

him right now. Consistently taught that, the child will WANT fewer incentives as he matures.

3. The award should be for a short-range goal, emphasizing a single project rather than cumulative projects. The apostle Paul said that he would work forgetting those things that were behind and pressing forward to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Likewise a child must be trained not to count up his achievements but to deliberately and constantly lay aside the past, laboring in the present with a view to eternity. Setting long range incentives not only abets pride but can also greatly discourage the child if he fails.
4. Even award incentives should normally be given as an expression of parental pleasure AFTER the task is finished rather than promised ahead as a reward. During the task, verbal encouragement and assistance where needed will do far more good, anyway. Awards given after completion of a task serve far better as a means of reinforcement of the reward of praise.
5. It follows that award incentives should not be set up on a regular basis. If Jimmy is given an award for cleaning the car each time that he cleans it, he soon will refuse to clean the car willingly unless the award is forthcoming. Then he has failed to see the award as merely an incentive and has failed also to learn that his true rewards are (1) knowing that the car IS well cleaned, and (2) knowing that his parents and God are pleased if it was done willingly.

The conclusion of the matter which I come to is thus this. Parents and teachers of covenant children, be sure that in our instruction we amply surround our children with rewards, for these are necessary and important. Let these rewards be REAL rewards, of well accomplished work and of teacherly or parental praise, subject to the praise of God as the final reward. And if the child is struggling, if a task is difficult, then perhaps give an incentive award to show that the difficulty is understood and to reinforce the reward of praise...but even then with caution so as not to lessen the seeking of the true rewards. For only, finally, as the child labors for God alone with love for the neighbor will God be glorified in the life of that child.

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## TO TEST OR NOT TO TEST

by Randy Groenendyk

Over the years schools have changed in many ways. Teaching methods, course offerings, and even students themselves are now different from the way they used to be. But one aspect of school has remained pretty much the same: final examinations. Nearly every junior high school, high school, and college in the country insist upon giving them after each semester.

Today, however, exams are coming under close scrutiny and evaluation by many educators. Some advocate the elimination of exams, while others feel the merits of exams make them well worth retaining. It is fast becoming a controversial issue in the teaching world.

If convenience dictated what should be done, then there would be no choice but to cancel all exams—permanently.

Without a doubt no student in the world enjoys the hassles of preparing for and taking an exam. To most students exams are nothing but an unnecessary headache. And what teacher enjoys putting together several pages of test questions and then evaluating the possibly hundreds of tests and assigning a grade to them? For both students and teachers, the time consumed can total several hours—and not a minute can be considered enjoyable.

However, just because something is not enjoyable does not mean that it is worthless or without benefit. If exams do serve a purpose and are beneficial, then they certainly should not be thrown out of our educational system.

But what are the merits of exams and why are they considered so important by so many people? And, on the other hand, what are its liabilities and why do other people argue so vehemently against them?

One of the reasons the value of exams is denied by many is the manner in which many students prepare for them. Few students study slowly, deliberately, and with total concentration. Rather, they choose to stay up late at night or get up early in the morning to do their studying, which is often done very hurriedly and with little comprehension. "Cramming", as it has come to be called, has and always will be very common. The end result of cramming is that the hastily gathered knowledge is forgotten soon after exams are over. Thus, nothing is really gained and the student does not benefit in the least.

A second argument is exams simply are not necessary in some courses because the knowledge gained throughout the year is practiced every day. Mathematics is one good example of this type of course. All year long math students build upon and add to the facts and principles already learned for the purpose of solving more difficult and complex problems. The "pyramid" effect, which requires the student to constantly use and re-use

previous information, makes exams unnecessary for the purpose of reviewing.

A third proposed reason for eliminating exams is this: if the student hasn't learned the material the first time it was presented to him, what would enable him to pick it up the second time around? If he doesn't understand it, (or doesn't want to understand it) why would he "get it" now while reviewing for the exam?

Exams, also, say some teachers, contain far too much material to be covered in just one test. How can anyone adequately study literally hundreds of textbook pages, not to mention pages and pages of notes, and really know and comprehend everything he is looking at? And when you have three or four exams of a similar nature, well, it can be mind boggling.

Nevertheless, there are some strong reasons for continuing exams. The first, and perhaps the best, is that in many courses, especially in the liberal arts field, a "total view" is a must. History is a good example of this. When each event, person, war, nation, etc., are studied individually, as is done during the year, history really is nothing more than a meaningless collection of boring facts.

However, by reviewing large segments of time, as is done in an exam, the student can begin to see not only how all events in history are related to each other, but also the workings and plan of God. God is, very definitely, guiding and directing all of history, and **everything** that ever happens is part of His master plan. And it is only by getting that "total view," so well accomplished by an exam, that the student can begin to see and understand that plan of God. And after all, isn't that one of the child of God's responsibilities?

Secondly, just as surely as there are students who cram or don't study at all for exams, there are also those who study long and hard and are successful in reviewing all of the necessary material.

The all-too-painful truth is, the human memory can be very poor at times, often forgetting a great deal of facts and information. Exams, when properly prepared for, very adequately serve the purpose of refreshing and re-informing the student of significant information which he had forgotten.

In recent years, there have been a few new developments in exams. One is letting seniors skip taking the exams of classes in which they achieve a certain grade (usually an A- or B+). The reason for that is if a student studies hard and learns the material well the first time, there is no need for him to review it and be tested on it again. This may indeed be right and good, but in all fairness, why shouldn't this privilege be extended to everyone? Underclassmen may work just as hard as seniors, yet they have to take all their exams and seniors don't. Perhaps this practice should be re-evaluated.

Certain variations in exams are also

possible. Semesters can be divided into nine week marking periods, with "mini-exams" given after each period. There would be four exams each year, but they would be smaller in content and much more easy to study for.

Or, exams can be held only once every school year. These exams would cover a broader range of material, but would include only the basics of the course, meaning students would not have to worry about the smaller, relatively insignificant details.

There are other suggestions for changing exams, but it really isn't necessary to list them all, for each one is based upon the supposition that exams, as they are now held, are not beneficial and should be eliminated or replaced. The task of educators, then, is to wade through the many pro and con arguments and make the crucial decision on the future of exams.

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# PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

by Fred Hanko

In the nineteenth century an influential historian, Leopold von Ranke, stated clearly an idea that was prevalent in his time: that the sole duty of the historian is to record as accurately as possible the happenings of the past. If this were true, we would not need to discuss a philosophy of history. Before we begin, then, it is necessary to dispose of this idea, which is also stated in a current textbook, "History is the record of all that men have said or done, up to the present moment."<sup>1</sup>

## I. The Necessity of Interpretation in History

In the first place history as simply a record of facts is impossible. The writing of history inevitably involves selection and arrangement, and in the selection and arrangement of materials the historian cannot avoid interpretation. The fact that the historian chooses to include certain materials in his account and to leave out others assumes interpretation of the relative importance of these materials.