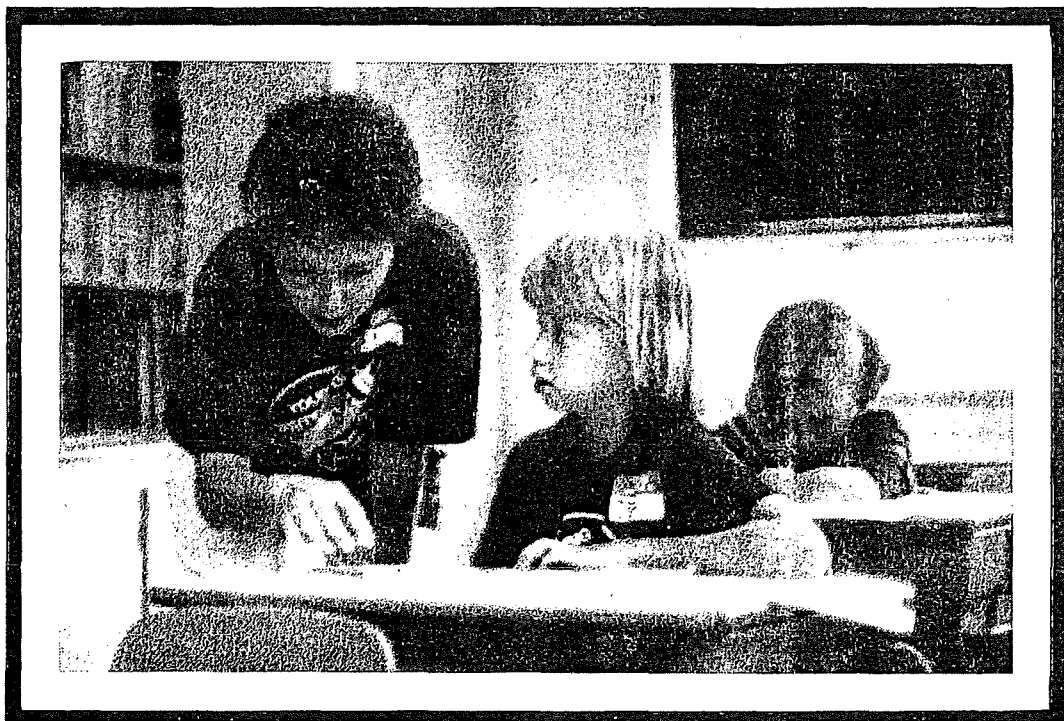
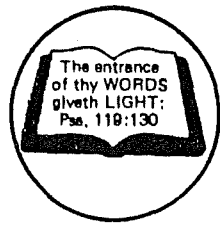


# *Perspectives*

*in Covenant Education*



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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: 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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1987-1988

## SPECIAL FOCUS

*Young Writers' Day brought out no fewer than 112 eager 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th graders this year. That's not a bad turnout, for an event that, in our small school system, is only two seasons old. Most of the "Young Writers" came from Adams, Heritage, Hope, and South Holland Protestant Reformed Schools, but one of those in attendance hails from as far away as Redlands, California. Our observation was that they all enjoyed the day immensely. Swimming and pizza might have had something to do with that; but, judging from the caliber of the pre-writing activities which they carried with them from home that day, most of the writers took seriously the main business of the day.*

*Those pre-writing activities were intended, by the way, to make possible greater progress during the single day spent on the actual work of producing a finished product. One day, after all, just isn't very much time for teaching and for learning a skill so complex as writing. Better by far it is to spread the work out a bit, by assigning some of the preliminaries to be taken care of before the actual gathering for the workshop. So, there it was, summer vacation. . . and a homework assignment! Isn't that the pits! But the troops, no doubt with some parental guidance, bore up well under such adversity and came, for the most part, well prepared.*

*On the front cover you see Mrs. Joanne Bult, a sixth grade*



*The directors: Jim Huizinga, John Kalsbeek,  
Cal Kalsbeek, Darrel Huiskens*

*teacher from Adams Street, giving to an obviously alert young writer advice concerning the objectives for the day — using specific details and putting them in correct chronological order. From the essays submitted at the end of the day it's evident that the young writers also picked up on the more general objectives, namely, that they try to be conscious of the fact that the Lord rules in all of the events of their lives, and that life's "turning points" occur not by chance but by His design, for their advantage.*

*Mrs. Brenda Regnerus was among those who drove from Illinois to Michigan for the day. She came as one of the 12 instructors, having picked up her very apparent teaching skills through several years of experience in South Holland Protestant Reformed School. She agreed to reflect on the Young Writers' Day experience for the benefit of our Perspectives readers. Along with her article, which follows directly, we include a few pictures of the day's activities and several of the student compositions. We hope that the combination will give you a little of the flavor of the event.*

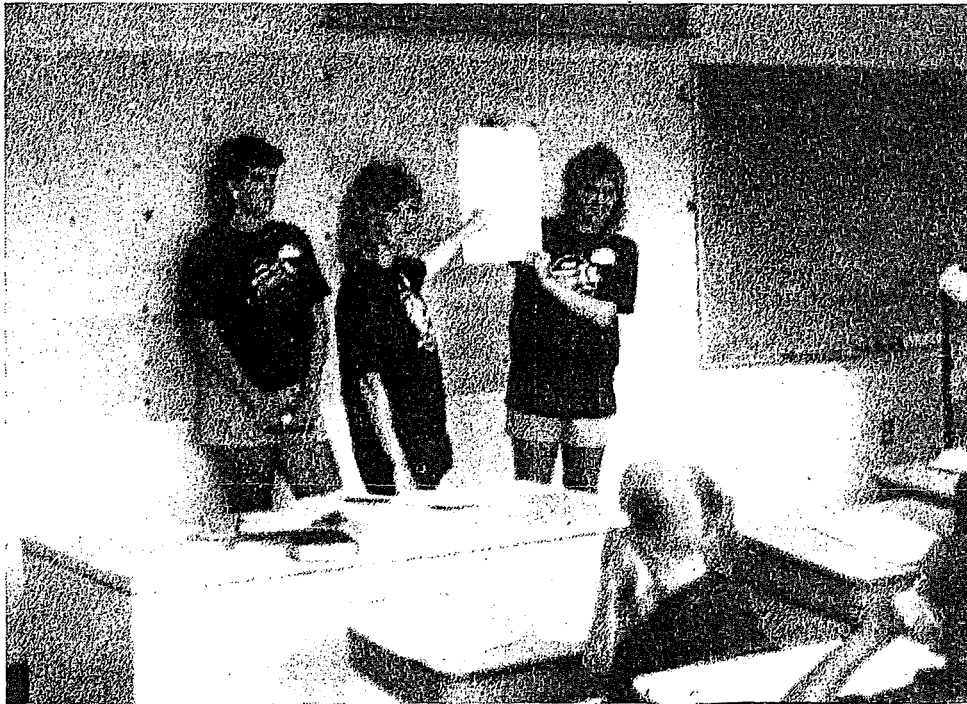
## Young Writers' Day 1987

Brenda Regnerus

Young Writers' Day actually began long before the "official" day this year. Early in the summer, worksheets were sent out to the students in grades four through seven who planned to attend. The worksheets helped students to see how God worked a turning point in the lives of Biblical heroes. It also gave the students opportunity to work with their parents to find a turning point in their life and to record data about it. Armed with these completed pre-writing activities, the students anxiously awaited the "official" day.

July 10, 1987, found about thirty South Holland students gathering in their school parking lot at 4:45 AM. As mothers sipped coffee and students shuffled for positions in cars, the morning sun began to cast a few pink rays into the gray, eastern sky. By 5:00 a procession of five cars was headed to Michigan for Young Writers' Day.

Upon arrival at Hope Protestant Reformed School, the South Holland group joined with a throng of students from the Grand Rapids area. The activities began with an assembly in the gymnasium. Mr.



*Brenda Regnerus makes a point*

John Kalsbeek, from Adams Street School, led in opening devotions and then gave an inspiring introduction, vividly recalling what means God had used as a turning point in his life. With this boost of encouragement, teachers, assistants, and students headed to their designated rooms to begin writing.

Referring to their data sheets, students worked to transfer their information and thoughts to a written narration of the turning point in their life. Starting with placing the basic facts in a correct sequence and then adding details, the young writer moved onward. Encouragement, correction, and advice was handed out by the teachers and their assistants, who often marveled at the students' ability to perceive God's direction in their life. Some students God had touched in powerful ways — as in the sudden death of a loved one. Others had felt His guiding hand in less dramatic experiences. Yet, all the students confessed that they had, in some way, felt the eternal plan of God being carried out in their life.

Even though the primary objectives of the day were to help students recognize God's working in their lives and to write about that recognition in a clear and meaningful way, some secondary objectives were also met. Students and teachers renewed old acquaintances and new friendships were started. Teachers and assistants gained valuable experiences

in working with students — recognizing their frustration and learning to help solve problems.

Attention was also given to the students' (and teachers'!) physical needs during the day. A snack time with bars, cookies, and fruit punch was provided for a morning break, and pop and pizza for lunch. Fans were placed in rooms and Mr. Huisken kept the thirsty occupants supplied with ice water on the warm day. Spirited games of kickball were played at noon and everyone went swimming after closing devotions.

After the long eventful day, a teacher reflects on its successes. It was encouraging to work with the students again — delightful to see their awareness of God in their lives. We express our sincere thanks to the Federation for sponsoring Young Writers' Day and to those who organized it. Most of all, a heartfelt thankfulness to God is felt for covenant children and the working of God in their lives. ■□■



*Cal Kalsbeek gets a piece of the action*

#### A Special Friend

It was the summer of 1982 when I met a kind, warm-hearted friend. This friend is from Singapore. He traveled all the way

from Singapore to Michigan to go to college to be a teacher.

When this friend first came to Michigan I was excited. My brothers and sisters and I brought

him flowers to welcome him. He was living in my grandpa's house which is near my house. This friend's name is Kok Eng.

I like this friend very much because he turned to be a Christian. When he was little, his parents raised him to worship idols or even his ancestors. I also like Kok Eng because he gave me birthday cards and sometimes even a present.

At that time I thought I was big for knowing a Singaporean and I often showed off. I also sat on his lap a lot.

Because of Kok Eng I realize that I should be thankful for a Christian home, school, church, and most of all Christian parents. Also because of Kok Eng, I met some Chinese people which go to our churches in Singapore or here. Their names are Michiel, Catherine, Fransise, and Rev. Mahtani and his wife and sons. I'm happy that I met Kok Eng, and I'm happy that God put this turning point in my life, even though I don't know why He did.

Dorothy Kalsbeek

#### Loss of a Loved One

Something happened to me when I was seven years old that made me feel sad and I cried. It made me wish it had never happened.

My dad was a loving, kind person. Whenever I needed him he was there. I love him. He was a

car salesman. He loved God. He loved his family.

One day we learned that Dad had cancer. He was taken to the hospital for a long time. After a while Dad came home. He stayed in bed quite a lot of the time. Later he went back to the hospital.

He died in the hospital on August 21, 1986, ten days after my birthday.

God is good. God is great. God is merciful. God is loving. It was in God's plan for my dad to die.

The death of my dad was a turning point for me because now I don't have a dad anymore.

Philip Reitsma

Something happened to me every other year that made me feel pretty good when I got used to it. Eric, B.J., Alex, and Erin are my brothers and sister. Eric is 8; B.J., 5½; Alex, 3; and Erin, 2½. We live in Zeeland on 88th. It's a middle-sized, white house.

The kids were born every other year: '79 — Eric, '81 — B.J., '83 — Alex, '85 — Erin. I was born in '77. That made me the oldest. When my mom had Erin I had to help a lot. I didn't like it really well. I had to do more work. I think God did it to make me more responsible. And to help out a lot. I had to clear the table with my brother, and set it. I had to watch the kids sometimes.





*A pause that refreshes*

When my brothers and sister were born it was an experience for me because my mom made me learn to set the table and I had to take up a lot of responsibilities.

Ryan Mowery

Last summer when we were on vacation we went to Ohio and we went to Canada. In the morning when we woke up we put all our stuff back in the van and drove off. Later we stopped at the hotel restaurant. My dad went to talk to someone. I emptied the wastebasket and my dad jumped in the van and drove off without me. When I came back I couldn't find the van. I was very SCARED when I looked and saw them leaving! I ran after the van but it

had already left. Then I began to run the fastest I have ever run before. But I couldn't catch up with them. I ran to a gas station and started to cry. The man said that they might come back. I jumped up and down. THEY WERE BACK! I was so happy. They picked me up and drove off to Cedar Point.

Being left at a hotel was good for me because God wanted me to love my family more. Sometimes bad things happen that turn out good.

Dawn Kalsbeek

#### The Security of Light

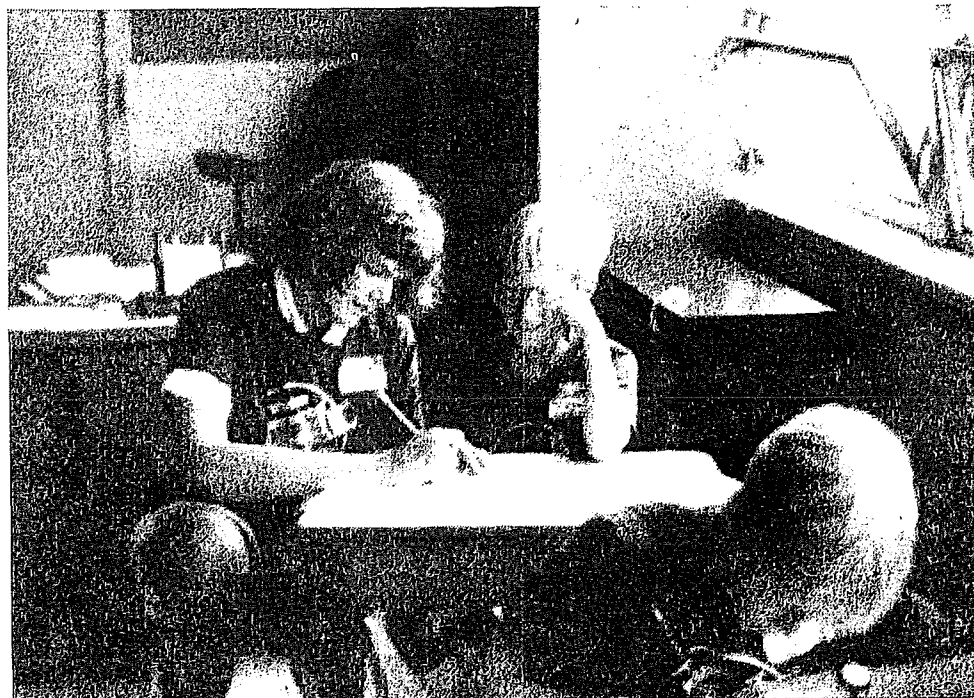
This happened two years ago. It made me realize that God is the only light I can trust in.



*Instructor Karen Buiter gives one-to-one help*

It was a Sunday night in February and my parents were going out for coffee. Since the sky was

dark and cloudy and a wind was blowing up, I asked them not to stay out too long. I went inside



*Sharon Hauck, one of 13 assistants, lends a hand*



*David Harbach and Gary VanDer Schaaf from Adams, and Gary Lanning from Covenant. Mr. Harbach gave his attention to the reproductive system; Mr. VanDer Schaaf, as we said, to the skeletal system; and Mr. Lanning to the muscular. The three papers prepared by the participants testify to the willingness of the authors to work hard and long on the project. In order to share some of it with you, our readers, we thought first of taking excerpts from all three. There are of course advantages to that, but in the end we decided instead to select one of the three and print it in its entirety. Don't let the length deter you. It's instructive, to be sure, but hardly "heavy" reading. It's the kind of thing that, once you start, you're hooked — which, I guess, is the reason we decided to print the whole thing.*

## The Skeletal System

Gary VanDer Schaaf

I am six years old, and hanging from the water pipes that run the cool dark length of my grandmother's cellar. My hands are cramped around the pipes, and my arms ache, stretched to their endurance. I glance down nervously: the cement floor is feet, yards, miles away. Like a small kitten in a tall tree, I am transfixed: how did I get up here? How do I get down?

"Let go," says my cousin. "I'll catch you. Just drop."

I do.

He doesn't.

I hit the floor, landing, uncat-like, on my side. In my left arm, that softly curving spiral of bone between elbow and wrist, the radius, snaps neatly, cleanly.

Altogether, it will take more than six hours to get me to a

doctor, determine that the arm is indeed broken, then set, wrap, and cast the fractured limb. The bone itself, however, responds to the break immediately. In an instant, the body reacts to this breach in its foundation, and millions of the three basic types of bone cells are formed, or transformed from existing cells, and gather about the break.

Osteocytes, which maintain live bone tissue, minister to the areas on either side of the break, making sure that no further trauma to the bone will occur. Osteoblasts, bone-repairing cells, await the completion of callus formation, a sheathlike growth of collagenous protein and cartilage which will unite again the severed bone. Once the softer callus framework is established, the

osteoblasts will fill and harden it, leaving the bone whole and strong again, but with a swollen growth surrounding the area of the fracture, like a burl upon a tree.

Meanwhile, large osteoclasts, giant bone-destroying cells, each containing 10-30 nuclei, have been busy cleaning the area of minute bone fragments. And once the callus is completely hardened, these osteoclasts will break down the extra material, like a sander smoothing down a concrete patch, finally leaving the repaired bone in almost original shape and condition, sometimes even stronger than before, the breach filled, the body's foundation again complete.

The human skeleton, that unseemly and unappealing collection of 206 lengths of calcium and collagen, is indeed the body's framework and foundation. Over two millennia ago, Job observed, "Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinew" (Job 10: 11), and I do not believe that 2,000 years of scientific advancement has provided a better summary of the function of human bone. As a fence defines and protects property, and as a building's foundation determines its size, strength, and shape, so our skeleton protects us, gives us our shape, and sets the broad limits of our physical abilities.

Bones are the only hard tissue

within the body, buried deep with in us; it is their strength which supports and upholds our clothing of skin and flesh, just as a home's plaster walls are built upon and upheld by the buried rock or cement foundation. And as a fence protects property so does the skeleton protect our vital organs, the skull enveloping the brain, the ribs covering heart and lungs.

Unlike man-made fences and foundations, however, bones are not inanimate, static things. Not only does the skeleton, in conjunction with the muscular system, give us freedom of movement, but it is itself a dynamic, growing, changing, living thing.

An infant is born with a "skeleton" of some 350 "bones." Some are true bones, calcified and hardened, but many are still soft cartilage. A baby with the firm skeleton of an adult could not undergo or survive birth. Its small body would be too rigid and incompressible, unable to pass through the birth canal.

Throughout life, the bones will calcify, coalesce, expand, lengthen, and finally shrink, while constantly tearing down and rebuilding themselves. The virtually boneless skull of the infant will not harden and grow to close off the last of the openings, the fontanelles, until the child is two years old. And the then bony plates will still not be completely

coalesced even four decades later.

Every bone in the hand of that two-year-old will replace itself by the child's third year; not one will be the same. The 26 bones in each of the child's feet are especially active; they will not be fully and finally formed until he is 15, a fact that dismays parents and delights shoe salesmen.

But because the skeleton is a living thing, it is subject to the law of death. And die it does, like the rest of the body, slowly at first, then more rapidly, finally ending in a frenzy of self-destruction in a headlong rush to the grave. The bone-building osteoblasts which dominated the first half of life gradually become less active, and the bone-destroyers, the osteoclasts, begin to dominate the body. The amount of annual bone replacement, 100% in youth, plummets to under 20% after age 60.

And the rate of that replacement grows slower each year. The fractured arm of a four-year-old will heal within 4-8 weeks; the same fracture in a 65-year-old may require nearly twice that time to mend, if it will mend at all. Then, that which once was made well by a simple splint and cast demands surgery, possibly a bone graft, metal screws, pins, and plates, perhaps a teflon joint, and weeks of therapy to be made, not as good as new, but merely functional.

Bone replacement lags further and further behind bone destruction. That which was once gently rounded becomes pointed and sharp. The chin bone grows more pronounced, the jawbone pulls inward, the hip-bone protrudes, and its now brittle structure threatens to turn a fall into a disaster.

The old find that their clothes no longer fit. Shirts and blouses are tight across the shoulders; slacks and pants are too long. What is happening? The body's frame, the skeleton, is shrinking. If this shrinkage is uneven, and if the person has a history of calcium depletion (common among women), the bones will slowly deform. The strong men of Ecclesiastes 12:3 will bow themselves: spine and femur, tibia and fibula will bend and stay bent. Grandmother and Grandfather will totter out to greet you, stooped and bow-legged, smiling faces pinched and pointed, their bent and failing bones a testimony to their sojourn in a fallen world.

Yet for 70 or more years the skeleton will fulfill its fourfold function. It will give shape to the body, protect vital organs, house red marrow for blood cell production and store fat for energy reserves, and provide that system of levers, operated by the muscles, which gives us movement. These four functions both

reveal and underscore the fundamental nature of bone and the skeleton, and it is that nature, or rather two aspects of it, which form the subject of the pages which follow.

#### UNITY

The first picture that bone presents is that of fundamental identity, oneness, and unity: identity of self, oneness of self and mate, and unity with God through unity with the body of His Christ.

Scripture frequently uses part of the body — bone — to refer to the whole. This is not mere synecdoche. When David wishes to express the totality of his commitment to and adoration of Jehovah, he writes

And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation. All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee...  
(Ps. 35:9, 10a).

Note the parallelism: soul and bone respond as one. The sweet psalmist's entire being is dedicated to praise as he approaches the throne of the Almighty and prostrates himself before it. Bone is fundamental. What it feels the whole body experiences. Where it goes, the rest is sure to follow.

In like fashion the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews uses the picture of a rendered skeleton to complete his picture of the all-

encompassing and profound power of the Word over and within the lives of men:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (4:12).

Mind, soul, spirit, joints and marrow, man is a fundamental unity of all these things, the immaterial and the corporeal, and the Word has dominion over all that makes man himself.

Our Saviour also uses bone to identify Himself as "very man." Upon His first post-resurrection appearance to the gathered disciples, Jesus must first assure them that He is indeed Himself, not a phantom or spirit: "Behold my hands and feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39).

In effect, Jesus says, "Look, it is I. I appear to you not as spirit but in a body, new and glorified. But I am still Myself; the clothing of this new flesh still hangs on a framework of bone. I am the first-fruits of the grave, not a ghost. I am indeed the New Man, and I am risen."

Because of its fundamental nature, the skeleton does much to

determine, physically, who we are and what we do. Man is created to be lord of creation, called to subjugate creation to the praise of its Creator. To this end, our bodies are framed with bones, which enables us to traverse this earth. (Quite literally so. Even in our non-ambulatory age, the feet and leg bones of the average American will carry him over 65,000 miles – more than twice around the globe.) Many creatures are able to stand and walk on two legs for brief periods, but only man, the intended master of such beasts, has a skeleton designed that he might stand and walk erect for 70 years. And although many creatures have hands, even hands with an opposable thumb, man alone in creation can touch the tip of his thumb to the fingertip of his forefinger, due to a skeletal arrangement unique to man, without which manipulation and mastery of the environment would be impossible.

One could go on and on about how bone and skeleton are structured to allow us to function in our God-ordained roles. The skeleton and its component parts are an architect's primer-book: a system of obdurate columns, hollowed to provide the maximum strength with the minimum of material, cushioned and jointed and arched to absorb shock and distribute stress, supporting every

cell in the body yet comprising only 1/5 of its weight. Light but durable (remaining intact centuries after the flesh returns to dust), inflexible yet providing a range and finesse of movement unparalleled in nature. And bone is alive. It maintains, repairs, and replaces itself continually. It grows as we do.

As a junior-high teacher, I am surrounded by growing skeletons nine months of the year, and I am always amazed at the outward evidences of a living skeleton changing itself to prepare its owner to function in the adult world. The small boys who enter 7th grade metamorph into towering 9th graders, and their lyth-some, curveless little-girl classmates will graduate two years later, well-rounded in more ways than one as their growing, changing skeletons prepare them for their places in God's earthly kingdom.

In these days of godless feminist philosophy and uni-sex culture, the skeleton maintains a rigidly chauvinistic witness to fundamental differences between male and female, and accordingly, to the God-ordained roles of each sex in the home, church, and society. Generally speaking, the male skeleton is larger, its bones thicker and stronger than the smaller and lighter bones of the female. Male bones exhibit a slight difference in structure



which allows for a muscle, ligament, and tendon arrangement that provides more efficient and smoother motion, and a teacher can tell his students that this difference is the reason why a girl throws a ball, swings a bat, and runs like... like... well, like a girl. In short, a man's skeleton outfits him for harder, more physical labor. It is a fitting framework for one who is called to lead and to provide for a family.

And even if our perception of the implications of the differences between the overall size, structure, and strength of male and female skeletons becomes clouded in our day of "househusbands" and female body-builders, the skeleton maintains one startling and irrefutable testimony to the uniqueness of each sex's structure and function — the pelvis.

A male pelvis is narrow and heart-shaped, its bones heavy and very hard, its inner ring lined with knobby, hooked points to which the muscles and ligaments attach. The acute angle of the inner opening brings the hip-sockets closer together, nearer the body's center of gravity. Altogether, it is an arrangement providing a powerful lifting of the upper body and fluid, efficient movement.

The female pelvis is quite another story. Upon puberty, its lighter, more flexible bones

broaden in anticipation of pregnancy: it will have to support a child-filled womb, and the inner opening grows larger, more obtuse, to permit the passage of the baby. This pelvic flaring pushes the hip-sockets out, away from the body's center of gravity, and in conjunction with a muscle and ligament attachment different from the male's, producing the rolling, less efficient but distinctly feminine walk (which, alas, some young ladies are inclined to exaggerate).

Finally, the inner ring of the female pelvis is smooth and oval. The projections for muscle and ligament attachment present in the male pelvis are absent, and the opening is unobstructed, precisely the size of an infant's head. All-in-all, the female pelvis is a structure clearly designed for child-bearing, and we should remind our students, when they are of appropriate age, that while perhaps the young ladies may not be able to throw as far, jump as high, or run as fast as their male classmates, it is their unequaled privilege, attested to by their very bones, to bring forth covenant seed.

Scripture, in addition to using bone as a picture of essential personhood, also uses bone as an image of kinship unity. II Samuel 19:13-14 records David's reaction to Judah's absence at his return to Israel after Absalom's rebellion.

The disappointed king cries out:

Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh, wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king? And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also (note close identification with self implied, GVS) if thou be not captain of the host before me. . . .

This use of bone as a picture of extended-family unity is found throughout Scripture (Gen. 29:14; Jud. 9:2; I Chron. 11:1) and has an interesting parallel in the field of animal classification. The outward appearance of a marlin, a shark, and a dolphin would suggest some taxonomic relationship among them. An examination of their respective skeletons, however, reveals that the shark has no true skeleton at all, only cartilage, and that the skeleton of the dolphin resembles more closely that of a mouse, a fellow mammal, than that of the marlin.

Consider also the panda bear, the polar bear, and the brown bear. Outwardly, the animals are very similar, yet most taxonomists are reluctant to classify the panda bear as a bear at all. Stripped of its charming fur coat and mountains of flesh, the "bear's" skeleton reveals a close similarity to that of a raccoon. And a polar bear's skeleton re-

sembles nothing so much as the skeleton of a wolverine (if there were such a thing as a wolverine the size of a volkswagen), an implied kinship that is, perhaps, mirrored in the extremely aggressive natures of both animals — wolverines do not hesitate to threaten grizzly bears, and a polar bear is the only animal that will hunt man.

That Scripture uses bone to picture familial relationships should come as no surprise, for it was bone from which the first family was formed. So closely did God wish Adam to identify with Eve, so intimate a union does God intend the marriage relationship to be, that God took from Adam's own skeleton, his own frame and foundation, that from which his mate would come.

In his commentary on Genesis, John Calvin describes the divine purpose behind the means of Eve's creation in this manner:

. . . that the conjunction of the human race might be the more sacred, He (God) purposed that both male and female should spring forth from one and the same origin. Something was taken from Adam, in order that he might embrace with greater benevolence a part of himself. He lost, therefore, one of his ribs, but instead of it, a far richer reward was granted him, since

he obtained a faithful associate for life. For he now saw himself, who had before been imperfect, rendered complete in his wife. And in this we see a true resemblance of our union with the Son of God: for He became weak that He might have the members of His body endued with strength (pp. 132-33).

That Adam understood the significance of the means of Eve's making is evident in his first words upon beholding her: "This is now bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). Adam could love his wife, care for her, and nourish her as he would his own body (Eph. 5:28-29) because inwardly and fundamentally they were one — "bone of my bone" — and so, naturally, the union of their flesh into one flesh would follow.

And, finally, building upon this image of "bone of my bone" inherent in the marriage union, Scripture describes our eternal covenant union with God in terms of bone. By adoption we enter the family of God, and claim Jesus as elder brother. But even this blood relationship does not describe the depth of the intimate and sweet communion our God has decreed for His chosen friends-servants. By the gracious mercies and mysteries of the covenant we are made part of Jesus Himself.

This does Paul declare in Ephesians 5:30, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Thus our unity with Christ is complete and fundamental, total, absolute, and everlasting. We are flesh of His flesh, bone of His bones, in Whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Do you know this in your heart? Can you "feel it in your bones"? They testify to its very truth.

#### LAW

My junior-high students loathe rules. They want to do and say what they want, whenever and wherever they want. "Our mere presence here in school," they seem to think, "is quite enough. Don't make it worse by trying to tell us how to behave."

Christian teachers, in turn, despise and labor against this attitude, sometimes growing very angry at those who exhibit it with soul-wearying consistency, sometimes forgetting that it is often our own attitude toward our own participation in the body of Christ.

Rules of behavior — the law — and rules of belief — doctrine — have fallen on hard times. The law, say its detractors, is negative and restrictive, denying the positive freedoms we enjoy in the new dispensation of Christ and His Spirit. And doctrine? Dead and divisive, the binding and

bitter fruit of struggles long since forgotten. The church of God, after all, is one body. We should have no creed but Christ.

Those who confess this may belong to a body, but it is not the body of Christ. The body to which they belong has no strength: it cannot stand, and is buffeted about by every wind of doctrine. It has no support, no structure; it is shapeless, shifting, and ever-changing, and cannot be part of the eternal, immutable Word. It has nothing by which its several parts are united and made one, and thus its ecumenicity is a perverse parody of the brotherhood of all believers and of the one, holy, catholic church. It has no foundation on which to grow, nothing on or by which to build an edifice of praise to the glory of the Father, and thus it has no purpose. This body is like a house built upon the sand, like a skyscraper without a core of steel. Or like a body without bone.

Bone and skeleton are a picture, I believe, of God's law and of the truths of His word and like many Scriptural images, a picture that operates on many levels. Notice first the natural human reaction to a skeleton: in the words of one of my 7th grade students, "Oh, gross!!" Like the law, the skeleton holds no natural appeal for natural man. It is an offense to the senses, the stuff of horror and nightmare.

Our natural aversion to a skeleton stems in part from the stark reality it presents. Again, as one student remarked upon seeing a human skeleton, "You mean, that's ME?" Yes, that is you. Stripped of our fleshly clothing and all the added adornment we smear, spray, and hang upon it, we are not pretty things. In like manner is the law of God's word a schoolmaster, revealing us for what we are apart from grace: vile corpses in animated rebellion against the living God. All self-deception as to our innate goodness and beauty is just that — a lie. Apart from Christ's body and His revivifying Spirit, we are all whited sepulchers, full of dead men's bones.

Our appreciation of the picture of bone as law is increased when we consider the many Scripture passages that speak of bone in association with God's law and the truths of His word. The verses that speak of aching, shattered bones as a result of sin or that tell of the destruction of bone as a sign of God's wrath against the covenant-breaker and infidel are so numerous that only three of the most familiar passages, all found in the Psalms, are given here:

My strength faileth because  
of mine iniquity, and my  
bones are consumed (31:  
106).

When I kept silence, my

bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long (32:3).

There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin (38:3).

Conversely, obedience to the law and spiritual restoration are pictured by strong, healthy bones:

Fear the LORD and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to the bones (Prov. 3:7b, 8).

And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones (Is. 58:11a).

Are there lessons to be learned from these word pictures? I think so. First, we can see that sin is a profoundly serious thing. Sin is grievous; it is all pervading, infecting and inhabiting us, as it were, at our core, our very bones. C.H. Spurgeon, reflecting on Psalms 6 and 51, remarks that sin is "no mere flesh wound." Rather, "the solid pillars of the house of manhood are shaken." Sinful man cannot stand before God: the knowledge of our sin is a rottenness in our bones. We tremble in fear, bones shaking, reeling and falling like drunken men "because of the words of His holiness" (Job 4:14, Jer. 23:9, Hab. 3:16).

Secondly, we understand that broken law, like broken bone, violates harmony and unity. Unconfessed sin is like an unset fracture: a source of pain, misery, and deformity. In the impenitent state we are vexed, poured out like water, and all our bones are out of joint (Ps. 6:2; 21:14). Our bones provide no support and allow no rest (Job 30:16-17), for our sins rise up against us, like ribs against shrunken flesh, to remind us that we have broken the covenant that unites us with God, that we are living outside the body, not members of it but enemies to it, enemies that will be cut off, burned, utterly destroyed as would be diseased and cancerous bone.

Yet the Great and Loving Physician has sent His Son, with healing in His wings, to heal that which is wounded and to bind up that which is broken down. Even as our sin and our disobedience to the law and truth are pictured in broken bone, so is our salvation found in Him Who *is* Truth, Who kept the law perfectly, Whose bones were kept whole: not one of them was broken (Ex. 12:46; Ps. 34:20; John 19:32-37). Then does the healing and Holy Spirit apply the Balm of Gilead to our broken selves, and then again do we hear joy and gladness, and the bones which were shattered do rejoice (Ps. 51:8).

There remains one more lesson

to learn, or, if you will, one final warning to heed, and that is the lesson and warning found in Ezekiel 37:1-15: the macabre vision of the valley of dry bones.

In the valley Ezekiel sees the bleached bones of the scattered skeletons of "the whole house of Israel, dead in its own conceit, lifeless in its national sin of outward obedience and works-righteousness, withered and dry and blasted to the bare bone by the heat of God's indignation. Here is a glimpse into the charnel house of man's efforts to live apart from God's law and to save himself apart from God's grace. But even as the vision progresses, and the skeletons are reknit and clothed with flesh, we witness that Israel is yet dead. God withholds His breath, His reviving Spirit, from them. Only when God pours out His Spirit do the flesh and bones of the house of Israel arise from the grave and enter into a living relationship with their covenant Head.

So it is with us. We must constantly beware of "dead bone," of dead orthodoxy, of outward compliance with the law, of our natural inclination to the heresy of salvation by works.

Only when bone is alive can it fulfill its functions; dead bone is harmful, worse than useless, fit only for removal and destruction. Thus God's law must be within us a living and growing thing, ever

enabling us to live and move and have our entire being in obedient living to the praise of the mercy of the Father. Man is not an insect, and neither is he crustacean or mollusk; his skeleton is not a dead thing worn without, but a living part of him, within him, protecting and nourishing him, giving shape and purpose to his being.

Therefore the law of God and the love of His Word must be written deep within us, and our innermost man must be renewed. When dead bone is removed from the body, the surgeon will graft into its place a section of healthy bone from elsewhere in the body. But spiritually we are dead throughout, and such an intra-personal transplant is impossible. When God said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones live?" the prophet's hopeless reply was, "O Lord God, thou knowest." The question is rhetorical, the conclusion foregone.

Foregone, that is, as far as man can comprehend. "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all" (Eccl. 11:5). With God all things are possible, and with such dead bones as we have He made covenant. In faithfulness to Himself we are made new. Like branches grafted into a living vine,



*The parent/teacher conference is the most direct means of communication between the home and the school. Handled skillfully, and conducted by both parties involved in the right spirit, these conferences can be profitable both to teacher and parent alike. Not always however do they come off right. Teachers who've had unhappy experiences in them may learn actually to dread conference nights. And, vice versa, parents who feel put down by the teacher or frustrated in their appeal for help may consider parent/teacher conferences to be at best a waste of time.*

*That's too bad. Communication, after all, is the key to good home-school relations. And good home-school relations can pay huge dividends in the classroom. Parents, in fact, can be the teacher's greatest allies. Likewise, teachers who see and work with the child in a setting quite different from that of the home can provide information useful to parents in their rearing of that child.*

*While parents have much to contribute to a good conference, it's probably true to say that the burden for its success falls primarily on the teacher. It was with that in mind that the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies decided to sponsor yet another activity this past year: a summer mini-course on "Interacting With Parents." (The emphasis here should be on "mini," since the "course" lasted for just an afternoon in August. But it was, for all that, a very worthwhile activity. And it was well attended by teachers not only from our four schools in the Grand Rapids area, but from South Holland, Illinois, and Doon, Iowa.) Since the topic concerned a function involving both teachers and parents, the Federation (through the Teacher Educational Development Committee) made provision both for teacher and parent involvement in the running of the course. Presentations were made by Messrs. Jim Decker and Eric Ophoff, both parents of children at Adams, and by Mr. Cal Kalsbeek and Miss Agatha Lubbers, instructors at Covenant. Jim Decker laid the groundwork by speaking about the skill of communication (in which, incidentally, he has by training and experience no little expertise). Eric Ophoff and Agatha Lubbers spoke to the "how" of conducting parent/teacher conferences; and, finally, Cal Kalsbeek encouraged the teachers and principals to avail themselves of a variety of means to maintain good communication between home and school.*

*Now, what does all this have to do with "Parents' Corner"? We have an article here by one of the participants of that mini-course. Mr. Eric Ophoff agreed to pen a few of his thoughts on*



*what parents hope to learn from parent/teacher conferences.*

*As something of an after-thought, we decided to throw in an article by a teacher too. I happened to think of an article written by Fred Hanko, ten years ago, on the back of one of Hope School's weekly notes to the parents. In it he wrote about conferences, and, interestingly, his remarks suggest that the teachers want much the same thing out of a conference as do, according to Eric Ophoff, the parents. So, parents, the teachers are going to borrow a little of your "corner" in this issue of Perspectives.*

# Parent-Teacher Conferences

What's in it for Parents?

Eric Ophoff

The purpose of parent-teacher conferences has to be to allow for communication between parents and teachers. Both parents are vitally interested in the well-being and performance of children in the classroom. Parents often come away from conferences with teachers with a renewed sense that teachers *are* concerned about the children. I've been to many conferences, and if there's one thing that never fails to impress me it's the fact that teachers *care*.

Without conferences, the only gauge that a parent has to measure the success of the student is the occasional report card. While that is certainly something of a measurement of academic progress, Christian parents are also concerned with a number of other

aspects of a child's development.

Parent-teacher conferences provide the parent with a good opportunity to inquire about areas such as the spirituality and the social development of a child. Parents can and should use the opportunity of conferences to inquire of the teacher regarding the child's attitude towards others, school in general, and his receptivity to the religious and spiritual slant given to the material presented.

I think it's good that conferences are held in the classroom where the student spends his school day. It gives the parent an opportunity physically to see and appreciate the world of a school-age child. I'm always impressed that the classroom is so small and

closed. For a child it's a big world in a big classroom at a big school. To a parent, it's a small room with a teacher and some little desks. Often times in the hustle of the work-a-day world it's easy to forget about the kids in school. For a parent to go physically to the classroom serves to remind him that his children are yet children being taught much the same as the parent was — but the parent doesn't think about it. The world of parents is a long way from the world of school children.

I've come to appreciate the teacher who is prepared for conferences. My goal in a conference with a teacher is to determine if my child is working at his capacity and if he is living a sanctified

life among his peer group. I usually find out the answers to these questions and there often is a sense of relief on my part to know that things are handled on the school front much the same way as on the home front.

Through parent-teacher conferences, I have developed a respect for the abilities of our Christian school teachers. I have a respect for their concern and dedication to the calling of instructing our covenant children. I believe our teachers have a sense of responsibility to that calling that exceeds the academic. Teachers care. One way to observe that is to go to parent-teacher conferences.

■ ■ ■

## Conference Time Again

Fred Hanko

... The lack of a close relationship between parents and teachers can have several unhappy results. Both parents and teachers are more hesitant to discuss problems with the other when they arise. The lack of knowledge and understanding of each other leads to doubts about what the other is trying to do. Parents begin to talk to each other about "the teachers," and teachers grumble about "the parents" and the result is a poorer relationship

and no progress in our mutual interest, the welfare of the children. If we knew each other better and could talk things over more frequently, I'm sure that many of our problems would disappear.

That's what conferences are all about. It's true, they're very limited in time and are often very formal and structured, but they are the best that we have now, and they do offer an excellent opportunity to help the children

whether your child is doing the best he can. I can give you my opinion. If he is not doing as well as he should, I can tell you what the problems are as I see them. Perhaps I can suggest some ways that he can try to overcome the problem. I can tell you something about his behavior in the group of children at school, I can tell you something about his behavior in the classroom and about the attitudes he shows there.

Looking at the things I want to know from you and the things I want to tell you, several things are clear: We are both interested in the same things. We can accomplish a great deal by sharing our information and our problems. The conferences help us both. By getting to know each other we can accomplish great things.

Your child may not always think so, but we teachers like your child. We want your child to grow in knowledge and understanding that a covenant child needs to live a life of service to God. You want the same thing. The conferences can help us work toward that goal.

**SECRET**

“Received the latest issue of *Perspectives* this week. I want to commend you on the direction you are taking in the magazine; if my analysis is correct, this direction is a bit from the scholarly and learned (but not altogether) toward the more practical and more readily understood. The use of pictures, undoubtedly expensive, is a fine idea. My ninth and tenth grade children actually did some reading in the last issue, on their own, because of the presence of these pictures. I do hope Lynden’s graduation picture may yet appear.”

"Incidentally, the last 3 issues of *Perspectives* have been great, and I compliment you on your valuable work."

"We would like to inform you that a school society in the Edmonton congregation has been formed to promote and assist its members in the pursuit of Chris-

Emmanuel Prot. Ref. School Soc.  
c/o Henry Ferguson  
Box 117, RR 1, Cardiff Echoes  
Morinville, Alberta, Canada  
T0G-1P0

We included the name and address in that last one, in the hope that some of you might have or be able to obtain "bulletins or information" to send to Mr. Ferguson to assist the Edmonton School Society in their important undertaking.

## CURRENT ISSUES

# Docere Aut Non Docere Latinum

Brian Dykstra

To teach or not to teach Latin: that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler for the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of an outrageous dead language, or to take arms against Latin's sea of troubles to advocate the study of living languages such as German or Spanish. Much research is being done in educational circles on the usefulness of Latin for today's students. The study of the classical languages has fallen on hard times and is a topic of debate among educators.

Two recent newspaper articles also dealt with this issue. A reader sent in an article which appeared in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* of August 1, 1987 called, "The Last Gasp of a Dead Language" written by Marcus Eliason who is a writer for the Associated Press; and the *Grand Rapids Press* of July 24, 1987, printed an article by the deputy chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, John Agresto, titled, "Why Should Students Study Latin and Greek?"

It is certainly true that fewer students are taking courses in the classical languages. Eliason demonstrates this when he writes:

In the 15 years since the ancient Roman tongue ceased to be a compulsory subject to earn a high-school diploma in Britain, the number of Latin students has fallen sharply, while ancient Greek has all but vanished.

The debate resurfaced in March when it came out that in London, which has 300,000 high-school students, the number choosing to study Latin for their diploma was down from 877 in 1976 to just 286 last year. This year, only 30 of London's 146 high schools are offering Latin studies.

There are various reasons for Latin's decline. No doubt anybody who took Latin and purchased a used book has read in the writing of a former owner of the book:

Latin is a language as dead  
as dead can be.

It killed the ancient Romans  
and now it's killing me.

A language which is not currently spoken is viewed as being of little value. A traveller simply cannot go into a restaurant overseas and order a tasty local dish using Latin.

Latin also suffers from its reputation of being tough and not fun. Eliason writes:

But most generations remember Latin classes as a nightmare of parsing phrases from ancient texts and conjugating serried ranks of verbs under the beady eye of a robed, cane-wielding teacher.

"It became unfashionable to study Latin because parents would tell their children, 'Oh, you don't want to study Latin. I did and I hated it,'" Belinda Dennis, a teacher and member of the Association for the Reform of Latin Teaching, said in an interview.

Latin also suffers because it is not useful to today's market. Living languages are more useful in business and travel. There is more of a demand for science and technology not only in many areas of business, but also for national security and trade. Eliason says:

To those who say the classical heritage is Britain's virtue, critics reply that Latin and Greek for too long eclipsed the sciences, leaving Britain at a technological disadvantage.

Now that Latin lies bleeding badly on the battlefield of curriculum, its defenders rush to the scene with their tote bags of salve. Eliason presents the common defense for Latin in his article. The common defense for Latin is that it gives mental discipline, helps in the study of other foreign languages, improves spelling and grammar, and is an aid in vocabulary development. Eliason writes:

Columnist Anne Smith says that mental discipline imposed by learning Latin still serves her well.

"Had it not been for the patient construction and analysis learned in the Latin room, I'd never have been able to fix my mother's washing machine as I did," she wrote recently in the Scotsman newspaper.

... Latin is needed to help students master technical terms, prepare to study European languages, improve spelling and grammar and learn the origins of Western culture.

... Dr. Rudolph Masciantonio, director of

foreign-language studies for the Philadelphia School District, says that knowing the Latin word *manus* (hand) helps pupils tackle difficult English derivatives like manuscript, manipulate, manufacture.

"They absorb it like a sponge and enjoy it tremendously," he said in a telephone interview.

Agresto asserts that these reasons are too shallow. He claims:

Such narrow and merely utilitarian arguments are perhaps why a majority of Latin students drop the language after only one year. Surely we need to know the value of these ancient studies, but is there nothing good the classics have to offer beyond vocabulary building, pretechnical training and the academic equivalent of Marine boot camp?

Agresto's defense of Latin and the classical languages is:

These languages and their books, their plays, their modes of thought have helped form not only our contemporary speech, but our politics, our literature, our history and the shape of our civilization. If we are

to know ourselves, we must know our own. Despite glib talk in certain circles that insists our first job is to open our minds to the understanding of other cultures and ways of life, if we fail to know our own civilization — its hopes, its principles, its reasons and its greatness — we will not be able to make comparisons that are even worth a dime.

... Properly taught, the classics inhabit the best of all possible worlds. They can appeal to the desire to know ourselves, to see the roots of our principles, ideas and culture and, at the same time, to see who we are not.

Would some learning of Latin or Greek be beneficial to us? We might not be as interested in learning about our cultural heritage as others, but what about the writings and music of the early church? Would understanding more about the language and culture of ancient Rome and Greece help us to understand better the early New Testament church? In times when the King James version of the Bible could become hard to find and other Bible translations are suspect, might others besides preachers benefit from the study of Greek or Latin? *Salve,*



## SAVORING SCIENCE

*In our summer issue of Perspectives we introduced this rubric. It's pretty fresh off the drawing board therefore. . . and already we'd like to modify our plans for it. Our original intent was that the rubric would appear only in the summer and the winter issues of this magazine, and that Mr. Gary Lanning would be its regular and only writer. That's what we announced last time. Well, since that time we had occasion to talk to Mr. John M. Faber about some writing he's been doing in a similar vein. What we had had in mind for our new rubric was short articles dealing with things in "nature" which are cause for wonder. Mr. Faber, meanwhile, was sitting at his typewriter producing short articles which he entitled "Musings." And, in calling them that, he had in mind not simply that they were the fruit of his thinking meditatively. He thought rather of the old meaning of the word "muse," which is to wonder or marvel. And what he was "wondering" at was the works of God's hands that we see around us in nature. Since that was exactly what we had in mind for "Savoring Science," and since Mr. Faber was willing to share his Musings with us, we decided to expand our offering such that the rubric would appear not only in two issues per year but in every issue, and, further, that it have two writers instead of one. For Mr. Faber's articles we'll retain his "Musings" as a kind of sub-title for Savoring Science.*

*Mr. Faber needs no introduction to most of our readers, since for nearly 12 years (during the 50's and 60's) he was news editor of the **Standard Bearer** (See you in church. . . JMF), and he's a long-time writer for the **Beacon Lights**. Articles in the latter he signs "Gramps." That's probably because he's getting a little older — 82 years of age. He remains active, however — both physically and mentally; and we're happy that we are able to benefit from his continuing (and deepening) insights.*

## Musings

John M. Faber

. . . while I was musing  
the fire burned (Ps. 39:3).

He spake and it was done, He  
called the things that were not as



though they were done. I thought that the Bible told me that the One who spoke was the Eternal God: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Eternal is a word I cannot understand. Looking into the dim future is something I can get a picture of, but looking back into the very dim past is beyond me. And, I thought, it was somewhere in the dim past that God spoke. He said, "Let there be light."

The speech of God of which I was musing was of such nature that it became a reality. How different from my speech! I can go out on a cold winter day and say, "hot." But it accomplishes nothing. It is still cold. Because God had said cold, my hot does nothing. So, when God said, "light," there was light. Then I remembered that He divided the light from darkness and the First Day became a reality, a real thing! Further, I mused, the term "first" suggests a second, and a third, etc. So, when God created that first day with succeeding days to follow, He created time.

When I had been musing about the term "eternity" I was thinking that it meant that something stretched before time, and stretched ahead to "after time." That reminded me of the end of the world when time shall be no more; so I came to the conclusion that I cannot think that God was before the world began, and will

be after the world ends; but I must think that the Eternal God is before, is now, and is forever after! Whew! That made my head whirl. I thought, I cannot fathom that. I thought, of course not! How can I, a mere creature, fathom the mind of God!

I further thought, what *is* light? Just what did God create on that wonderful First Day? For me, poor mortal, it means that by that light I can see something. Sure, I know what light does. It illuminates. It shows me things, from sandcastles to skyscrapers, from ants to giants. So I was feeling quite satisfied with myself until I thought, but what *is* light? My dictionary tells me that it is an electro-magnetic wave of energy that travels over one hundred miles per hour! Whew! I don't understand what energy waves are, and such high speed at which it travels. It simply makes my head swim. Swim? I thought, it can't even *swim* in that mind-boggling information. No, it drowns in that immensity, the timelessness, the unmeasurableness of God measured by the yardsticks of men.

I wondered too where that newly created light was coming from. Then I realized that I could stop wondering about that light source when I remembered that My creator had already anticipated such a question. That thought caught me up short. In



That vastness overwhelms my  
thoughts so as to cause my soul  
to exclaim,

□ □

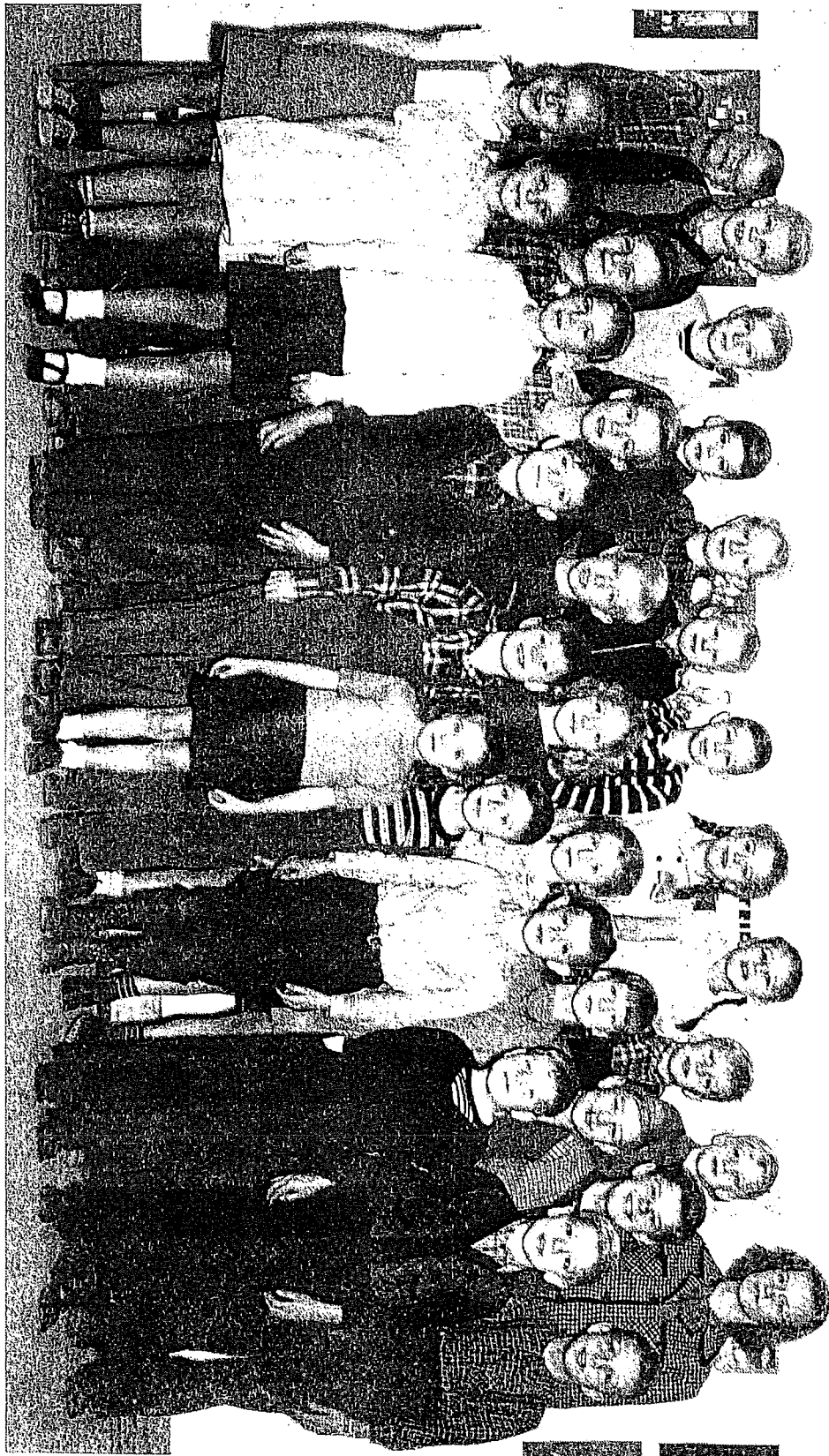
1. Teachers each day will clean lamps, clean chimneys, and trim wicks.

3. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to the individual tastes of the pupils.

5. After ten hours in school, the teachers should spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.

7. Every teacher should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years, so that he will not become a burden on society.

9. The teacher who performs his labors faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of twenty-five cents per week in his pay, providing the Board of Education approves.



*Schools? And maybe some of your old friends? And then there's the teacher (J.D.), back there in the 40's. To her students she probably seemed old already then. But she's still at it — in the same building!*

*If any of you other old-timers have pictures which you think might be fun to have in **Perspectives**, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Big pictures (8 x 10's) are fine, since they can be reduced. And don't worry about losing them. The printing process affects them not at all, and we'll return them to you with the same care with which you send them to us.*



## VIEWPOINTS

*A couple of our teachers take a look here at the matter of instruction of the gifted. They approach the subject from somewhat different points of view — but not **opposing** viewpoints. Rather, the articles complement each other. Mrs. Judie Feenstra, a teacher at Heritage Protestant Reformed School in Hudsonville, looks first at the definition of giftedness, and then stresses the necessity of challenging the gifted through appropriate adaptations of the regular curriculum to meet their special academic needs. Left to themselves, she warns, they'll become average learners in no time at all. Mr. Harry Langerak, a teacher at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, while readily acknowledging the responsibility of the teacher to stretch the intellectual abilities of all students, including the gifted, emphasizes the importance of helping the gifted students develop attitudes which keep them from falling into "particular spiritual pitfalls which are peculiar to them." Both of these emphases, we say, are important for teachers and parents in their working together to develop properly the talents God has, for His own purposes, given in larger measure to some of our children. We therefore recommend the following articles for your consideration.*

# Gifted?... or Having Gifts?

Judie Feenstra

There is an important difference between being gifted and having gifts. God gives each one of us gifts, some more than others, and we are responsible for using our gifts to the best of our ability. This is taught very plainly in the Parable of the Talents. However, some people not only have gifts given to them, but also they are gifted. What does this mean?

Putting a label on giftedness is like trying to describe beauty. Based on a variety of knowledge, we recognize beauty but can't define it concretely. So it is with giftedness. I will set forth some facts and conclusions about being gifted and you will be better equipped to recognize a gifted child.

The following is a list of characteristics that are frequently evident in the gifted:

- Displays a great curiosity about things, situations, or events.
- Is interested in a wide variety of things.
- Learns rapidly, easily, and efficiently.
- Walked and/or talked earlier than most children.

- Has a large vocabulary for his age.

- Shows an early interest in reading and words.

- Frequently reads before he enters school.

- Retains information without much rote or drill.

- Has a good memory.

- Makes collections of things that are advanced for his age.

- Uses a lot of common sense and practical knowledge.

- Reasons things out, thinks clearly, recognizes relationships.

- Knows many things of which other children are unaware.

- Can read books that are one or two years above age.

- Performs difficult mental tasks.

- Demonstrates intellectual curiosity.

- Shows perseverance and the capacity for self direction.

- Has long attention span for things of interest.

- Wants to learn.

An excellent memory is the most prevalent sign of giftedness.

Some early signs to watch for are:

- Unusual alertness, watching

and listening intently.

- Eyes focusing on an object for a longer period of time than is true of other children.

- Walking before first birthday.

- Ambidextrous for some period of time.

- Use more complex sentence structure.

- Develop a larger vocabulary.

- Show an early interest in books.

- Express themselves better than other children.

- Avid interest in reading prior to school age — many have taught themselves.

- Unbounded curiosity.

Although not all gifted children will exhibit the same characteristics, if a child exhibits some of these early signs, giftedness may be indicated.

The single most distinguishing feature is the *way* they learn. They need far less details and fewer repeated instructions. They are and must be very active in the learning process. They easily learn that the process is the *path*, not the *goal* of learning.

To teach them we must understand their characteristics which they bring to learning. The following is a brief list of some of their learning characteristics:

- Learn faster, deeper.

- Insatiable appetites.

- See whole pictures — not parts.

- Divergent thinkers — bring facts together.

- Vary in interest.

- See patterns.

- Seem to learn effortlessly.

- Problem solvers.

- Need a facilitator.

Gifted students bring a deeper perspective to the same projects. We must deal with the nature of their intelligence rather than the level of their intelligence.

With their unusual characteristics also come unique problems. We assume that they are independent learners. **THEY ARE NOT!** They are very interested in learning, but they are not independent, they need guidance. Studies have shown that gifted students left unchallenged, become average students in a short period of time. They don't *remain* average if someone finds the key to teach them differently. They spend the majority of their time in the regular classroom so it is important that instructional adaptations be made in the regular education program for the unique instructional needs of the gifted. Intelligence is not static; it is capable of both increasing and decreasing.

Another problem that we come across when teaching them is that because the gifted child can often solve problems at the abstract level, he may lose some of the values that work could develop. Consequently, the gifted child

needs to learn that the knowing and the doing are two different things. He needs to make himself go through the process so that when he encounters a problem too hard even for him he will know the steps to take to arrive at a solution.

Research has shown us that twenty percent of any school population needs special education. Ten percent are slow learners or students with special problems and they are taught differently than the average. Ten percent are students with high I.Q.'s and yet their education, for the most part, is the same as the average. Working below their potential in a regular classroom

deteriorates their above average abilities.

Christian educators must make sure that the gifted children in their classes are developing all of their God-given academic talents rather than coasting through an unchallenging school curriculum.

Being gifted affects both the children who are gifted and those around them. Gifted students must learn through experience that the reason God has given them additional gifts is that they may build up the body of Christ. Christian educators must help their students see that all of life is service to God, and that in everything they do they must give their *best* to the Master. ■■■

## Our Instruction of the Gifted

Harry Langerak

The subject of the instruction of the gifted has recently taken on new emphasis because of the re-assessment which has taken place in the public school system. The world in its assessment of the public schools has come to the amazing conclusion that the mediocrity that characterizes much of public education has also affected those on whom it has pinned its hopes for tomorrow. The world which believes its

future rests with the gifted is concerned that it has failed them and now wonders what can be done to salvage the situation.

In seeking answers they have, not surprisingly, developed a thoroughly humanistic approach which emphasizes man as the end of all things. They want the gifted to serve mankind and thereby make the world a better place in which to live. With this re-assessment of public education it

is not out of place for us, too, to look at what we have been doing in our education of the gifted.

It is not my intention to suggest that we have failed in our instruction of the gifted. Nor am I suggesting that we view the gifted as those deserving a more prominent place within our community. It is necessary that we continue to give the gifted as well as all our children the best instruction possible.

To give covenantal instruction to the gifted it is necessary to have a foundation of Scriptural principles. Although I am particularly interested in the instruction of the gifted in this article, these principles apply to the instruction of all our children. The basis for the instruction of all our children is the covenant. The triune God has brought us and our children into a relationship of friendship and fellowship with Him in Jesus Christ our Lord. God is our God and the God of our children. He is our God in Christ with whom He has established His covenant. As such Christ is the Head of His church and of all creation. Through the work of Christ we and our children are reconciled to God and made friend-servants to serve and glorify Him. Because of this relationship the command of God comes to parents to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord. As teachers who stand in

the place of parents this same command comes to us. This command must be our motivation also in the instruction of the gifted. God promises to bless God-honoring, God-fearing, and God-glorifying instruction for all our children including the gifted.

The goal of our instruction is the mature man and woman of God living in the world using their gifts and talents as God's friend-servants, loving and serving God in all their earthly life. Yet, this is not all, for this earth will pass away. We must further instruct our children to live in the new heavens and earth as kings under Christ. (See Deut. 6; Ps. 78; II Tim. 3.) The prayer in our Baptism Form emphasizes the goal of instruction. "That they live in all righteousness, under our only Teacher, King and High Priest, Jesus Christ, and that (they) may manfully fight against and overcome sin, the devil and his whole dominion, to the end that they may eternally praise and magnify Thee and Thy Son Jesus Christ together with the Holy Ghost, the one only true God."

Using this basis and goal there are some important Scriptural ideas to emphasize in our instruction of the gifted. This is not to say we should not emphasize these truths in the instruction of all our children, but the gifted have particular spiritual pitfalls



which are peculiar to them. Therefore, we instruct them to seek first the kingdom of heaven. They must understand the kingdom to be the spiritual kingdom of which they are partakers by the regenerating grace of Christ. The seeking of the heavenly kingdom is a spiritual seeking in which they submit themselves to the Word of God. The seeking first of the kingdom is not a first in a list of priorities, but is a first which is foremost and always with all their gifts and abilities. Our instruction is contrary to the teaching of the world that its gifted make our world a better place to live. We must always instruct our children to be pilgrims and strangers passing through a desert wasteland warning them against pounding their tent stakes too deeply.

Another Scriptural truth which needs emphasis in our instruction is that the gifts of the gifted are given to them by God. We must never talk about the giftedness of the gifted without talking about the Maker who gave their gifts. "All that I am I owe to Thee; Thy wisdom, Lord, has fashioned me." Closely connected is God's demand of all His children to use their abilities to His service and to His glory. Yet it is more than a command, for we must lead in our instruction to a willingness of God's children to use their gifts out of gratitude and thanksgiving

for the gift of salvation.

Further, the gifted need instruction about their membership by grace in Christ's body, the church. Christ is the Head of the body, and it is the duty of its members to submit themselves to Him and use their abilities in the service of His church and for the advantage and salvation of the other members. As members of Christ's body, they are not isolated individuals able to do as they please, but all Christ's members must seek the well-being of the body. Also, to be a member of Christ's body is to take the yoke of Christ. Implied is the limiting of personal ambitions. The gifted can be very ambitious for self and are esteemed by the world as world-shakers. Natural man brushes off this yoke as impossible and grievous to be born. Our instruction will be that God's grace alone will allow the gifted to say with Christ, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." The gifted child of God will limit himself to those tasks and places where Christ's church is evident in its purest manifestation. He will limit where he gets an education for the same reason.

Further, we will instruct the gifted as members of Christ's body to be servants of Christ and of one another. In John 13:14 Jesus said, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your

feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet." By God's grace the gifted are given humility to be servants of Christ. Yet, as in all of us, it is but a small beginning of the new obedience. Therefore, as teachers we must nurture the gifted in this small beginning, guiding them not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. Recognizing their great gifts it is easy for teachers to forget the calling to serve Christ and direct them into selfish intellectual pursuits by emphasizing the great opportunities that exist in fields of high pay and prestige. We can also encourage selfish pursuits by placing much importance on their abilities, thereby fostering intellectual pride and arrogance to the point where the gifted find the sphere of the church to be confining. Instruction in humility demands an example of humility and prayerful bringing of mutual needs before God's throne of grace. Only in this way will the student and the teacher be willing to serve Christ and His church, and the gifted will be instructed and warned by I Corinthians 1:26, 27, 29: "Ye see your calling brethren, how that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise... that no flesh should glory in his presence."

We must encourage the gifted in the development and use of their abilities. This involves much effort which is not easy for the flesh. We encourage them by the care and concern we show for their efforts and abilities and by placing before them a high standard of excellence. It is also important that the other students receive the gifted as fellow saints. It is easy for those who are less gifted to mock and ridicule the gifted. Peer pressure can degrade academic excellence with the result that the gifted hate themselves and their ability and refuse to use it properly. It is important for parents and teachers to provide a proper atmosphere in the home and school for the proper exercise of intellectual ability.

Discipline is another Scriptural truth necessary in our instruction of the gifted because the gifted no less than all our children are sinful saints and, therefore, need direction in being disciples of Christ. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15). Our children need the rod of discipline to give guidance and direction in learning the will of God and submitting to that will. In our day an insidious evil under the guise of good education is being promoted. It is said, "Let them be their own man." "Let them be free thinkers doing what they

use the ancient landmarks as their guideposts. We must through loving, patient, caring discipline bring them under the yoke of Christ in order that "our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace" (Ps. 144: 12).

There is no consistent correlation between a child's intellectual capacity and his lifelong level of achievement. This does not mean that a brilliant mind and good marks in school are liabilities. It simply means that we should have the same level of love and optimism for the low achiever as we have for the high achiever. Every individual is worthwhile and should be highly treasured as a special creation of God. One child should not be more highly valued than another child.

taken from *Christian School Comment*  
by Dr. Paul A. Kienel

# BULLETIN BOARD

As we mentioned last time, the pictures of Lynden's graduating classes arrived too late for posting on the Bulletin Board in our summer issue. So did the picture of the Covenant Christian High School (G.R.) graduates. We'll make an exception and place them here. Lynden, by the way, being the only one of our schools to have a K-12 system, is the only one also to have two graduating classes, an 8th grade and a 12th grade. So, a bit belatedly, here they are.



*Covenant Christian School, Lynden, Washington*  
*front: Ronald Kaptein, Patricia Howard, Marsha deBoer, William Smit*  
*back: Miss Feenstra, Mr. Hilton, Mr. Adams,*  
*Mr. Bleyenbergh, Miss Lubbers*



*Covenant Christian High School, Lynden, Washington*  
*front: Ralph VanderMeulen, Lynn Roeteisoender, Calvin DenHartog*  
*back: Herman Boonstra, Linda deBoer*



*Covenant Christian High School, Grand Rapids, Michigan*

*Front: Doug Kuiper, Dave Hop, Brenda Holstege, Karen Hauck, Lisa Huber, Sheila Engelsma, Jordana Kalsbeek, Lori Bouwkamp, Marcia Van Baren, Heather Kreuzer, Tim Bartelds, Bill Huber*  
*Middle: Dave Kamps, Leah Kamps, Cherie Feenstra, Shelley Brummel, Sharon Hauck, Karen Hanko, Sarah Ondersma, Elizabeth Engelsma, Tricia Kraima, Bev Dykstra, Mr. Langerak, Jeff Kalsbeek*  
*Back: Chris Vink, Scott Bartelds, Dale Vink, Mark Oomkes, Scott Bonzelaar, Pete Bruckbauer, Pam Brummel, Eric Brandt, Pam Garvelink, Steve Potjer, Brad Kuiper, Brad Brower, Mark Langerak, Tim Decker, Sheri Besselsen, Liz Monsma*

## from the TEACHERS' LOUNGE

*After reading Mr. Harbach's own introduction to his article, I hardly dare say a word. Let me add just this: Dave deserves an expression of gratitude for those six years as Executive Secretary to the Board of the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies. As the term "executive" implies, he does far more than record minutes. The Executive Secretary is an automatic member of the Teacher Educational Development Committee, and, as its secretary, he's responsible for coordinating most of the important activities of the Board. The Young Writers' Day, the workshops, the mini-course — Dave had his hands in all of these. And, as with everything he undertakes, he did a thorough job. But it finally got to be too much, what with his position as Editor-in-Chief of **Beacon Lights**, his work as elder in Grandville Church, his conscientious approach to his main calling as a teacher at Adams School, and who knows what all else. Most of the extra-curricular activities of Mr. Harbach are non income-producing. And that suits him fine. His reference, in the article which follows, to a need for raising teacher salaries is not a personal pitch for more money. Never has Dave done that, and I suspect he never will. In his article he gives recognition to the fact that bread-winning family men often have a difficult time meeting financial obligations on a teacher's salary; and he submits that it's unwise therefore to begin consideration of merit pay when some teachers are at a bare-subsistence level.*

*But. . . I'd better call this to a halt, before the introductory notes are "longer than the article." For Mr. Harbach's insights into a rather knotty question, read on.*

# The Cart Before the Horses

Merit Pay and Teacher Evaluation

David Harbach

Being the Federation Board's Executive Secretary for the past six years has been a rewarding experience and one that is not easy to give up. And out of a sincere desire in my heart to further the

cause of covenant education in our schools, I am writing this article to show a few of my thoughts concerning merit pay and teacher evaluation. My experience as executive secretary and teacher qualifies me for this task so that you can benefit from reading this article. I hope this will be enough of an introduction but if I know the editor, Mr. Don Doezema, he will add some of his own thoughts, which I hope will not be longer than the article.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Although merit pay based on a teacher evaluation is not a new idea in educational systems of today, merit pay based on an evaluation is new to our schools. The salary schedule we have used in our schools during our brief existence is a merit pay system, not based on teacher evaluation but based on years of service and level of degree. Our schools have been content with that merit pay system for years. And yet there is something attractive about paying some teachers more money than other teachers on the basis of competence. Teachers who perform their tasks more efficiently and effectively than other teachers should be rewarded for their efforts by an increase in pay. So why don't our schools all add teacher evaluation as a basis for merit pay? I believe that is primarily because in the present situation in our schools this would

be trying to put the cart before two horses: increasing salary levels and developing a vehicle for objective evaluation of teachers.

Schools throughout our nation that have merit pay in operation based on teacher evaluation also have in operation a very high teacher pay based upon the fact that teachers are professionals and should be paid professional wages for their efforts. Common to these schools are teachers' salaries from \$20,000 to \$35,000 or more a year. Because of the substantial level of teacher pay and subsequent financial pressure, these schools sought and developed various devices to pay some teachers more than others based upon an objective evaluation of their performance as professionals. Our schools have not reached this high level of pay, nor do we have in place a vehicle for an objective evaluation of teacher performance, nor do we consider teachers to be "professionals" but instead servants of God who use their talents for the service of the kingdom and who deserve to be rewarded for their efforts on the behalf of parents.

The recent desire on the part of some school boards in the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies to establish a teacher evaluation based merit pay schedule is a good intention and worthy of implementing in

the future. But in the present state of affairs in our schools it would be inadvisable to implement that policy now. The financial pressure with which our schools are presently coping and the fact that around 80% of tuition cost is teacher salary would seem to preclude any idea of a substantial increase in teacher salaries that would bring them to the level where merit pay based on competence could be considered feasible. The Federation board realizes that the level of pay that all our teachers presently receive is low enough that attention needs to be centered on ways to increase the general level of pay for all teachers so that all teachers can support their families. When our schools have increased the level of pay to teachers, then it would be in order to consider merit pay based on teacher evaluation as a device to relieve the financial burden. But to implement a teacher evaluation now to determine the level of pay would put an undue pressure upon our teachers who are silently struggling to exist on current salary levels. The cart before one of the horses is the implementation of a merit pay system based on teacher competence, while the horse is the increase in salary levels.

To decrease the verbosity of this article, from now on when the words "merit pay" are used I

am referring to a merit pay system based on teacher evaluation.

Merit pay is a good policy to implement when a school also has in place a vehicle for objective evaluation of its teachers. As far as I know there is no objective evaluation form that our schools use to evaluate teacher performance. Our schools would do well to establish a form for an objective evaluation of each teacher, so that the teacher would benefit and subsequently the schools. But to implement merit pay before a vehicle is used to evaluate teachers objectively is another instance of putting the cart before the horses. If we really want merit pay then by all means let us establish a useful device for objectively evaluating teachers.

Implementing an objective evaluation of teachers now does not have to wait until a school raises the general pay level of its teachers so that merit pay can be considered. What I mean by this is that developing a vehicle for teacher evaluation is an excellent goal to seek now. Teacher evaluation is not dependent on the need to increase salary levels nor is it dependent on raising present salary levels for the purpose of merit pay. Teacher evaluation can benefit our teachers and schools now!

I suggest two things, however, that we need to keep in mind if



we are to take seriously our desire to evaluate teacher performance. The first thought is that the development of a device for evaluating teachers objectively will understandably mean the mutual efforts of boards and teachers. These efforts will perhaps lay the ground work for implementing merit pay in the future and will insure the full cooperation of boards and teachers in making a future teacher evaluation/merit pay system work. A key to the success of evaluation is objectivity, and unless you involve teachers in the development of an evaluation vehicle, you can not assure teachers that the vehicle will do what it is intended to do. Besides, I can not imagine that a school board would be so blind as to ignore the wealth of information with which teachers could provide the school board in developing a teacher evaluation form.

As to the fear of losing or undermining the board's authority if the school board seeks the mutual cooperation of teachers, I have this to say. A school board does not lose any of its God-given authority in maintaining a parental school and subsequently the rule over the teachers, when it seeks the help and mutual cooperation of its teachers. The relationship of teacher to the board is one of servant to master. And there are Scriptural examples of a

servant not only entrusted with the care of his master's household but also with important decisions concerning his master's wealth. Cooperation between masters and servants is an evidence of the presence of God's love in the hearts of God's people. This same cooperation exists between school boards and teachers when they love each other and work together to fulfill their God-given responsibilities.

Many godless schools have failed at getting merit pay systems to work simply because they did not seek the cooperation of teachers in the development of such a system, thereby alienating the teachers and principal toward accepting and making the system work. An air of distrust developed because the school board did not involve its teachers in the development process. When a school board shows that it does not trust its teachers it is inevitable that those teachers will not trust their school board. Then the needed cooperation of school board and teacher disintegrates into distrust and bitterness and the merit pay system becomes a bone of contention.

The second thought is that all too often a board will guarantee a deliberate subjective evaluation on the part of the principal or board member involved by not having in place a device to use in teacher evaluation. The principal or

board member with good intentions enters the room without warning, sits down, observes, takes a few notes (mentally), then leaves. The teacher has no idea what areas of evaluation were considered, nor what were his/her strengths and weaknesses that the principal or board member observed. This sort of evaluation is very limited in its effectiveness and usefulness, which means it is worthless to educators. Oh yes, the children and teacher did see the concern that the principal or board members have for them and that is important. But let's be honest, the primary reason for the visit is not to show concern but to *evaluate the teacher*. And because no evaluating vehicle was used that the teacher could later on read, the evaluation becomes a subjective evaluation based on such factors as: Family relationship to teacher, personal like or dislike of the teacher, age of the teacher, and years of service to the school. If we are serious about teacher evaluation we will develop a vehicle that will insure objectivity.

When the management of a corporation wants to make the corporation more efficient it sometimes hires a department boss to clean the dead wood and anyone they don't like out of the organization. "Hatchet men" we call them. In a school, it doesn't take too long for teachers to realize that the school has de-

liberately hired a "hatchet man" to clean house of those teachers the board deems expendable. The danger of subjective evaluation of teachers is that it leaves the door open to a hatchet man, whether he is a principal or board member. Objective evaluation closes the door on such a possibility and guarantees somewhat a fair and useful evaluation of teacher competence.

In conclusion, you will notice two horses that need to be put before the cart: increase the level of teacher pay and develop an objective teacher evaluation device before our schools establish a merit pay system based on teacher competence. You will also notice that in the area of salary level increases, our school boards as represented on the Federation Board have been trying cooperatively to increase teacher salary levels and at the same time keep tuition at reasonable levels in our schools. There is a great concern that our teachers be able to support their families with the salaries they earn. When our schools do decide to develop a teacher evaluation form it is advisable that teachers be a part of that development to increase the cooperation of board and teacher and also to insure that the evaluation vehicle will guarantee an objective evaluation of teacher competence. May God bless our efforts in maintaining our Protestant Reformed Schools. ■■■

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