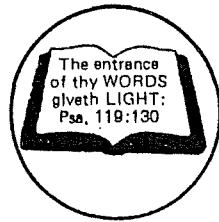


# *Perspectives*

*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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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Special Focus . . . . .	2	
<i>A Tribute to Miss Jessie Dykstra.</i> . . . .	4	✦
Feature . . . . .	5	
<i>The Biblical Foundation of the Family</i> . . . . .	6	✦
Savoring Science . . . . .	15	
<i>Musings.</i> . . . .	15	✧
Dear Miss Koole . . . . .	17	
Parents' Corner . . . . .	19	
<i>Parental Involvement in Education</i> . . . . .	20	✦
Bulletin Board . . . . .	22	
<i>Ground-Breaking at Covenant Christian High School</i> . . . . .	22	✦ (Schools)
<i>Young Writers' Day From the Inside</i> . . . . .	25	✦
Viewpoints. . . . .	29	
<i>Uniforms — Yes?</i> . . . . .	30	
<i>Uniforms — Nyet.</i> . . . .	33	> ✦
Readers' Forum . . . . .	35	
Book Review . . . . .	37	
from the Teachers' Lounge . . . . .	38	
<i>Standardized Tests: Bane or Boon?</i> . . . . .	38	
<i>Thanksgiving</i> . . . . .	41	
<i>Princesses.</i> . . . .	42	
<i>Young Writers' Poems</i> . . . . .	43	
<i>Homonym Jingle.</i> . . . .	44	

## SPECIAL FOCUS

*Since the Protestant Reformed schools are all comparatively young, we have not heretofore seen in them much in the way of retirement from the teaching profession. Now that we've passed the forty-year mark, however, there'll probably be more of that sort of thing. In fact, June of this very year saw the retirement of one of the old guard. Miss Jess Dykstra (cover photo), one of our "special education" teachers, did not return to the classroom in September. Jess has seen a lot of Septembers — and many of them have been as a teacher in one capacity or another. The first such September (i.e., the first as a teacher) was back in 1945. Miss Dykstra had had three years of college by that time, and, encouraged by the pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Manhattan, Montana, she left Calvin College before obtaining her degree and her teaching certificate, in order to teach in the school which the children of our church in that town attended.*

*She taught there for two years, the first of which was in grades 4, 5, and 6. The second year found her, for the better part of the school day, at the head of grades 3, 4, and 5. As if that combination of grades was not already quite enough, she was assigned also the job of teaching geometry and algebra to 10th and 11th graders during another part of the day. Interestingly, among her high school students at that time was a young man by the name of Fred Hanko — a "preacher's kid," who would one day become also a colleague of hers in the teaching profession. Not only, incidentally, did Mr. Hanko become a teacher, he became, at a number of different schools, a teacher of algebra. Evidently he learned his lessons well, under Miss Dykstra.*

*Early in 1947, in her second year in Manhattan, Jess received a telegram from Grand Rapids. Hope School was in the process of being built, and there was an urgent need for teachers. Two of them. That's right, the school which was destined to become the largest of the Protestant Reformed elementary schools had a small beginning — a two-room building, with 52 students. Thirty of them (in grades 1-4) became Jess Dykstra's. She left Fred Hanko to take his Trig from somebody else in Manhattan, and she took on the likes of Mary Beth Engelsma, Gerald Kuiper, Harry*

*Langerak, and John Kalsbeek in the 1st grade, and one David Engelsma in the 4th, at Hope School in Grand Rapids.*

*She taught there for a year and then went back to Calvin to finish up her own schooling. In 1949 she was back at Hope, as part of an expanded faculty of three. The reason for the expansion of the faculty was the increased enrollment. The building, however, had not expanded along with it. So one of the three groups into which the student body was divided had to meet in the basement of Hope Church. That was Jess Dykstra's lot. When asked, recently, what she considered to be the highlights of her career, she mentioned only two. One of them was the excitement of being part of Hope's first staff. And the other was the thrill of moving out of the church basement into a new school classroom. (Imagine how she would have felt if she had been the kindergarten teacher who, the next year, taught kindergarten in Hope School's furnace room! Ah, yes — those were the days, weren't they?)*

*For ten years Miss Dykstra stayed at Hope School. Then she moved on to other things. Having developed an interest in special education, she accepted a position at Children's Retreat. To this day she remembers the names and the personalities of the "special" children she taught during her ten years there. Among them was Carol Pastoor, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Pastoor, of First Church.*

*During her years at Children's Retreat, Jess attended the University of Michigan. After acquiring her Master's Degree in Special Ed. from the U. of M., she went to Western Michigan to study school psychology (psychological testing and related services). With that, she took a new position, as school psychologist for Montcalm County. Ten years she worked for Montcalm County.*

*A varied career, certainly... and one which ended about where it began. That is, not in Manhattan, but in Hope School. At least, in Hope's building. In 1984 she was hired by the Board of the Society for Protestant Reformed Special Education to teach the "special" children of our churches in the Grand Rapids area. A room for that purpose was provided in Hope School. Jess was able therefore to close out her career in the school which had meant so much to her, and with the kind of children which she had learned to love, and with whom she had learned to work so effectively.*

*How effectively? Mr. Roland Petersen, a teacher at Hope School, speaks to that, in the article which follows:*

# A Tribute to Miss Jessie Dykstra

Roland Petersen

Many years ago, at a school event of some sort, I heard a parent admiring a classroom art project. The occasion and the identity of the parent are long-forgotten. The teacher's reply, however, has stayed with me through the years. "Yes, it takes a good teacher to do work like that!" Shocked, I looked for some evidence that this remark was evoked by a "private joke" of the sort that we often share with our closest friends. No, this teacher was serious in proclaiming herself a "good teacher."

For all I know, she really was a “good teacher.” Still, I have often wondered why she felt it necessary to “toot her own horn” in such an obvious manner.

For the past several years we at Hope School were privileged to witness the artistry of a *Master Teacher*. She never had to tell us this; she was, in fact, rather quiet and seldom spoke of what she was doing or how she was doing it. Nevertheless, her product spoke

eloquently of her mastery! Her very special students gave us all that we needed to make the evaluation, “master teacher.”

My only brother was born with *Down's Syndrome*, so I can understand from firsthand experience what it is like to work with the "slow learner," the "learning disabled," the "mentally handicapped," the "special child," or whatever we choose to call them. Whenever I observed Miss Dykstra working with her "special" bunch I was impressed by her wisdom and her patience (which, by the way, far exceeded mine!) in dealing with those whom God in His infinite wisdom, has made "special."

*Master teacher, Jessie Dykstra,*  
I wish you God's blessing, and  
thank you for your diligent,  
patient, and *loving* work done  
with our "special children" and  
for the lessons in patience that  
I have learned from your  
example!

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## FEATURE

*Just over a year ago there was held in South Holland, Illinois (under the auspices of South Holland's Evangelism Committee, I believe) a conference on the Christian Family. The subject matter was of interest to Perspectives of course, for we are a magazine the concern of which is distinctively Christian education. And education, in turn, is a concern not only of the school but most emphatically of the home, of the Christian family. We obtained therefore from each of the three conference-speakers the manuscripts of their respective presentations. Two of them we have already printed: Rev. Slopsema's on "The Role of Family Worship," and Rev. (now Prof.) Engelsma's on "The Happiness of the Home." In this issue we're pleased to have the third: Rev. Carl Haak's speech which dealt with the biblical foundation of the family.*

*A timely topic that is, in these days when the world and the devil are doing their utmost to knock away the underpinnings of the family. Men today fail to reckon with the fact that the family is an institution of God. They prefer to think of it as nothing more than a man-made ordering of society, subject therefore to re-defining and re-structuring according to the whim and fancy of men. The truth is, however, that the family has its foundation in creation, and, more than that, as Rev. Haak goes on to say, it is founded in the covenant of grace and stands in the service of the covenant of grace.*

*It is especially the latter which should be of great concern to us, for it has implications which are most practical. As Rev. Haak puts it, "God's purpose for the family of believers is that it be the incubator, the nursery, where He would cause the children of the covenant to be conceived, born, raised, taught, loved, and guided into all the truth." How about us? Do we need to be reminded that the family is a precious gift of God to the church? Has the business and busyness of life taken its toll also in our families? Does providing our children with a home and with food and clothing, and buying for them an education, take so much of our time and energy that we rarely sit down to talk to them? Is our first concern to leave our children an "example of a heart tender and soft to God," an example also of a "walk close to God and daily fellowship with God"? Do we train our children, from*

*infancy, "not for the earth, not for fashion, wealth, success, name; but train them for heaven"?*

*If we are able to answer those questions only with various qualifications, then this article by Rev. Haak is for us.*

# The Biblical Foundation of the Family

Rev. Carl Haak

As fellow members of the family of God, we gather together tonight to discuss a truth which is most dear to our hearts. There is no institution in this life which so touches us in all our being, brings the greatest joys or the deepest griefs, so affects the totality of our earthly pilgrimage, as does the family. I am not assuming the stance of a psychologist, but being a faithful pastor, when I say that our life in our homes places an indelible stamp upon us. Those things which we observed when our eyes first began to focus as a child ("the manner of life" we have seen in our parents, the attitude, the godly fear or lack thereof) will never leave us.

This is doubly true for us who confess the truth of God's Covenant of Grace. We believe that the God-fearing family is used by our Lord as the nursery in which God brings us to faith and nurtures us in the Word. God, generally, calls His children out of the bosom of believing

families, and uses such a family to bring us up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. For us, who experience the nurturing hand of God upon us in the family, the family is dear.

Still more, the truth of the family is one close to our hearts because the family has eternal dimensions. No, our earthly ties are not preserved in glory. Our Master taught us that in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage. "There shall not be there an infant of days, nor an old man that hath filled his days, the former things have passed away." But, our life now in the family prepares us for our place in glory. We have that amazing word in Psalm 45 that covenant homes of parents and children are the way God prepares us to be princes and princesses in His kingdom. Our lives now in the home reverberate to all eternity.

I choose that as our approach to this vast subject: we will look



at the family as the dear and sacred gift of God to us. She is to be defended against her foes, cultivated in our midst, and loved by every one of us who call upon God's name in faith.

The family is dear to the gospel of Christ! There are few things which constitute a more powerful demonstration of the power and reality of the Christian faith than a well-ordered covenant home existing and functioning under the lordship of Jesus Christ. And since few lights shine brighter than a well-ordered family, it ought to be the deepest concern of every man, woman, and child naming the name of Christ, to see to it that the family is ordered by the Word of God to the end that God is glorified.

And the family is dear to us personally! In the family we learn as a child the Holy Scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **I. The Foundation of the Family**

The family is founded on the wise creative act of God. God made the family, and God revealed that it is His will for the human creatures He had made that they live in families. "In the beginning" is more than just a designation of time; it is God's work of laying the foundation of earthly life and determining its course. "God created the heavens

and the earth... male and female...." And He created the relationship in which they were to live with each other. He instituted marriage — one man and one woman. And to that union of marriage He gave the command to be fruitful and multiply, to bear children who would be reared by parents. God instituted, God ordained, God founded the family in *creation*. And of the family, as the unit in which we are to live, God said, "And behold, it was very good."

The family is not a product of social convenience, it is not an arrangement which evolved in time, decided by man to be a nice way of ordering society. And, therefore, man may not define the family according to his thoughts. If you are to understand what the family is, you must humbly bow at the throne of the Creator and hearken to His Word.

God defined what the family is. He is the author of the family constitution as the creation account reveals. A family is one man and one woman united in marriage — both created equal as God's image bearers, friends of God. But they were not created identical or with the same calling and abilities. The man was created first and was made the head of his wife, as Paul says in Ephesians 5: "For the husband is the head of the wife." The

woman was made subordinate, a helpmeet, taken from the rib of Adam, that bone which guards the heart. And both were taught their need of the other. Adam first had to name the animals to see that as of yet there was no helpmeet for him. He may not view the woman as something nice and additional, but as one who was to supply what he lacked. And the woman may not consider herself some independent creature, for she is taken from man's rib. And together the man and the woman were made one in an exclusive life-long bond of marriage.

To them, we read in Genesis 1:28, came the word of God, "Be fruitful and multiply." God is pleased to bring into existence men and women out of the union of the man and woman in marriage. John Calvin comments that God did not create man as the animals, creating thousands of them, but He willed that we be brought into being through the marvel of birth. Why? So that we might grow up under the tutelage of loving and believing parents and thus be molded to glorify Him. God wills to bring into existence through birth His children whom He has known eternally, and that we be brought into being as helpless and dependent babes, to grow up in the sphere of a home where we receive nurture and are taught God's

fear. And all of this is not some fairy tale, but reality. God made the family in the beginning and revealed His design for it.

"Remember now thy creator" — not just your *creation*, but your *Creator*. As believing families we are not only to nod our heads and say, "Yes, it all began with creation." We must remember our Creator. God has laid down how man is to live. In the family we have God's wise and good institution given for our good. In living in the family as He wills and designs it, we remember Him and live unto Him. God would have us live in families. Yes, He is the God of the orphan and widow. Being single is not a shame, if so the Lord leads. And when father and mother forsake, the Lord will take us up. But under normal circumstances it is God's will for us to live in the family. Not the life of a hermit, but the experience of a family life is God's good will for us revealed in His creation of the family.

But there is more. The family is founded in the Covenant of Grace, and it stands in service of the Covenant of Grace. Our fall into sin did not obliterate the family. Adam's fall and sin twists, distorts, and corrupts God's institution of the home. Man in sin becomes a tyrant over his wife; he uses and abuses her for his own lust and gratification. The

woman has become self-centered, vain-glorious, disobedient. Marriage and the family are corrupted in polygamy, divorce, re-marriage, broken homes, etc. And that is not just "out there some where," but *our* sin and evil nature spoils marriage and the home by evil cravings, pride, and hatred.

But God makes known His wondrous grace and mercy. In His work of gracious redemption, God shows that He will maintain the family. God takes up the family into His church. Salvation in Christ does not mean that God throws out the created orders, that there are no more husbands, wives, children. Ephesians 5 and 6 make plain that in the church the family structure as created remains.

The family stands in the service of God's covenant purpose! The family can only be understood when we see the truth of God's covenant. God is pleased to gather His children from the children of believers. God works His grace in the family! God's purpose for the family of believers is that it be the incubator, the nursery, where He would cause the children of the covenant to be conceived, born, raised, taught, loved, and guided into all the truth. The Puritans were fond of saying, "God casts the lines of election in the loins of believing parents." We often say: "God

gathers His church in the lines of the generations of believing parents." Men say, "What is marriage? Just a piece of paper! What is a family? Just one way of organizing society." Do not talk so exceedingly proudly, oh man! With God's wonder and purpose we have to do. The family exists for God's purpose to create for Himself a people who shall dwell in His presence forever.

The foundation of the family is to be found in God's wise and perfect institution in creation, and as it serves God's purpose to build His church.

## II. The Pillars of the Family

The Holy Scripture gives us certain bedrock characteristics of the godly family. Proverbs 9:1 reads, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars." There are pillars to be erected upon this foundation which both characterize the believing home and define it. Let me suggest five pillars of the family to be set in place upon the foundation we have just seen.

1. **ORDER.** There is a fixed order, laid down in Scripture, which is necessary for the existence of the family. A godly marriage, devoted parents, pious children — specifically the order of a husband and father who is the head of his home, a wife and mother who is a helpmeet and submissive to her husband, and

obedient children.

Our concern is not now to elaborate on these callings, but to assert that this order must be present and that the family depends upon it. Today, everything is up for grabs. Roles have to be redefined according to the trends. The feminist movement, no friend to any godly woman or family, says that the family has to be re-ordered; traditional roles must go; there must be no authority; women must not view themselves as keepers of the home; children's development ought not to be stunted by oppressive discipline, and so on. Beloved in Christ! God orders the home, and that order is not negotiable. The Biblical roles of the family are not the product of culture; the Bible is not the expression of prevailing cultural norms. But the Bible expresses the God-given order of the home! And until God Himself comes and changes what He has written, it abides. Almighty God says, "Children, obey; wives, be subject; fathers, nurture; husbands, love; young women keep your homes." And that is not the twisted male chauvinistic perspective of bachelor Paul, but the revealed and wise will of God for the family. Throw out the Biblical order, and you have broken the foundation on which a happy, peaceful family life can be enjoyed.

Our Lord Himself, in the days

of His earthly sojourn among us in the flesh, observed this order. We read of the young boy Jesus, "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." That is an insight into the family in Nazareth of carpenter Joseph and his wife Mary and Mary's son, Jesus. "He was subject to them" — subordinate to them! Now, who is Jesus, who is bending to the rule of step-father Joseph and mother Mary? The Incarnate God. God in the flesh was subject to two of His creatures. Why? Because it was God incarnate in the family relationship; and so inflexible is the order of the family as laid down by God that when the Son of God lived in the family He observed its order. Children, obey! Wives, be subject! Husbands, love! Fathers, nurture! All these are not suggestions or cultural norms of an ancient era, but the divine order for the families' well-being.

Flowing out of that order is a well-ordered home, a well-structured family life. Not a hit-and-miss, helter-skelter mess of missed meals and members always gone. Structure and order are necessary. This is not a cold, regimented order similar to that of a prison with its guards and inmates. It's the order of love. Set times for devotions, bed-time, study-time, play-time, meal-time—all ordered out of the love of God.

Children especially need this. They need the order of the family and want things to be under the control of wise and Spirit-filled parents who know the charge given to them, who have searched out the order God has given for the family, and who prayerfully pursue it.

2. *GOD-FEARING.* This breathes life into the family. All members, in their place, bow in humble adoring reverence before the Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The family motives and rationale for doing all they do is astoundingly simple: the fear of God. Their greatest dread is to be displeasing to God, and their greatest joy is to be pleasing to God.

This begins before the family is born. When a young man and young woman seek to marry and enter into the state of marriage and begin a new family, this must be before them: the fear of God. Marry in the Lord! The selection of a wife or husband may not be spiritually unpremeditated. If marriage does not begin with hearts dedicated to God it will bring pitiful consequences.

The fear of God must be cultivated in the family. Parents, the most important thing you give your children is not a luxurious home, endowments, etc., but the example of a heart tender and soft to God. The example of a walk close to God and daily fellowship

with God; let that be what you leave with them. So pattern your lives that your son and daughter say, "Dad and Mom fear God. The first question Dad always asks is, what does God say? What does God want?"

3. *NURTURE.* The family must be characterized by religious training. This is what the home exists for: the handing down by the present generation to the coming generation, the wonderful works of God. This is not something which is merely nice, so that we would say, "My children should have a little religion, should be sent to church at least once and learn to be decent." No, this is the very purpose of the home, to provide religious nurture. "And ye fathers, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Exert all your powers into your children's spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being so that the child might stand as a whole man or woman serving God. The first thing to be considered in your home-life is this: How will this affect their souls? To pet and pamper and indulge your child as if this world is all we have to look forward to, and this life is really the thing, and this life is the season of happiness, this is not love but cruelty. Nurture them! Train them from infancy not for the earth, not for fashion, wealth, success, name; but train them for

heaven! To nurture them is not to hide from but to show to the child the grand truth he must know from earliest infancy to the last of his days, namely, the chief end of man is to know God and glorify Him forever.

4. *FELLOWSHIP*. The family in which God has taken up His abode is one of fellowship. God in His covenant takes us up to Himself and tells us His secrets. He would not hide from us the things He purposes to do. Biblical family life is built on fellowship, on talking, on living in the communion which is ours in Christ.

Strong lines of communication have to be laid in a marriage and in a family by cultivating the Biblical truths of communication as the joint heirs of eternal life. Some of them are these: listening, even as God hears our prayers; readiness to drop all and come to the aid of a wife or child in difficulties; a soft word spoken to turn away wrath; forgiveness so that the past and pardoned sins are not brought up again; an understanding eye which sees difficulties arise and deals with them before they reach a stage of crisis.

This communication begins from the head down, from fathers. You can't begin too soon. You begin when that child comes home from the hospital as a newborn. Don't wait. Don't treat that baby or toddler as

something for Mom. Hold your baby; let that child hear the voice and feel the care of a father from its earliest days.

5. *EXERCISE OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUES*. There are certain principles of the kingdom of Heaven regulating our lives one with another. That law is, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." And that law is expounded at large in Scripture: "Forgive one another; be tenderhearted; admonish one another; be patient one with another." Not a day goes by when the exercise of a true, living faith is not needed in the home — a living faith displayed in Christian virtues.

My point is this: the family is the place where first we begin the life of thankfulness, which gives promise for the rest of our life. Before you are able to go forth into the world as a shining light, you must first live as such a light in your home. Doesn't it strike you that the first commandment of the second table of the law (love thy neighbor as thyself) is "Honor thy father and thy mother"? The thankful life of the Christian displayed in his life of obedience to the second table of the law *begins in the home*. If one does not live in sanctification in his home, he will not do so when he walks out of the door of his house either. If one's life is devoid of the Christian graces of forgiveness, love, patience, etc.

within the four walls of his own home, then whatever he may appear to be outside of the home, his life is a fake. Godliness, specifically a life displaying Christian virtues, begins in the home.

### III. Maintaining the Foundations

As we dearly love the family, so we are eager to maintain these truths.

The world and the devil have sought to break down this foundation. Knowing that his time is short, the evil one launches a massive bombardment today. He knows what he is about. Shameless immorality flaunted before God's face, an age sold to selfish pride, broken homes, latch-key kids, rebellion, delinquency, divorce, remarriage — all these are his legions. The State more and more grants a sympathetic ear to the humanist and feminist and comes out against the Biblical family. Pornography, abortion, child abuse, co-habitation, and, not the least of these, the uncovered and blatant challenge that the family as God ordains it has to go! Children are best raised in institutions by experts, not because parents are poverty stricken, but because self is so worshiped and served today that children are shipped out to make way for *me*.

And we are not untouched. The malady is deep. What pain and bitterness in marital strife.

What heart-wrenching agony in wayward children. So that out of the family we cry, "Has God forgotten to be kind?" And from the family we ask with the psalmist, "If the foundations are shaken, what can the righteous do?"

We are called to stand in renewed faith and love for God's precious gift, the family.

The church has the calling to maintain the foundations of the family. As churches we must know that our strength and stability in the truth will be found in the family. This was the conviction of the Reformers and their successors. Their understanding of the importance of the family for the church can be seen in the zeal with which they applied themselves to formulating catechisms and confessions of faith. These confessions were intended for the church, but more particularly for family instruction. The church must preach and teach the family: her calling, her life, her purity. Officebearers must labor with our homes. Discipline must be exercised against those sins which tear down the family: divorce, remarriage, teenage rebellion. Let not the church abandon the family in the face of her many foes.

As members of the family, parents and children, we have the call to maintain the family.

We need to re-affirm our faith

in the God-appointed way of the family producing the holy seed of the church. In this age catered for self, let us hear the call of God, "He that will come after me, let him deny himself." That call runs right across the family. He who will live well-pleasing to God in marriage and the family, let him cut the nerve of self-love. Having children, rearing children, living in the home — before it all stands the call, "Lose thyself in service of my kingdom!"

We need a re-assertion of the priority of the teaching of the home in the rearing of children. Bringing up a family is a divine calling. There is a tremendous dignity attached to fatherhood and motherhood, as well as an awesome responsibility. It is not dull, lackluster, void of fulfillment; but it is the greatest of all privileges and callings God has given: to be entrusted with the children of His kingdom.

We need to be reminded that the family is the real life and happiness for us. It is not out there in the streets and on the go. How much are you at home? Teenagers out; parents out; children out — nobody is home anymore! And what is out there? Everything in the world is calculated to break up the fellowship of your soul with God. The home life is

where the real joy and life God has given is to be enjoyed. In the home God works a work no man can tear down. To maintain the home, you have to be there!

We need to do all in dependency upon God. It is not your plans, your will, your love that can erect a covenant home. "Without me, ye can do nothing." There is nothing we can do in the home without life union to Him. You may want what is right; you may want peace and understanding and a meeting at the cross with your spouse or teenager — and sometimes it doesn't happen. Pride rears up to smash the home, sending it reeling, confused, tormented. We need more vital communion with the Savior — not just the vain folding of hands and impotent prayers, but a begging and crying to God for help. And then arise from prayer to do His will even in hardship.

To the family which trembles at God's Word, walks in His ways, defies the world's mold, looks to the Savior, and seeks to end in the glory of God — to that family, though at times we tremble, weep, and are afraid, comes the Word, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the earth."

Oh may the Lord God dwell  
among us! Then all is well.



Rev. Carl Haak is pastor of our Protestant Reformed Church in Lynden, Washington.



## **SAVORING SCIENCE**

# **Musings**

John M. Faber

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

Yesterday I was musing about God's purpose in creating the firmament, dry land, and the seas. I guessed then that God was thinking of living space for living creatures in His creative counsel. And I thought that these habitats were just right for the various creatures He would place there. On the Fifth Day He did create living creatures which had volitions and desires. They, with those yet to be created the next day, would be called living souls.

Then I thought of the difference between those things created on the Fourth and this Fifth Day. Those were in fixed positions; these were called fish and fowl. Then I wondered, seeing they were created on the same day, what did they have in common. In my musing I realized that their mode of locomotion was a bit similar. Birds fly by moving their wings up and down. Fish swim by moving their fins up and down. The fish ride the water currents; birds ride the air currents — think of the soaring eagle or hawk.

Then I thought the firmament and the seas were first-cousins. They comprise the water world. When driving through a heavy rainstorm, I often wonder where all that water comes from! Are there other first-cousin relationships found? Yes, I thought, birds ride the wave formations of the clouds, and fish ride the wave-moved waters. And those wave-formations in the clouds reaching to the horizon are like the waves raging on the seas to its horizon.

Then I thought of the behavior of fish and fowl. Some ducks dive into and "swim" under water to catch their prey. And their cousins, the fish, can leap out of the water to catch a bug flying near the surface. I thought of the osprey, a high flying bird, which can swoop down to catch a sub-surface fish. And I wondered if it is a coincidence that birds and fish like to eat worms. And is it not an awesome sight to see a robin hippity-hopping on your lawn, then stopping and cocking his ear (or is it his eye?) to find that delicious worm moving the blade of grass? Then watch it grab it and pull it way out, to

enjoy his cold meat lunch.

Then I muse about the great variety of the different kinds of living souls. How could God, the Creator, "invent" so many, and such a variety! Of the fish world I know a few, like the pike and the perch. But of the myriads of varieties in the waters of the sea I must find in books. I read of squids (which can make an "ink-screen" to hide from their enemies) and the octopus and the whale. My head swims when I think that there are 150 varieties of octopuses alone! And, each of them has eight arms, each with 240 suckers to the arm for catching its prey! And I learned that they vary in size from two inches to twenty feet!

Then I thought of the whales, some of which reach the length of 100 feet, and weigh 100 tons. They give birth to live babies which, at birth, are some 20 feet long! And those "babies" suckle for months.

I further thought of the whales mentioned in Genesis. Some were sea monsters, of which our well-known whale is but one. I think of the dinosaurs and all the other "saurs" mentioned in science books; they call them pre-historic animals. Then I mused about the fact that our Creator found it necessary to destroy the earth in Noah's time because the giants in Nature were being matched by giants in the Human world —

giants of wicked men. But then God's thoughts are way beyond my puny thoughts. He knows the end from the beginning.

I thought, God things big! But He also thinks beauty. Musing about the world of vegetation I remembered the stately palm tree with its fruit; the spreading chestnut with its fruit; the peach, pear, and apple trees with their fruit. Too vast to be comprehended by my feeble brain.

Then I thought of the bird world with its kingly eagle; the gorgeous peacock with its long and colorful tail feathers; the flamingo and the ordinary parrot. That type of thinking naturally turned my musing to the fish world. The ordinary gold fish found in my living room bowl is but a reflection of the exotic fish of the south seas with their colored fins and trailing tails of every color. Then I think that I know only of a few of those piscine beauties, but I am aware of the fact that there are an innumerable variety which I have never seen. I only have a tiny, tiny inkling of the vast creation of Beauty!

Strolling through my garden my attention was called to a butterfly hovering around the flower beds. I thought, "Where does that creature fit in?" It surely does not fit in the fowl-fish category. But it flies, does it not? No, I thought, it flits. Then I thought

ience. 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!



QUESTION:

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 work-world would have been my lot!

Fall, 1988

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. The 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, brains, 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? Dr. J. Dobson in his book *Hide or Seek* (which I would recommend for everyone's reading) condemns vigorously the unjust and unbiblical value system that 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 God-fearing 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 of Ephesians 4:31: "... Be ye kind one to another. . ."; but this admonition needs constant reinforcement. Parents and teachers should insist that kindness characterize all relationships their



*writes, however, more from the perspective of the latter, having just recently completed a three-year stint on the board of our Adams Street Christian School in Grand Rapids. During those years he served, at various times, as chairman of the Transportation Committee and of the Education Committee and as a member of the Building Committee. I suspect therefore that memories of 10 PM phone calls, from disgruntled parents, about misbehavior on the bus, or about the bus driver being too early and "going right on by," or about perceived injustices in the classroom, are all still fresh in his mind. And he remembers well what it felt like to advertise a work bee at school. . . and then find oneself part of a five-man work crew (building committee plus two) when the big day (which, regrettably, was usually the evening before the first day of school in September) arrived. For a man who takes the work seriously (and Ed was one who did), board membership involves a lot of hard, often frustrating, work. We're glad therefore to hear, in our parents' corner, from one who knows what it's all about.*

## Parental Involvement in Education

(or Who Runs our Schools, Anyway?)

Ed Ophoff, II

Several observations come to mind when, as a current tuition-paying parent and former board member, I think of the running of our schools. First of all, there is the matter of delegated authority. In an ideal world, all of us parents would like to oversee and supervise directly the teaching of our children. That is our right. In fact, it is our obligation in accordance with our baptismal vows. Unfortunately, however, the little matter of providing for a family and making a living gets

in the way. Few of us have the time to do justice to two full-time obligations. Consequently, we band together as parents, form associations, elect boards, and start Christian schools. For many years, dedicated Christian parents have met their obligations and educated their children in that way in our Protestant Reformed Christian schools.

Sometimes, however, parents interfere with the elected board's operating the school within its guidelines. By challenging and

The other error some parents fall into is more common and more serious. It is that of apathy. Parents elect a board at an annual meeting, pay their tuition, and

■ ■ ■

In conclusion, we as parents should support our board and its decisions, use proper channels to alleviate grievances, and always keep in mind our collective goal — to educate our children in a Christian setting, distinctively Reformed.

# BULLETIN BOARD

## GROUND-BREAKING AT COVENANT CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

Cal Kalsbeek

Saturday, October 8, 1988 was a special day for supporters of Covenant Christian High School in Walker, Michigan; for that day marked the official beginning of an extensive expansion program for the school. The ceremony was led by board president, Mr. David Ondersma, included special numbers from the Alumni Choir and a band ensemble, and focused on an appropriate message from Rev. J. Slopesma, pastor of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church.

Although the ground-breaking ceremony was the *official* beginning, much had been done many months before that made it a possibility. The following excerpts from a brochure produced by the board titled "A Message to Friends of Covenant Christian" will make that abundantly clear:

**Long-range perspective:** "In 1985 the Board established a planning committee to advise them on the long-range issues facing Covenant Christian High



*Board members break the ground*



School. Their report stated that 'the primary longer-range issue which the Board should address in its planning relates to the rapidly expanding student body projected from current enrollments in the elementary schools.' These projections indicate an enrollment of almost 300 students by the year 2,000, which is more than double the school's present size. An in-depth review resulted in the preparation of a Master Plan which would require by the year 2,000 a three-phase building program estimated at \$1.9 million (using current prices)."

**Phase I Building Program:**

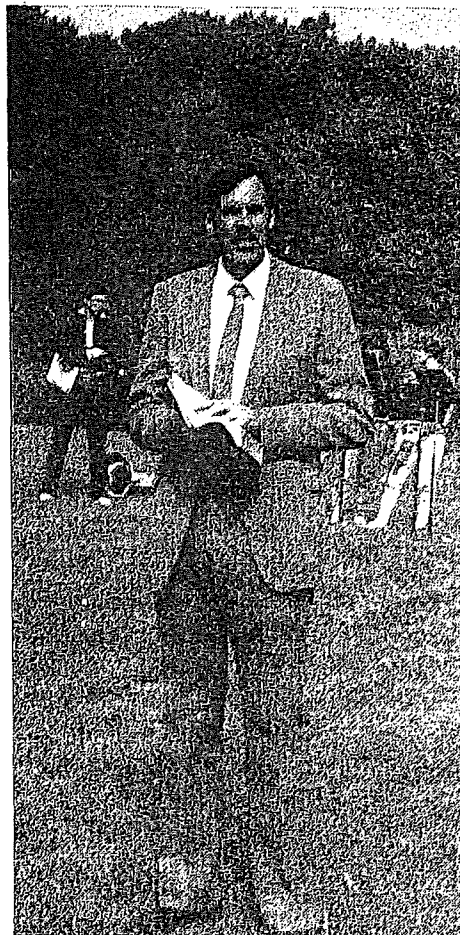
"New construction on the west side of the school building will result in an additional science room, the relocation of science prep/storage between the two science rooms, two regular classrooms, an enlargement of the small classroom just west of the lobby, and additional restrooms. Remodeling of the space east of the lobby entrance will increase the office size and provide better traffic flow in the office. The remodeling will also include a counselor's office, workroom, storage space, and the relocation of the principal's office and faculty/board room."

**REMARKS OF REV. SLOPSEMA  
at Ground-Breaking Ceremony  
(based on Psalm 127)**

We are reminded in Psalm 127

of the precious gift God has given us in our children. In verse 3 we read, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is his reward." A heritage is a gift of great value. This is what our children are: gifts of great value given to us of God.

Our children are this because of the covenant. It is the good pleasure of God not to establish His covenant with individuals scattered here and there but with families. Therefore, as believing parents, we bring forth our children in the confidence that



*Rev. Slopsema delivers address*

God will place His children in our homes and establish with them His covenant. This makes our children the heritage of the Lord, gifts of great value to be treasured by us.

God has richly blessed us over the years in His covenant.

He has given us Covenant Christian High School for the past 20 years. And He has given us good teachers who have provided God-centered instruction for our children in this school to supplement the training our children receive in the home. For this we must be very thankful today.

But, in addition to this, God has blessed us with an abundance of younger children so that, if everything continues on its present course, our present facilities will be much too small in a few years. And so we have made plans for expansion. Today we break ground for the first of a three-phase expansion. Again we must thank God for all the children He has given to us.

But as we break ground today for this new addition, we must also be reminded from Psalm 127 that the success of our work depends upon the Lord.

In verse 1 of this Psalm we read, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain."

Our ultimate goal in this expansion project is the spiritual growth and development of our children and grandchildren in God's covenant.

For that goal to be realized a number of things are necessary. First, we must find the financial resources to complete these building projects. Secondly, we must continue to find godly teachers, who will instruct our children from the viewpoint of God's Word. Finally, our children must receive and embrace this instruction with an open heart.

What we must realize and never forget is that all these things are in God's hands. For our high goal to be reached, God must provide us with the financial resources to complete these building projects. God must provide the instruction through dedicated teachers. And, most importantly, God must open the hearts of our children and grandchildren to the instruction they will receive from their parents and in this school.

We are breaking ground for a building project today. How true are the words of the Psalmist, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

With this before our mind's eye, let us labor not in our own strength. Let us rather rely upon the Lord, asking Him every day anew to bless the works of our hand.

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## YOUNG WRITERS' DAY FROM THE INSIDE

Sue Looyenga

The hazy sky on July 15 held the promise of yet another sultry summer day as the sun's glow began to lighten the horizon behind the Protestant Reformed School here in South Holland, Illinois. One by one cars with bleary-eyed mothers at their wheels rolled into the school parking lot and discharged bright-eyed children clutching beach towels, bathing suits, and workbooks with bright green covers. The hour was a little before five AM, and some of these were children who howled over rising for school at 7 AM. But no one was complaining today. Today promised an adventure: a trip to the third annual Young Writers' Day activities in Michigan and the opportunity for fun and fellowship with students from the Hope, Heritage, and Adams Street Protestant Reformed Schools there.

At 5:15 two vans, two cars, and a station wagon bearing about twenty fourth-through-eighth graders began the two-and-a-half hour trip to Grand Rapids. In the van I was driving, five fourth and fifth grade girls chattered excitedly about what the day

held in store. Those who were "veterans" of the previous year's writing workshop hinted of pizza lunch and ball games and swimming as the highlight of the day. There was also talk of friends made the previous year and the anticipation that some would return this year. And, of course, the bright green workbooks held a prominent place in the conversation, for they held the key to unlock the writing adventures of the day.

These little workbooks consisted of worksheets with various readings (primarily Scriptural) and questions relating to them. These simple exercises were designed to guide young writers to reveal thoughts and feelings about them-



*Mrs. Looyenga checks  
a student's work*

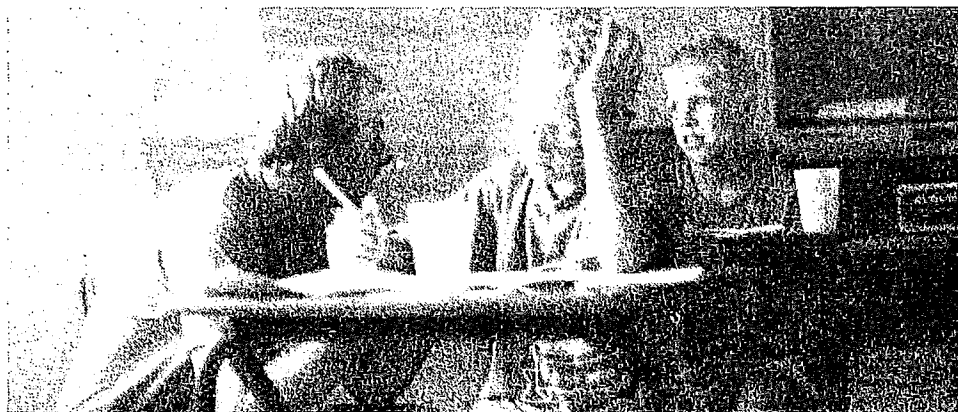


*Giving pointers...*

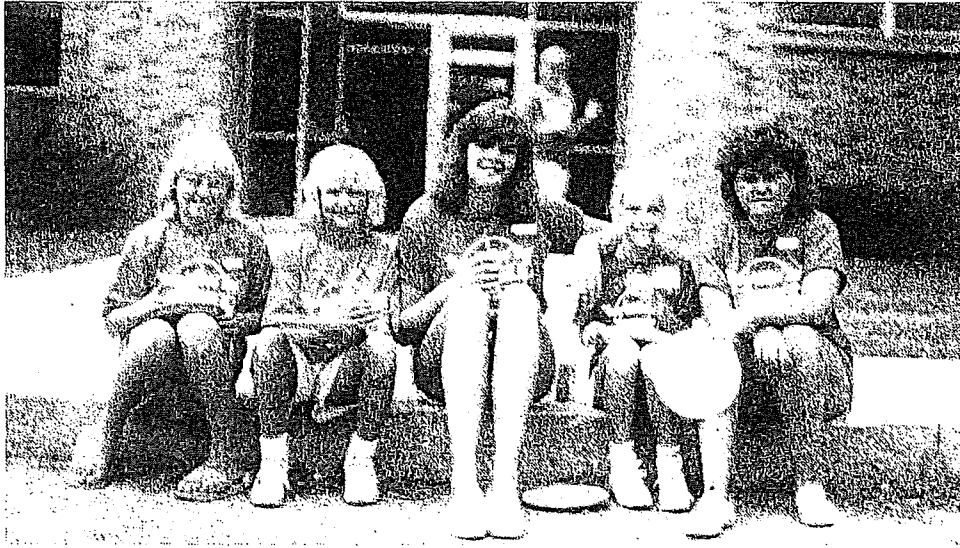
selves, the creation around them, and their fellow saints, all in preparation for the writing activities of this day. The theme for the 1988 Young Writers' Day was "Writing to One Another," and the exercises were to be in the writing of both poetry and personal letters. Handed out to participating students at the end of the school year, the booklets were to be completed on a daily

basis on weekdays preceding July 15. As an added incentive, a prize was offered to every student who had completed the work by this date. (All of my passengers admitted to having finished their booklets and proffered guesses as to what "The Prize" would be.)

Time slipped quickly by as the excitement grew, and soon we were rolling into the parking lot



*... to youthful scholars*



*Noon-time curb-side lunch*

of Hope School. Our watches said nearly 9 AM, the time set for the devotions opening the day, so we hurried inside and joined the crowd of children and adult leaders who were donning bright candy-pink T-shirts proclaiming the day and theme in white. All filed from there into the gym for devotions: singing, Scripture reading, and prayer. Then students entering grades 4 and 5 filed into their assigned classrooms at Hope, and future sixth through eighth graders made a short trek to Covenant Christian High School to use the facilities there.

This was my third year of involvement with Young Writers' Day as a parent, but the first year as a group leader assigned, with a teen-aged assistant, to lead eleven fifth-graders into the finer points of writing poetry and personal

correspondence. As they filed into our assigned classroom, some with light and eager footsteps and a few with a "going-to-Siberia" trudge, I had my first taste of the classroom from the *front* of the room and took a deep breath! They were there to "have a good time writing," most by choice, some because Mom and Dad had made a decision on their behalf. One shuffled a duffle bag between



*Time out for games*

his feet on the floor, perhaps consoling himself that writing was only something that had to be endured before that final bus ride to the swimming pool at 2 PM.

By 10 AM and our first break, however, the atmosphere of the room had changed. Not only were we experimenting with different approaches to expressing ourselves poetically — we were actually having fun doing it. The intensity of trying to find the “right words” was lightened by popsicle and punch breaks, and during the two forty-minute morning sessions everyone found that he or she could really write poetry. Assisted by the notes collected in their workbooks, several even found the task an easy one. It wasn’t long before the call for pizza and pop came.

While lunch was being consumed each classroom group was assigned another as its opponent for the noontime kickball games. The wide expanse of playing fields at Hope School blossomed with pink T-shirts as classmates-for-the-day, previously introduced, now cheered one another on as teammates.

All too soon it seemed, the bell summoned us to the classrooms once again, and we began our third exercise in poetry, the most strenuous one, but attacked this time by much more confident writers. A game intended to stimulate comparison-making started things off with a bit of humor and provided several great ideas for poems as well. By the time the final poetry session had ended, everyone had contributed



*Afternoon popsicle break*

At the beginning of the day each student had been given an envelope to address to himself and turn back in empty and unsealed. The mystery surrounding this strange request was now to be unravelled. Each student was now given the envelope of another classmate and was told to write a letter to that person as a fellow saint in Christ Jesus. Guidelines were given and green books again consulted to carry out this task, and many precious expressions of faith and concern emerged through the pens of these budding writers. Yet one more way to unite the students of four schools in two states contributed to the joy of the day.

Young Writers' Day will, hopefully, continue to be an annual affair for years to come. Not only does it offer 4th through 8th graders an opportunity to broaden and enhance their writing skills in an informal atmosphere, it also provides an opportunity for the students involved to experience in a variety of ways the Christian companionship of fellow saints from our schools. Careful and thoughtful preparation has gone into the three Writers' Days held so far and an even greater number of participants in the future can only add to their enjoyment and worth. ■■■

# NEW POINTS

Fall, 1988

*In our schools a good deal of freedom in the selection of clothing for students is the order of the day. That is, attire is, for the most part, left to the discretion of the student and his parents. And, more often than not, that works well. Sometimes, however, it doesn't. And when it doesn't, it doesn't take long either before someone offers what, on the surface at least, would seem to be the ultimate solution: "Why don't we just have school uniforms and be done with it all?" To some parents, that might be a welcome turn of events, since they have otherwise to cope with the all too common "But, why can't I wear this? Everybody's wearing it!" And the teacher, who likewise can be caught in the middle of things, could with uniforms be freed from the disagreeable necessity of talking to a student (or his mother) about clothing which, though not perhaps improper in itself, is nevertheless not quite appropriate in the school setting.*

*So . . . what to do — that is the question. Some schools, public and private, have opted for uniforms. Should our schools consider that? What are the "pros" and the "cons"? We arranged therefore to have the matter addressed in our "Viewpoints" rubric. Speaking out in favor of school uniforms is Mrs. Jo Dykstra. She's worked for a good number of years as secretary in Hope School (G.R.), so she's had plenty of opportunity to observe the subtle effects that clothing can have on student behavior. Besides, she's reared a few children of her own; so she probably knows, too, what it's like to have to try to help children deal with the pressures which can be involved, for *them*, in the matter of selection of clothing. The arguments on the other side are taken up by a teacher: Mrs. Mary Beth Lubbers. She, too, has had ample opportunity to deal with the matter of school attire both at school and on the home front; so, no less than Mrs. Dykstra, she knows by experience whereof she speaks. She addresses the question primarily from a *girl's* perspective, because, especially from her experience as a mother, she understands that it's the girls who are most affected by decisions regarding what's permissible in the way of school attire.*

*So . . . with that for background, here they are:*

## Uniforms-Yes?

Jo Dykstra

"But, Mom, these jeans aren't frosted. Nobody wears plain jeans anymore!"

"I don't want to wear these jeans; they don't have the right label on them."



Mom assures her, "Don't worry, Darcie, we can sew the label from your old jeans on this pair."

Are scenes such as this characteristic of your home? Or, perhaps, do your children report situations such as this:

"Darcie, I love your new jeans; where did you get them?"

Darcie cringes and thinks to herself, "If I say Rogers I will be telling a lie, and if I say Meijers, Joni will probably make fun of me."

I have talked to a few mothers and am told scenes like this *do* occur. I think you already know that they do.

What pressures our children sometimes have to endure with regard to the clothes they wear! And what pressures are put on our moms so our children can be dressed like "everybody" else. (Really, is it *everybody* or just some who are perhaps the ones who follow the latest trends?) We know it is not accurate that *everybody* is wearing these trend-setter clothes, but some are, and those pressures are very really out there. After all, don't we adults also experience this pressure to one degree or another?

Certainly these pressures have an effect on our children's learning. You know the uncomfortable feeling if you don't "measure up" — it can be pretty hard to concentrate on the task

at hand. What can we do to help?

Well, how about our children wearing uniforms? I can already hear them screaming loudly! "Uniforms! Who wants to wear them?" And perhaps we parents don't really like the thought of this alternative either.

Let me tell you about some schools who were given the option of wearing uniforms (public schools), some who have already worn them, and some who have made a change to uniforms (Christian schools).

*Newsweek*, November 1987, reported on five public schools in the east who are wearing uniforms on a voluntary basis. I will quote in part from the report.

"The initial idea was to get rid of the social stigma attached to not having the right sneakers or jeans. Besides freeing children from that kind of peer pressure, school officials hope that wearing uniforms may lead to higher grades and better behavior. A principal in New York's Harlem claims that test scores have improved since donning uniforms three years ago. The uniforms just help the children feel better about themselves. Parents are already feeling one important difference: uniforms are a lot easier on limited family budgets than closets full of Reeboks and Guess? jeans."

In Washington the cost for a boy to be outfitted with three

pairs of slacks, three shirts, a tie and socks was \$104.00. A girl with two jumpers, three blouses, socks, and a sweater was \$107.00. Some parents reported they have better control of their children since the strife over clothes has been reduced. Since teenagers are more apt to balk over the switch, they began the program in the lower grades. Then as they move up in the grades they continue to wear uniforms.

I called two area Christian schools whose students wear uniforms. One school (Pilgrim Bible Academy in Cedar Springs) has worn them for their entire existence, which is 13 years. The junior high girls wear navy skirts (with a modest skirt length of course), red or navy sweaters or vests with white blouses; and the girls in the lower grades wear jumpers with tights. For gym classes the girls wear culottes. The boys wear navy pants with red or navy sweaters, and shirts and ties (which may be removed at recess). They report a positive attitude and a good learning environment without the competition in dress. They also report it is much less costly, needing a minimum of two outfits. They did not give any disadvantages and highly recommended uniforms as a mode of dress.

At Beth Haven, a Baptist School in Greenville, I spoke with a staff member who was also a

mother of two daughters who attended this school at the time the dress code was in effect. She was happy with uniforms. This school changed from regular dress to uniforms about eight years ago. Their uniforms are much the same as in the other Christian school. Her response to my questions was that wearing uniforms promotes a better attitude, reduces discipline problems, promotes better behavior, and improves the learning atmosphere. Obviously they have no problems with improper dress or with one student being better dressed than another. Also, it was reported to be more economical. She did not give any disadvantages. When the change was made, a few students and their parents were opposed. However, after it was in operation, there were no more complaints. When occasionally they were allowed to wear regular dress for one day, a change in behavior was evident (unbelievable though it may sound). The children also wore their uniforms when presenting programs. Uniforms were highly recommended! (Incidentally, the staff at this school wore the same uniforms, with the addition of blazers.)

I wonder if we parents, especially those who can provide the latest fashions for our children, realize the pressures put on those families who cannot keep up with the trends. What un-

happiness can be brought on the students who can't "measure up"! Remember, the trends are set by the world and are often not worthy to be copied. Modesty is not a consideration in their designs; in fact we all know that the opposite is true. Just page through the catalogs; some pictures almost make one blush.

When asked to write an article in favor of uniforms, I hesitated because I was not at all sure that I was in favor of them. However, since talking to Christian school personnel who have made the change successfully, I believe it could be an improvement. Especially now that we are more and more seeing the return of the short, narrow skirts and the sloppy and baggy unkempt look! I am very concerned that maybe we are on the way toward the problems of indecency we experienced with our children wearing extremely short skirts in the early 70's. I surely hope not!

In making a decision with regard to our children's dress, whether uniforms or otherwise,

modesty must have a high priority so that also in this area of their lives they also glorify God. We know that the dress, also of our younger daughters in the elementary grades, must be modest as well as neat. And who will teach them to dress modestly if it is not we parents? They will be building on what they are taught as they grow older. Our children must show in their dress, as well as in their behavior and attitude, that they belong to Christ. And we parents must do all in our power to promote these Christian attitudes and appearances. Perhaps uniforms would help to promote such attitudes.

Parents, I think the *Perspectives* staff would like to hear from you on this subject. Why don't you express *your* thoughts concerning uniforms? Or maybe you would like to discuss this at a Parent-Teacher Association meeting. I am sure there are parents out there who would like to give it a try. It sounds pretty good to me.

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## Uniforms-Nyet

Mary Beth Lubbers

"...they (Russian prisoners) would be ordered to leave their leather coats, their Romanov sheepskin coats, their woolen sweaters, their suits of fine wool,

their felt cloaks, their leather boots, their felt boots...and after passing through (a different door) they received black cotton breeches, field shirts, camp

quilted jackets without pockets, and pigskin shoes.

" 'Where are our things?' they cried.

" 'In camp nothing belongs to you. Here in camp we have communism.' "

*The Gulag Archipelago*  
Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, p. 583.

This, then, is the issue. Should our parents, within the written or understood school dress code, have the freedom to choose their child's school clothes, appropriate to his age group, season of the year, and personality? Or should uniform apparel be mandatory in our school systems?

To the latter, I say no. Each Christian is a unique entity with individual tastes, habits, and desires. Within the framework of God's Word this is healthy. Moreover, Jehovah has never made commandment about these in-different matters. Why then should we make laws and precepts concerning things not prohibited by Scripture? It seems to me that godly parents (mothers) must exercise their sanctified judgment and see to it that their children are dressed for school modestly and discreetly. . . with a wide range of differences.

For those who espouse the concept of school uniform dress, I take the liberty to ask these few questions:

1. Are stockings and shoes

also to be uniform?

2. Will make-up (with older girls) also be uniform? Cover Girl, perhaps, and not the more expensive Clinique?

3. Will hair be one mandatory length? Straight, I would surmise, and not bobbed, curled, or "plaited?"

4. Will all accessories, such as scarves, barrettes, earrings, belts, jewelry, and other ornamentation, be of one kind? Or, perhaps, banned altogether?

5. Will outer apparel also be uniform?

If the answer to any or all of these is "no," then I fail to see the "social leveling" that I assume would be, at least for the most part, the purpose of uniform dress in school.

Remember, too, there are literally hundreds of ways to circumvent a uniform dress code, and I am confident that an ingenious student will find all of them. It has been documented that regulation dress is one sure way to bring out a student's creativity with what he can do with a uniform. And schools which require uniforms are plagued with day-by-day decisions about them.

From the viewpoint of a teacher I can make this observation. I rarely, if ever, can detail a child's wardrobe on a given day, but I can remember if a child is groomed and clean, I do observe



before, but the Summer '88 issue nearly did it. It's a very special issue dealing with difficult-to-teach students. Very few parents out there are even aware of or interested in the problem because they don't experience it in their families. This issue of *Perspectives* has been extremely uplifting to me as a parent — mainly because now I know for sure that there are some (let's hope *most*) teachers in our schools who recognize this very frustrating and complex problem and are finding ways of overcoming the difficulties by using different ways of explaining academic concepts and determining how well these students are retaining and can use the material taught, without labeling them as "lazy" or "don't care."

Few people realize the problems also encountered at home when these children return after school with loads of unfinished work to complete and their school days are extended by 2-3 hours (or more) — and weekends, too. This is *normal* for these children (but how *necessary*?) and creates an extremely tense situation in the family life. I prayerfully hope that each and every teacher from kindergarten through high school is fully aware of children with these problems and is not too intent on requiring all the students to perform in the same way academically, or too intent

on getting every day's lesson plan completed on time at someone else's expense.

It seems that often times a child is intensively supported in the primary grades, but as he gets older the support diminishes to a point where, by the time he reaches junior high, it is assumed that he doesn't need the reaching out by the teacher and he must be fully responsible for himself. Granted, the maturing process is such that the ability to assume responsibility usually *does* come with age; but if a child has had problems as he climbed up the academic ladder, those problems generally will persist in the upper and secondary grades. *Don't leave them to do it alone.*

Educate, by your attitude and your words, all the other children in the class so they can help the slower children and not ridicule them — all through their school careers. Personally, I hope the teachers' lounge is rarely used just for sitting, or that any teacher sits alone in his classroom at any break times. Avail yourselves to help other teachers who have students staying in for recess. See if some junior high students would like to help younger ones instead of standing around with nothing to do at recess. Form a caring network of people throughout the school. Be outside at all opportunities with the students, teaching and supervising their

bed, asleep at night; and your relief from the physical teaching comes at 3:15 PM. At school, you are all a family unit, since school is an extension of all our homes. A family that doesn't pull together, fails! Never forget I John 3:18: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Teach through God's strength and grace.



child's free time in which he finds opportunities to reduce his dependence on his parents. Television watching produces a "feeling of activity" where there is none. Also, TV and its control, or lack of it, becomes a source of unresolved struggle between the parent and child. For example, with TV present, parents are less capable of interacting with their child directly; they find themselves competing with the set for their child's attention. Restricting television viewing as a disciplinary measure almost always fails because parents are inconsistent and ambivalent about their control of TV and their own lack of discretion in viewing habits.

Marie Winn compares TV watching to drug use, stating that





which measure *past* performance, and ability tests (sometimes called aptitude or intelligence tests), which predict *future* performance. At Adams we use the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills for grades three through eight, together with the Cognitive Abilities Test in grades 4, 6, and 8; these tests were normed on the same group of students. For grades kindergarten through three, we use the Metropolitan Achievement Test. There are several other good tests, such as the California Achievement Test and the Stanford Achievement Test.

Objections to standardized testing come from parents as well as teachers. The chief objection seems to be that it takes away much-needed teaching time. Iowa Basics are supposed to take from two to four hours. However, that does not include teacher preparation time, which is necessary so that the tests can be given exactly according to instructions; nor does it include explaining the tests to the students and putting them in the proper frame of mind to take them. When students are absent, time must be set aside for them to make up what they missed. Moreover, when you try to find an uninterrupted block of time for a test, frequently there is not enough time left to teach a whole lesson, and daily work suffers. No doubt, more than two to

four hours is required.

Some teachers object that they have no use for the test results. After all the time they spend, the tests are scored and filed, and never looked at again.

Some critics claim that the tests are not an accurate reflection of a student's achievement. Items which he has never been taught often appear, making him tense and affecting his score. Other factors, physical, psychological — even the weather — affect it, too.

Others object that the annual cost of about a dollar per student is not justified, since not enough people benefit from it.

Are these objections valid? Is there sufficient merit in standardized testing to counterbalance the criticism leveled against it?

Achievement testing does, indeed, serve a good purpose: it is useful to the teacher in the classroom; it is useful to the administrator and education committee in the school. To be sure, it is not a perfect tool; there may be flaws in test items, stress, illness, or fatigue on the part of students, imperfect test givers; but achievement tests remain the best objective yardstick we have to see how we compare to schools nationwide, as well as to other Christian schools.

How do tests help the teacher? They yield information about the class as a whole, as well as about

individual students. Suppose that many score low on a given test; a teacher will look for reasons, and for ways to strengthen that area. If test items deal with material that has not been taught, that teacher may consider whether or not the instruction needs to be revamped a bit; on the other hand, he may find the material inappropriate, even though it is taught in the nation's schools. If only one or two students score low, that might be a signal for extra help; or, it could call for an examination of their Cognitive Abilities tests, to see whether there is a discrepancy between performance and expectation. By making good use of test results, a teacher can find the strengths and weaknesses in his class and teach to them. It is true that a good teacher is sensitive to the class, and knows whether or not it is doing well; but *how* well, *how* poorly in comparison to others of the same age and grade, can be determined only by objective measurement.

The administrator, too, when he examines the test results, can obtain a profile of each class. He may spot trouble areas that surface consistently throughout the whole school; his attention may be drawn to a problem in one class or another. He can judge whether, in general, the school is well above the national average, as it should be, in math,

in language arts, in science.

And then what? No matter how much useful information one can glean from a test, it does no good if you relegate it to a file to gather dust. It is up to the teacher to make use of the results, and up to the administrator to call a meeting of the teachers, in order to evaluate those results as a staff. Records of previous years can be compared. Has a given class always been "bright" or "slow"? Are there gaps in the curriculum? Are the textbooks adequate? Ideas for teaching can be discussed, suggestions given and received, valuable insights shared. What a gold mine testing can be, if we make the most of it!

We should take the time for that, should we not? Who has a better reason to strive for excellence? Motivated by our belief in God's Covenant, we are teaching children, who will teach *their* children the truth of God's word and the wonders of His creation in the light of it. That truth is under attack today, more than ever. Our children will have to grow up to be discerning readers and thinkers, as covenant parents, as teachers and preachers, as office-bearers, society members, and wherever the Lord calls them to witness. For that they need the best possible education.

Testing is worth the time and effort: it keeps us on our academic toes! ■■■

*From the "teachers' lounge" of our Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed School comes an article, appropriate to the season, written a year ago by administrator/teacher Skip Hunter for the Doon constituency. It has, of course, general applicability; so we're glad to include it here.*

## THANKSGIVING

Skip Hunter

Two days from now is the day set aside for our national day of Thanksgiving. According to our church order our church will call us to worship on that day. We will undoubtedly hear a message from God's word calling for us to give thanks to Him. Then what? With Thanksgiving Day over will the command to give thanks still be ringing in our ears?

How do we as students, parents, and teachers continue to give thanks as we carry out the calling of covenant education? Do we as teachers begin the day with personal prayer asking God to help us to thank Him as we teach the covenant seed? Do we as parents and students begin the day with a prayer of thanksgiving for our school? Each of our rooms begins the day with singing. Many of the psalms are psalms of gratitude for what God has done for us. How do we sing them? Thankfully or grudgingly? What about the school work itself? Are we as teachers thankful for the opportunity to teach the covenant seed in a school set up expressly

for that purpose? Are we as parents glad we have a school which can be a true extension of the home? Are we as students happy that we can learn the truth about God's creation? Those are a lot of questions. What are our answers?

How can we give thanks to God? We all have the old man of sin in us. We confess that our best works are as filthy rags. How can we thank God in our condition? We all by the grace of God can and must thank Him. Only by the unmerited favor of God are we able to thank Him. Only because His Son died on the cross are we able to thank Him for all the blessings He has given us throughout this year. Only on the basis of His love can we continue to expect blessings from Him.

Let us make it our daily prayer as parents, teachers, and students to thank Him for our means of covenant instruction. Let us thank God above all for the gift of His Son, our Saviour.

■□■

*We hear next, out of the "teachers' lounge" of our grade school in Lynden, Washington, from Mrs. Linda Smit. Linda, who is obviously a writer of more than common ability, wrote an article in the Spring, 1988 issue of "Northwood Lights," giving recognition to a class of people in the church who, as she says, are too often forgotten. Princesses, she calls them, in an essay by that name.*

## Princesses

Linda Smit

There are some in the realm of Christ's Church here on earth who are called to be princesses. Not princesses for a short time like so many of our daughters who are soon called away to be wives and mothers, but princesses for all (or most) of their life.

These special ladies can probably be found in every congregation. Children always recognize them as princesses and pay them homage. The rest of us too often forget them.

As children, we gathered around the electric golf cart that a princess in our congregation used for transportation. She never rebuked us, but took time to talk to each of us and sometimes to give us a ride home from church.

When I moved far from home, a princess made me a part of her family and welcomed me to her home every Sunday for coffee, millions of calories, and precious fellowship. (I know that she helped stay homesickness many

times.)

My girlfriend's aunt welcomed us to her home when we were in the area. Later, as her body was rapidly being destroyed by disease, she came to church in a wheelchair. She could barely speak, but she could always smile. I envisioned that soon her wheelchair would be replaced by a throne in a special place for princesses in heaven.

If there are extra special princesses, I would think they are the ones found in nearly every Christian school. They do so many tasks — big and small — often without others thanking or even realizing their contributions. They are not distracted as I am by things of the world and how I may please my husband, but they care for the things of the Lord; that they may be holy both in body and in spirit (from 1 Corinthians 7:34).

I have had the privilege of doing my teaching under the

guidance of one such very special lady. Her deep and lasting concern for her students has always been evident. She has become companion, counselor, and friend. And despite all the times I've come to her for help, I can't recall a single time she has criticized, but somehow she has always turned it into encouragement. (I hope someday I can learn this exceptional gift.)

So many princesses, and I have

known so few. Yet through each I have been enriched. I've noted their generosity and giving spirit at every shower and wedding and time of sickness. I've seen their concern for the congregation of which they were a part and for the whole of Christ's Church.

I think they will wear a special crown in heaven. Sometimes I can see the glimmering of it already here.

■□■

*Not infrequently the work of students finds its way into the teachers' lounge. Some of the work of last summer's Young Writers did just that; so we'll use our remaining space for this issue to give you a sampling of their efforts. Not only will you see how they write, but you'll also learn what they think about homework. Not surprisingly, it seems that homework is not, among students, a controversial issue. They're all against it. Read on:*

I come home from school  
And what do I have?  
Homework.

It is like taking school  
home with me.

I cannot go outside and play,  
I have to finish my work.

Marijo Brummel (Adams)

Homework! Homework!  
That's no fun!  
Let's get it done so we can play.

Alan Dykshorn  
(South Holland)

Homework is a great displeasure,  
Because in math you have to  
measure,  
Because work is for school,  
Not afterward.

Dale Zandstra (South Holland)

Homework is hard.  
I don't like it at all.

It takes up time,  
I wish I didn't have any.  
It usually is plenty.

Lori VanBaren (South Holland)

It takes away my playtime,  
It gets me frustrated.  
And if I didn't do it,  
I get in trouble at school.

Heather Bruinooge (Adams)

Homework is stupid.  
Some think so and so do I.  
Most people don't like homework  
Because it wastes your time.

Chuck Zandstra  
(South Holland)

I sure wish I didn't have  
homework,  
It holds me from my friends.  
It makes me mad to think,  
I have homework again.

Brendan Looyenga  
(South Holland)

Homework kind of gets to me  
When I have a lot.  
But if I put some effort in,  
I know it can get done.

Angie Schipper (Adams)

### HOMONYM JINGLE

(from South Holland's April, 1988 *Reflector*)

These homonyms get in my hare!  
I sea them hear; I sea them theïr.  
Eye no we had them won whole weak,  
But still they look too me like Greeck!

Say, is hour flag read, white, and blew?  
Wood one and won make for – or to?  
Is that a bare their in the zoo?  
I wish eye new just how two right  
These homonyms – and spell them write.

Sow should you find sum errors hear,  
Just take you're ball point pen, my deer,  
And right this verse as it should bee.  
(These Homonyms are knew for me!)



PERSPECTIVES

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