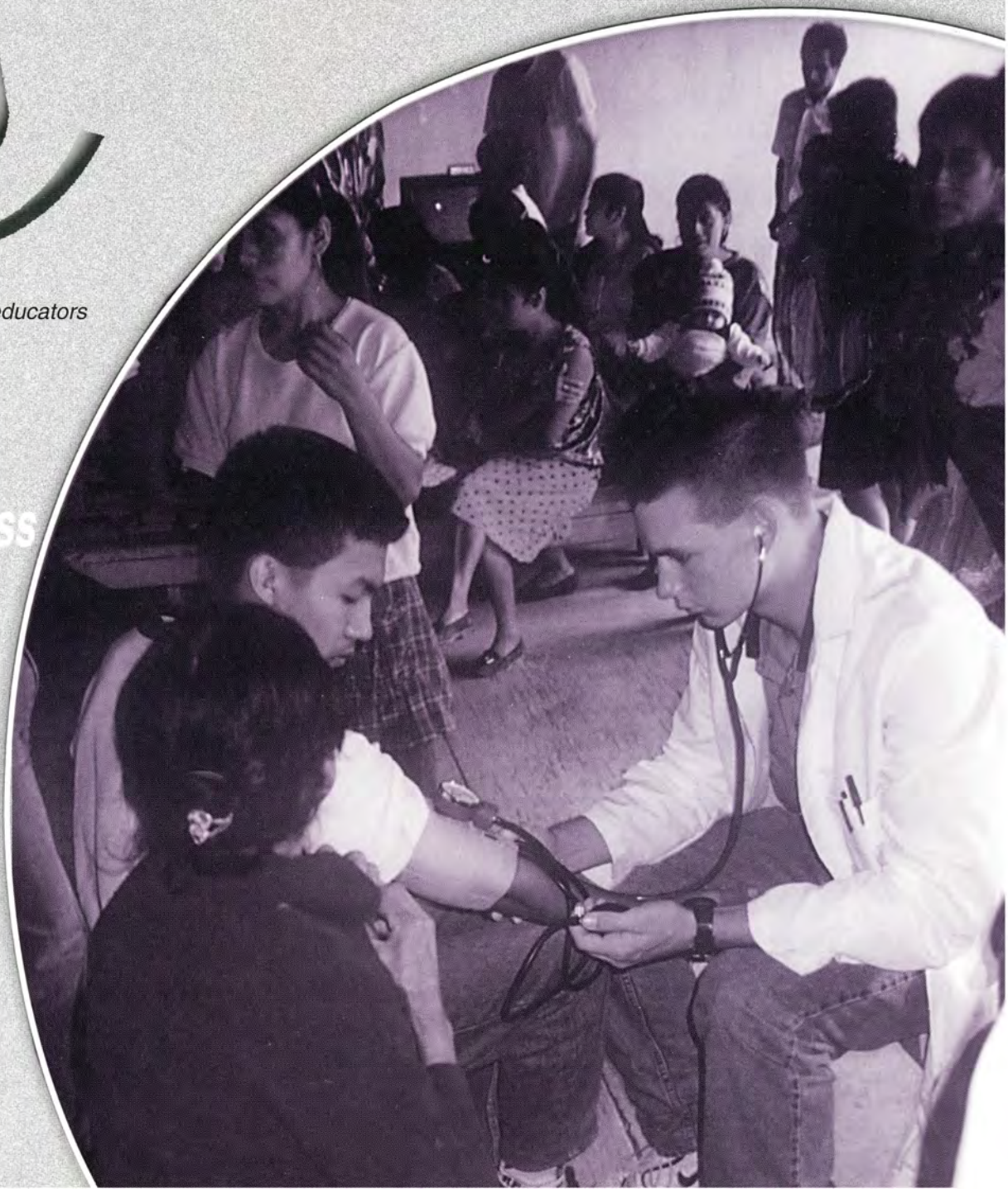
Christian Educators journal

February 1999

Quarterly Journal for Christian day school educators

Cross Cultural Consciousness



Volume 38 Number 3

Editorial

Open Minds, Open Hearts

Lorna Van Gilst

I was pleased to host a group of U.S. exchange students in my English class when I was teaching in Venezuela last year. The Venezuelan students plied the North Americans with questions: What kind of homes do you have? How big is your city? How does your family make a living? How big are the families? What do you study? The U.S. students had plenty of answers. But one question caught them off guard: What did you think of Venezuela before you came here? "Nothing," confessed one Chicagoan. "I didn't think about Venezuela at all until I signed up for the exchange program. My friends and I are pretty much tied up with our own world."

When I returned to Iowa, I was pleased to learn that my journalism class would have international membership: one Kenyan, one Ukrainian, three Canadians, and six U.S. citizens from four different regions. "Ah," I thought, "this group will take an interest in the rest of the world." I was soon disappointed by the North Americans.

"We care," they told me, "but we don't have time. We have too much going on right here to think about the rest of the world."

Their nonchalance frightens me. I am concerned that these white Anglo-North American students have no time and feel no need to know the traits and ways of other groups of people. By their disinterest they assume a comfortable ignorance about other cultures.

Ignorance allows us to avoid responsibility. But ignorance is inexcusable and nearly impossible in this age of Internet and mobility. We may not ignore people of various cultures, either those who come to live near us or those who live afar. God gave to humankind not only the cultural mandate—be fruitful and increase, fill and subdue the earth—but also the dispersion and later the commission to go to every nation with the Word. Choosing to remain ethnocentric is choosing to build Babel anew.

In one sense we need a new dispersion, a going out from our own tight little world of convenience and abundance. Exposure to other cultures enables us to appreciate the enormous creativity of our Creator. Human culture, though broken by sin, gives evidence of God's image in human beings as we seek to be fruitful and fill the earth and care for it. Immersion in another culture peels away the expectations of our own culture that become our idols and keep us from serving Christ as Lord of life.

Teacher's can't exactly dump their students into awareness. We can't ship all of our students out for a semester of off-campus Cultural Awareness 101, although a period of living in another culture is perhaps the best way to nurture awareness. Nor can we satisfy our responsibility by merely collecting money to send afar. Our task is much more difficult than that. We need to change attitudes of separation and self-interest.

We who teach must encourage respect for people in cultures other than our own. We must demonstrate a genuine interest, for Christ's sake, not necessarily embracing a new culture as our own, but being as willing to learn as to teach, giving dignity to its members. If we open our minds to another culture, we can come to know and to understand better why the people of that culture operate as they do. Those practices and attitudes that initially seem unreasonable take on more relevance.

When I first arrived in Venezuela, I was critical of my colleagues who hired live-in Colombian women as servants. However, as I began to go from vendor to vendor to buy my supplies, I came to realize how much time and energy I needed just to prepare a meal; and though I employed no servant, the practice of hiring a Colombian cook seemed much more reasonable to me, even gracious, because the Colombian woman gained a sense of dignity by having a home and a job.

In Venezuelan schools I encountered teachers who were suspicious of North Americans coming in to supposedly reform their system. North Americans wallow in a wealth of educational tools such as textbooks and media technology that are not the heritage of Venezuelan culture. Thus, these teachers had become deeply discouraged by the unwitting advice of North American teachers who recommend teaching methods inappropriate for the cultural setting. I could establish respect from these teachers and their students only by being willing, first of all, to sit with them in their classrooms and experience their conditions and learn from them. They showed me their world, and then they demonstrated remarkable interest in my world. ("Sing your national anthem," they urged me, and they knew the words better than some North American students!)

We have to erase the assumption that we don't need people of other cultures but they need us. Sometimes we think that we have to show the underprivileged people of the world how to be more efficient and time-conscious, in work and in worship. Indeed, some of the "underprivileged" of the world know so much more than we know about sharing, supporting, caring for one another—key attributes of kingdom building.

Until we personally come to know and love persons of another culture, we judge in ignorance, and we miss today's blessing of the cultural mandate. ■

Change of Heart in Guatemala

by Matt Borst

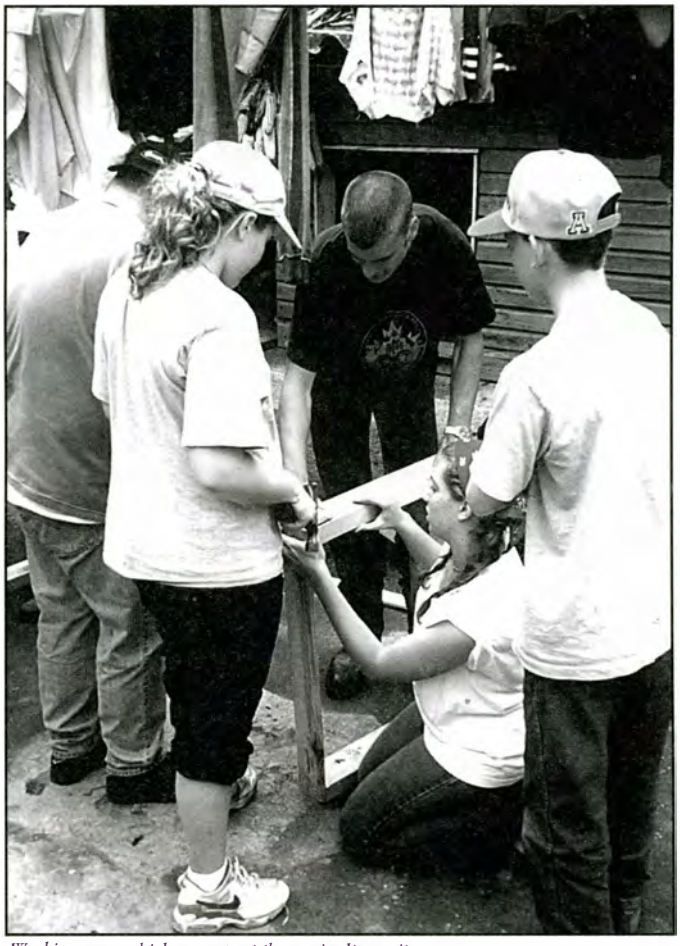
Matt Borst teaches Spanish courses at Ripon Christian High School in Ripon, California.

My students don't consider themselves racist. Racism brings up images of hate crimes, name calling, coarse jokes, and other people—not them. Unfortunately, their own racism isn't obvious to themselves.

For the past two years I've taken high school juniors and seniors to Guatemala for two weeks of mission work. The students who are drawn to this work are generally those who are more open to other cultures, yet they commonly respond at first with a sense of superiority toward or fear of other cultures. "I didn't realize I felt that way about other cultures," they say after a week or two in Guatemala.

We North Americans generally enjoy a very high standard of living. We have a high degree of control over the sights, sounds, and smells that surround us. We are selective observers, and as long as we remain observers of other cultures, we can maintain our persistent feelings of cultural superiority. My students find, however, that as they change from observing to participating in another culture, they can no longer tune out new sights, sounds, smells, or situations. They must confront them, and in doing so they can no longer ignore their biases and feelings of cultural superiority of Visalia, California

Students International organizes our outreach in Guatemala, offering each student the choice of a ministry site in which to work. Students in the medical site work with two Guatemalan staff doctors in a village clinic and observe surgeries in the city hospital. They pray with patients, learn to diagnose common problems, take blood pressures and temperatures, and even give injections. Other students choose agriculture, working with a Guatemalan pastor and village families, building chicken coops, working the fields, and sharing the gospel. Some of the American students teach English in the public elementary schools. In the afternoons they lead Bible studies for the Guatemalan children. Students who choose social work care for children, show them love, and lead Bible studies at an orphanage, or they work with handicapped children and malnourished infants at a hospital. In the technology site students work with an American mechanical engineer to help families in surrounding villages improve sanitary conditions. They work with drinking water sources or build composting latrines. Students in the sports site minister to men in the city prison, playing soccer and basketball with them and leading Bible studies. (Our sports team this year even played the prison guard soccer team in the local stadium.) Media students develop technical skills and learn the importance the media plays in informing people who will never visit places such as Guatemala. The economic development team works with two Guatemalan men who help Guatemalan students set up their own small businesses to learn business and stewardship principles. The team then spends afternoons working with small business owners to improve their business practices, since many Guatemalans have had no formal training in business and economics.



Working on a chicken coop at the agriculture site.

Students at all of the sites are encouraged to build relationships with nationals, using their particular skills and sharing the gospel. The ministering that the students do is very important, but even more

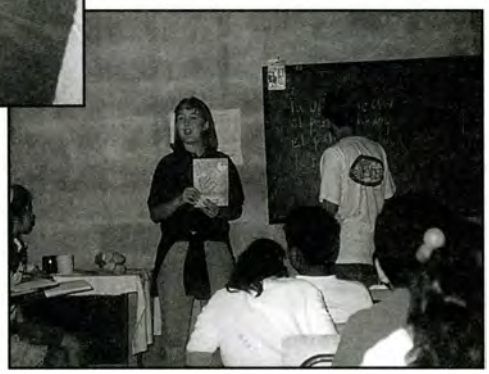
important is their own growth. The purpose of Students International is to broaden students' perspectives on how God can use them, to deepen their appreciation for other cultures, and to give them an opportunity to share the gospel. The staff of Students International consists of both North Americans and Guatemalans. Some are summer staff only, but many are full-time staff. Although the project lasts only two weeks for my students, the staff continues to minister all year in Guatemala, usually with other groups of students. Since the work is ongoing, the students get a more accurate picture of daily life in Guatemala.

Cleaning a leg wound at the village clinic.

I believe experiences such as these are the best, if not the only, way to discover our hidden prejudices and other ethnocentricities. And I believe these hidden ideas stand in the way of knowing God and understanding how he works in the world.

As my students and I reflect on our Guatemalan experience, we notice several biases that come up consistently. *First, we have a difficult time understanding poverty and the standard of living that much of the world endures.*

"Believe it or not, the pictures that you see of the poor on T.V. are real! I always thought that they told them not to smile so that they would look needy," wrote one of my students after working two weeks in a hospital's infant malnutrition ward. Television is a powerful tool to show us hunger and poverty around the world, but by merely observing we still don't feel the hunger and suffering. We can still all too easily walk into the kitchen to get more salsa for the nachos. The contrast between what we experience in North America and what we see and hear about in other parts of the world almost makes the rest of the world's suffering unbelievable. I, myself, had difficulty believing that malnutrition causes blindness; but I'm a believer after meeting a child who is losing his eyesight because of a diet limited to only coffee and a dozen corn tortillas each day.



Teaching English.

A student's eyes were opened and her perception of the world forever changed after spending two weeks working with Wendy, a nine-pound eighteen-month-old girl.

"This is like National Geographic," remarked one of my students. "No, this is National Geographic," responded her Guatemalan group leader. When we put names and experiences with those faces on television, we understand that our North American standard of living is abnormal, and stories like those of Hurricane Mitch will never cease.

Another bias we find is that *we North Americans tend to think we must "bring" God and his blessings to other places.* A common response to understanding needs is to want to fix them. While that response is good, it can lead to a feeling that we must bring God to the rest of the world. Then we are shocked to find that no matter where we go, God is already there. God's chosen nation cannot be located on a map of the western hemisphere—it is located globally, in his people's hearts. Months after our last outreach, one student wrote, "I was so excited to go at the beginning of the trip and was looking forward to the next two weeks. The trouble was that I had the wrong attitude for the first week. I felt like I was better than the Guatemalan people because I was demonstrating my faith by sacrificing my time to go to them. . . . That missions trip changed all bias I ever had against anyone based on race because I now see all God's children as equal in his sight." Recently the students in one of my classes were discussing why we feel as if we are the ones who bless the world. "We send missionaries all over the world," remarked one student. Does anyone send missionaries to the United States?" she wondered. Yes, they do. We are one of the world's mission fields as well.

Our self-centeredness is revealed at this point as well. We plan the trip for months in advance. We anticipate the changes we will make and the help we will bring. Sometimes, however, we forget that it is God who will make the changes, and that he is not only working his purposes through us, but also within us. We are not the constant in a changing world—

God is the constant who changes all of us. One of my students in the sports site titled a summary of his work in Guatemala "Did I change Guatemala, or did Guatemala change me?" His ministry team participated in the baptism service of one of the prisoners. Another student who spent her time working in the orphanage wrote, "God can use a child who needs love to work deep in your own heart and look at your life." God uses these experiences to help us see the world through his eyes rather than simply through our own.

As students begin to see the world more through God's eyes, fears begin to fall away. Initially they tend to keep their distance. But keeping a distance is not the model of ministry that Jesus lived and expects us to live. It is a reflection of a third bias: *we view other cultures according to how they affect us and judge other people by our own cultural standards.*

One student summed up his disappearing fear this way: "My first impression wasn't the greatest. . . . I thought the towns were really shabby, the people smelled, and the people who drove were insane. But after being in Guatemala for a week, I got to know the people better and understand their way of life, and I no longer cared how they drove or smelled. God changed the way I viewed these people. They are just like us and need the same kind of love we give one another. Although we may look, act, and talk different we all need the same God because without him we have nothing to live for."

Economic development team visiting the shoemaker.

Another student in the medical site spent an entire day delousing people. At first she was very scared of getting lice herself, so she kept the Guatemalans at arm's length. God changed her fear. "After awhile I loved the people so much that I didn't even care if I got lice," she said.

It has been said that the longest eighteen inches in the world are those from the head to the heart. We may be able to think past our ethnocentricities, but before we can live as God intends, our hearts must change. Short-term missions offer a great way to open ourselves and our students to God's working in our lives. ■

Playing games at school.

Consider this reflection written in Guatemala by a high school senior after her first week of work in a small village medical clinic:

In the world I lived in—full of greed and "things"—it was hard for me to comprehend what it would be like to live without food, water, clothes, peace. I came here with the idea that I was doing a "good deed"—kind of fulfilling my quota of godliness for the year. That all totally changed when I arrived here. I thought that this would be pretty simple, but it was so hard—I was so afraid. Afraid of the people and the diseases I would get from them, afraid of praying out loud for them, afraid of making a mistake when I was trying to help them or talking to them.

I hated it. The people were dirty and some of them smelled. When I arrived back at our house, I decided I never wanted to go back. I realized how totally selfish I was being and I prayed about it. I prayed for myself—still being selfish. The next day was a little better and I did a lot of thinking and praying over the weekend. On Monday I went back with the realization that these people were the real world. They were real people with real feelings and we were the same. I prayed for the people, and I started to see them through a different light—God's light. I could communicate with the people through laughing and smiling. An old woman came in—old, frail, wrinkled and dirty. She was in so much pain—she started to cry and then to weep—asking us to pray for her. I had a feeling that I should touch her. I really didn't want to . . . but I slowly kneeled down and took her small wrinkled hand in my own and prayed from my heart for her—I felt Jesus breaking down all the barriers I had faced before: communication, ethnic and economic differences. We were both just children of God. Christ built a bridge for me right there, between me and that woman. I crossed over from my little comfortable place into the REAL world. God built a bridge between my mind and my heart.

Anthropology in the Classroom

by Todd M. Vanden Berg

Todd M. Vanden Berg is a professor in the sociology department at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

I can vividly recall, as an undergraduate sociology major, asking my major advisor if he approved of my pursuing graduate school in cultural anthropology. He promptly told me that I should not do so. Undaunted and unwilling to believe that his comment could in any way be construed as a personal attack on my abilities, I asked him why. To pursue an advanced degree in cultural anthropology, he said, I would need to get a Ph.D., which meant being committed to years of further schooling, and once I earned a Ph.D., I would be highly qualified to stand in the unemployment line.

My initial thought was that I had already qualified myself to stand in such a line by majoring in sociology. I waited two years before I applied and began a graduate program in cultural anthropology. I have never regretted my decision. I would like to highlight a couple of personal observations on what my exposure to cultural anthropology has done for me and what I believe such an orientation can do at any level of education.

Anthropology, the study of humankind, is a draw for many students because of the exposure the discipline gives to the "exotic other." The nearly universal belief in witchcraft, unfamiliar and mysterious rites of passage, seemingly tasteless eating preferences, and colorful forms of physical adornment are but a few examples of the interesting and alluring aspects of diverse cultural systems. Once a student of cultural anthropology becomes more familiar with the comparative approach of anthropology, the "exotic other" is soon relegated to the common and mundane. Cultural systems that formerly seemed aberrant and odd are understood to be just as sensical as our own cultural system. Students of anthropology quickly experience a demystification of "exotic" cultural systems. Such a perspective of cultural systems is a healthy step toward the acceptance of people from diverse cultural systems.

But, something else typically occurs within students of cultural anthropology. Through exposure to various cultural systems, a student of anthropology begins to perceive and analyze her or his own cultural system from a more critical perspective. The student begins to understand that even through the variant forms of cultural expression, cultures and the people of cultures are remarkably similar. Once this realization sets in, students often begin to assess their own cultural system from a fresh perspective. From a personal point of view, I have found this experience to be wholly stimulating.

By integrating an anthropological, comparative orientation in the classroom at any level, I believe that students can also have this sort of experience, which is largely the goal of courses that I teach in anthropology. The exposure to variant cultural systems and the critical analysis of one's own cultural system is extremely valuable in our multi-cultural society that finds itself in the throws of globalization.

One of the advantages of cultural anthropology as a social science (and there are many!) is that anthropology, under the justification of "things cultural," has felt free to study any and all components of cultural systems. For the educator this openness is potentially a boon. Name the subject and you can be assured that some sort of comparative ethnological work has been done on it.

I encourage teachers to use the diverse knowledge found within the social science of anthropology to expose students to alternate cultural systems. And, within a nurturing and supportive context, use such exposure to turn a critical eye on our own cultural system. By doing so you will nurture your students to be culturally sensitive Christians in an increasingly multi-cultural society and global world. ■

Curricular Enrichment: Off-campus Programs

by Frank C. Roberts

Frank C. Roberts is director of off-campus programs at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

On Sunday, November 1, 1998, it was obvious that we at Calvin College were facing a potential crisis. Hurricane Mitch was rampaging across Honduras, killing record numbers of people, destroying much of the infrastructure of the country, and threatening huge public health emergencies as typhus and cholera began to appear.

Eighteen of our students were in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, participating in the Semester in Honduras Program. Our program director, Kurt VerBeek, and his family were also there. Were they safe? Would the program be able to go on? What would we tell the anxious parents when they called on Monday?

Thankfully, on Sunday evening, we received an e-mail message from Kurt telling us that he and the students were all safe. He described the devastation that was tearing Honduras apart. He and the students were already busy doing relief work. They were helping evacuate people from stricken areas and bagging food for delivery by helicopter to outlying areas cut off by the destruction of bridges. It was a profound relief to us and to the parents of these students to hear that they were safe. It was also thrilling for us that they were helping in their modest way to alleviate the suffering of the Honduran people in the midst of this tragedy.

What, you may ask, were these students doing in Honduras? They were studying third world development in this, the second or third poorest nation in the western hemisphere. They were learning how Christian values can have a formative impact on development theory, on how third world nations can work toward self-sufficiency and seek a way out of poverty.

Calvin College has several off-campus semester programs, five to be exact. In addition to Honduras, locations include London, England; Budapest, Hungary; Denia, Spain; and Gallup, New Mexico. Beyond these opportunities, students participate in about twenty-five off-campus programs offered during the college's January term. A sampling of locations includes France and Italy; India, Vietnam, and China; New England and Rehoboth, New Mexico, and many others. In any given year approximately six hundred students leave the campus and study on every continent except Antarctica, and my prediction is that it will not be too long before a January Term group studies there.

Why do we commit so much curricular energy to off-campus programs? Why do we think these programs ought to be such an important part of a Christian liberal arts education? First because, as a Christian college, we affirm the message of the gospel that the church of Jesus Christ is a kingdom formed "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9-10). Off-campus programs provide unique opportunities for our students and program directors to experience and celebrate the diversity that characterizes the kingdom of Christ, in ways that simply are not possible on the home campus.

Our students in Honduras work with indigenous Christians, they attend churches with them, and this year they helped with relief after the hurricane. In Hungary students study and live in dormitories with Reformed brothers and sisters whose church is just now coming out from under communist domination. In London they live and study at a Church of England theological college. Through these and other experiences students come to appreciate much more fully what it means when on Sunday mornings we confess that "we believe a holy catholic church, the communion of saints. . . ."

Because ours is a Christian liberal arts college in the Reformed tradition, we affirm the study of the liberal arts. Through such study "students are encouraged to develop value judgments grounded in the knowledge of their relationship to God, to themselves, to fellow human beings, *and to the world*, and to acknowledge the lordship of Christ over all . . . (1991-92 Calvin College Catalogue, 6, emphasis mine). Off-campus experiences, especially in other cultures, help students develop the ability to make such judgments, again in ways that would be less effective on the home campus.

More specifically, we have found in approximately twenty years of experience that our off-campus programs contribute significantly to student development by broadening their perspectives on world affairs and the kingdom of God. The professors who have organized and led these programs have been broadened as well. It is one thing to discuss international issues in a classroom in Grand Rapids. It is quite something else to be studying in Jerusalem or Cairo and to have the opportunity to meet Egyptians, Palestinians, and Jews and to hear their versions of what would constitute a true and just Middle East settlement. The same can be said of our students who are near Nairobi, Kenya, at Daystar University. The significance of the bombing of the American embassy

there, and what it means for Kenyans, not just Americans, is something that will be understood quite differently there than in the United States.

Off-campus programs provide opportunities for learning under unusually beneficial pedagogical circumstances, in an environment that provides daily reinforcement through practical application of classroom learning. Students in our Semester in Spain Program do not simply study Spanish in a Spanish setting. They do service learning in Spanish schools, at the local Red Cross, as volunteer archaeologists digging up the remains of ancient Moorish settlements. Through these activities they learn the language "hands on." They also get to know local people and to understand their culture in a way that no book could ever make possible. The same is true in Honduras, where students study theories of development but end the semester by working with a non-governmental development agency, an assignment that often takes them to remote villages. Students in our Hungary program visit such historic cultural centers as Krakow, Vienna, and Prague. Participants in our Spain program visit Granada, Seville, and Madrid, with their magnificent treasures.

Students' cross-cultural consciousness dramatically increases when off-campus programs immerse them in a multi-dimensional exposure to other cultures. They meet not only the so-called high culture of the locations. Many students also live with families and see culture from an inside vantage point as well. In New Mexico students encounter the Native American culture and the Hispanic. They spend time in class with students from these cultures. They study art with a Native American professor from Rehoboth Christian School. They have opportunities to dialogue with the leaders of these communities. Multi-dimensional exposure to other cultures is very much a part of this program.

Finally, off-campus programs provide opportunities for practical engagement. Students on a daily basis are confronted with crucial questions about the application of their theoretical learning and their Christian faith to ideas and concerns of others in unfamiliar places. How do they address their ideas and Christian commitment to the European scene where a post-Christian mindset seems to prevail? What is the appropriate response when a person is challenged by devout Muslim scholars? One of the first priorities, it has been discovered, is to learn what Muslims actually believe. A second is to make sure that as Christians the students understand their own faith commitments well. Over and over our students returning from abroad say that their experiences have been life changing. Why? Almost always they say this is so because their exposure to Islam or secularism or Buddhism forced them to seek to understand people of other faiths. It also compelled them to be clear about their own faith pilgrimage.

"They also get to know local people and to understand their culture in a way that no book could ever make possible."

Over the years we have also discovered some indirect benefits that come with off-campus programs. These courses extend the curriculum and close gaps in the course offerings. Programs at the Chicago Metropolitan Center open up excellent opportunities for students to do specialized internships in business, social work, teaching, and the arts. Such opportunities simply would not be equally available in Grand Rapids, especially when one considers the excellent seminars in the arts and the urban scene that most students take in conjunction with their internships. Language programs offered in Vienna and Paris enable German and French majors and minors the opportunity to study in a country where those languages are spoken.

Off-campus programs have led to a network of institutional partnerships around the world. We benefit from the ongoing good will that our programs generate. We truly have wonderful friends in London, Budapest, Spain, Honduras, Nairobi, and New Mexico.

Our decisions over the years to develop January term off-campus opportunities and our five off-campus semester programs and to endorse another nineteen run by other Christian colleges and the Coalition for Christian Colleges and Universities have been blessed. Not only has student participation grown dramatically over the years; the educational and spiritual impact these programs have had on students has been breathtaking. I encourage other Christian schools to move in the same direction. ■

Global Education—The New Frontier

by Don Oppewal

Don Oppewal is a professor emeritus of education at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a former editor and the present advertising manager of CEJ.

Imagine, for a moment, your classroom bare of maps, charts, bulletin board, and other visuals. Imagine too your students, thirty in number, sitting before you with no textbooks, workbooks, or handouts. Forget also any easy access to electrical wall outlets for computers or audiovisual equipment. Such are the conditions for teachers in many third world, or developing, countries. Most classrooms have a chalkboard, but little else.

What challenge does this situation provide for the Christian school students and teachers in the U.S. and Canada?

Now that the Christian school movement in the U.S. and Canada is in its comfortable middle age, what new frontiers beckon—other than technological frontiers? Isolated, and even insulated, from the larger American society in early years, Christian schools now prepare students well to live comfortably and constructively in this society. Many Christian schools have succeeded in becoming more multi-racial and multi-cultural.

But what of the next century, building on the last? Cross-cultural awareness, especially of the black and Hispanic cultures, presents a great challenge and opportunity to so translate the gospel of Christian education that others see its potential for themselves and for society.

The new, and as yet barely considered, frontier goes beyond the borders of our continent and stretches out around the globe. Daily newspapers and other media trumpet the happenings (mostly disasters) all over the world, and evidence of a global economy is expressed on just about every article of clothing and hard goods we buy. But understanding of what lies behind the news and the products is more scarce. Geography classes in the elementary school and international relations classes in the secondary school are surely a beginning, but they lag a decade behind the realities.

The Reformed view of education has caused missionaries to place schools right next to churches sometimes literally, but always in their priorities. Just as in North America, so too in other continents Christian parents have cried out for Christian schools. Governments in developing countries have been either hostile to or indifferent toward Christian schools. The vast difference between those schools and our schools is, at bottom, finances. While many of our schools struggle to maintain functional buildings and modest school equipment such as desks, textbooks, and now computers, all of these items are lacking within Christian schools abroad. Sometimes lacking even electricity, teachers rely mainly on talking with students, with none of the audiovisual aids we have come to see as both ordinary and necessary.

Those of us who have visited schools in other cultures come back with a burden for the cause of Christian education that exceeds what is felt about our schools in the U.S. and Canada. When missionaries from the Reformed tradition plant churches, the new converts often expect the church to provide their children with Christian education as well. Missionaries offer encouragement and advice, but they are not commissioned to plant schools. Thus these schools are left with the barest minimum to fulfill their dreams of a better education for their children.

Private initiative has stepped into the gap and found ways to lift up schools in countries such as the Philippines, Honduras, and Dominican Republic, to name just a few.

One such organized effort is called Worldwide Christian Schools, with headquarters in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This organization works independently as well

as in concert with concerned Christian school staff members and students. Worldwide Christian Schools calls upon builders and suppliers to donate time and materials to build a local home at very low cost. When the home is sold at market price the money is sent to build classrooms or to improve facilities in other countries. In addition, Worldwide organizes teams of students and construction workers to actually build the schools abroad, thus visibly demonstrating Christian solidarity with them, accomplishing what they could never do on their own. Testimonies from participants reveal that this partnership is a powerful means of increasing global awareness.

Help for families who cannot pay even the minimum tuition required to run a school comes through linking private Christian citizens with one or more of these schools in a student sponsorship program. Presently over 300 Christians donate through Worldwide so that students in a half dozen developing countries get the message that fellow Christians care about their education. Givers can name the country and the school they wish to help. Also, recent programs bring students from Ukraine and from Poland to Christian secondary schools in North America. The hope is that both North American students and those who come will increase their awareness of the worldwide nature of the Christian school movement.

Helping teachers teach is another goal. Worldwide has sent North American teachers to various countries for brief periods to conduct teacher training sessions. Donated teaching equipment, such as typewriters, duplicating machines, filmstrip projectors, movie projectors, and even some culturally-relevant textbooks have been sent and joyfully received by people who have none. North American castoffs become Worldwide treasures.

Sending money and materials from schools here to schools there is one way to dramatize the call of global education. Surely our own students need to be globally minded as part of the world in which God has placed them.

Curricular attention to world politics and global wars provides one way to increase our student's empathy for fellow Christians. A more powerful way is to put a face on global Christian education by linking North American schools with a school somewhere in the third world. When two schools of different cultures develop a sister relationship, then pictures, gifts, letters, banners, and other artifacts flow between them.

Several years ago six secondary schools in Nigeria linked with six schools in the United States: Calvin Christian High in Grandville, Holland Christian High in Michigan, Illiana Christian High in Illinois, Sheboygan County Christian High in Wisconsin, and Western Christian High in Hull, Iowa, and Bellevue Christian High in Washington. Acting through their faculties and the student government, they have in varying degrees provided gifts and communication with their sister schools. One major effort produced a shipment of hundreds of New International Version Study Bibles for a sister school, and now students in Nigeria can have in class what they never had before: actual Bibles to read while the teacher explains.

A second round of money and materials helped equip sister schools with sewing machines and with hand woodworking tools. Worldwide provided reprints of textbooks and teacher manuals to help students and teachers realize the Christian dimension of their education in technology.

A recent effort in Nigeria is focused on a program called "Lighting the Lamp of Learning." Schools in the United States are raising money to buy a generator or to pay for electricity for Nigerian schools.

The untested frontier for Christian schools on our continent is global awareness. Donating money and equipment for Christian schools is a way of loving our global neighbors. Taking initiative to get to know people of other countries goes even further. Christian relationships allow us to see Christ's love and lordship in one another, wherever we live.

Christian Education in the Philippines— Extending Their Tent Pegs

by Henry Visscher

Henry Visscher is presently at the junior high Northeast campus of Edmonton Christian Schools in Alberta.

Prior to the 7:45 a.m. flag raising ceremony, each class lines up single file in the small, concrete courtyard in front of the school. The adjoining street has been blocked off for an uninterrupted opening assembly. The majority of students have come to school by jeepney (a jeep-like vehicle with an extended body used as a mini bus), by a motorbike tricycle that holds up to five students, or by walking. The students, smartly dressed in their school uniforms of white shirt and green skirt or slacks, display a measure of unity and identity. The teachers, wearing school staff uniforms, participate in the morning exercises: singing of the national anthem, devotions, and announcements. This setting is Grace Christian Community School (GCCS) in Calauan in the Philippines.

An organization called BBK, Bukold Biyayany Kristiyano, Inc., in partnership with Worldwide Christian Schools (WCS) in Grand Rapids, has helped establish five Christian schools under the name of Grace Christian Community School, acknowledging that it is only by the grace of God that the schools will grow and develop. The schools are located in Calauan, Los Banos, Pila, Rizal, and Pasay, all of which are just south of Manila.

In February and March a year ago, I had the opportunity to conduct some in-services and workshops for the teachers, principals, and boards of these schools. Most of the workshops dealt with teaching from a Christian perspective and methodology, since most of these teachers have little training in these areas. The lack of Christian textbooks and resources also makes it difficult for teachers to integrate values and biblical truths into their courses.

The schools are built within a walled compound resulting in a restricted play area. Grass playing fields are non-existent in the urban schools, but children always find creative ways to play within the limited space. Marble games, "Frisbee" toss using plastic lids, and rope jumping are all part of play time before class and during break time.

Most classrooms are about half the size of a standard North American classroom and generally seat twenty-five students. One high school class had forty students, with desks and students literally wall to wall. Because of the lack of space, study center and shelving space are almost non-existent. The students are polite, friendly, happy, and generally motivated. A fair amount of memorization occurs, especially of Bible verses and songs. Teachers place a strong emphasis on mastery of content reinforced by academic quizzes and competitions. Academic excellence is stressed partly because of competition for college and university entrance.

Students as young as three years old start nursery school followed by two years of kindergarten, although school attendance is not mandatory until age six. The elementary grades go up to grade six followed by four years of high school. Calauan GCC School is presently the only one of the five schools offering a high school program.

Although the Filipino language is taught as a course at all grade levels, English is the language of instruction, with most subjects being taught in 45-60 minute periods. Character Building Activities (CBA) generally referred to as Bible studies in North America, math, science/health, language arts, and social studies are considered the academic courses. Music, art, and physical education—referred to as MAPE—have been integrated into one course. Home economics and livelihood education is called HELE in elementary levels, and technical and home economics is referred to as THE in high school. High school students are also required to take a computer course. The high school students in Calauan have access to eight computers to develop basic computer skills..

At 4:30 p.m., the students complete another of the 200-plus school days per year, with only a 15-minute morning and afternoon snack break, and a one-hour noon break. It is a long school day. Although the students have a summer break in April and May, a number of students attend remedial classes, which teachers are required to provide for those who need it. Some teachers deal with remedial students on Saturdays during the course of the year. Evaluation is based on exams or quiz bees made up by each teacher.

The Philippine people need little excuse to celebrate, and each year they celebrate the anniversary of their school: Foundation Day. We had the privilege of attending the Calauan school's eleventh Foundation Day celebrations: a parade of floats, musical groups, students, teachers, and board members and a program put on by the students. Traffic came to a standstill while everyone enjoyed the celebrations. It was a great way to promote Christian education.

During our stay the group of forty teachers, five principals, and more than thirty-five board members endorsed the need to extend the tent pegs of their own school community (Isaiah 54:2) and embrace one another by working together for the good and growth of Christian education in the Philippines. Their first teachers conference was held March 7, 1998, under the theme "Make my joy complete by being like minded . . ." Phil. 2:2.

Worldwide Christian Schools and Grace Christian Community Schools are exploring the possibility of a Summer Teaching Experience in the Philippines (STEP) program to help meet the needs of teachers in the Philippines. Such a program would allow experienced Christian teachers to share their classroom expertise and experience in Christian perspective and methodology with a GCCS teacher in the classroom. ■

A Curricular Response to the Issue of Diversity

by Blanche Jackson Glimps

Blanche Jackson Glimps is vice president for academic affairs at Kentucky Christian College in Grayson, Kentucky.

Diversity is necessary for any college or university to prepare students for the culturally diverse reality they will encounter upon graduation. A Christian college curriculum, in particular, recognizes that God created human beings in his image and with dignity. Diversity underscores that dignity.

Cultural diversity encompasses the whole range of human conditions including ethnicity, age, gender, religion, ability level, national origin, sexual orientation, geographical location, political orientation, language, socioeconomic class, physical size, and appearance. Understanding cultural diversity involves gaining a greater awareness of the ways that cultural heritage and background influence values, assumptions, thought processes, and relationships. Valuing cultural diversity is a learning process of moving from a perspective that devalues and discounts cultural differences to a perspective that validates and celebrates cultural differences at the personal, interpersonal, institutional, and community levels.

Researchers at The University of Michigan and Portland State University conducted a study of the attitudes of college students about issues such as racial intermarriage and affirmative action. The sample population consisted of 451 European American students from The University of Michigan, Portland State University, and The University of Florida. Researchers conducted personal interviews with a smaller sample of 41 students. Results indicated that most respondents professed to be open-minded about race. However, when researchers asked respondents to explain their attitudes, results indicated a hidden reservoir of racial animosity and suspicion. American students of European descent in the study considered discrimination and racism as purely individual phenomena and did not think the issues were widely prevalent. Further, respondents negated the idea that discrimination and racism affected the life chances of underrepresented groups in a most significant way (Rzepka 1998).

An institution's focus on diversity should first of all establish methods and strategies for building academic environments that value cultural diversity, but also facilitate personal and professional responses to that diversity on the part of students and college personnel. This focus should empower students to discover who they are in the cultural realm and develop to their full potential. A contemporary liberal arts, biblical education makes deep recognition of diversity in the nation and in the world to serve our students well while transforming them into Great Commissioners in their personal, professional, and spiritual lives. The challenge for Christian colleges is to take advantage of this human diversity.

> "Diversity is both the realization and the affirmation that differences exist among humans. It is also evidence of the work of God."

An important first step is to diversify the student body within the context of Psalm 133:1—"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" (NIV). Unfortunately, statistics reveal that many Christian colleges or other evangelical ministries do not attract members of underrepresented groups (Sidney 1990). Statistics on entering and continuing student enrollment at member colleges of the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges (Fall 1994) further emphasize this minimal representation of students from underrepresented groups. Enrollment in these institutions was 84 percent European. A recruitment and retention priority for these colleges requires aggressive work toward reversing this demographic picture. Without a diverse student body, an institution of higher education lacks alternative views and different perspectives or experiences.

To have a diverse student body is to undergird the value that colleges place upon each individual. To live with, work with, study with, and share leisure activity with people from different backgrounds and ethnicities is to enhance the educational mission of the institution. Diversity on a college campus bespeaks the openness members have toward the differences of one another. We learn from each other in ways we cannot if an institution is homogeneous. The goal is to achieve a balance to the primarily European faces traditionally found on Christian college campuses. The goal is not tolerance of differences but a true embracing of others in Christian love.

However, an institution can't take for granted that physical presence of diversity is enough for positive curricular outcomes. Research from the University of California at Berkeley indicated negligible change in students' attitudes within a diversified student body. This finding leads one to ask why. Interestingly, the reason related to the fact that faculty

members at the institution continued to teach in the same manner as they did thirty-five years ago. These faculty members did not use diversity-friendly instructional strategies.

In combination with efforts to diversify the student body, colleges should undertake an examination of the curriculum to ask, "Is our curriculum behind the times?" Many students grow up near metropolitan areas and regularly have personal cross-cultural interactions that include international experiences. Television, computers, and e-mail are tools that bring the world closer. Our graduates will enter a world that is increasingly pluralistic, complex, and diverse. Christian college classrooms are places where it is fundamental that curriculum focus on cultural competency skills development and include interactions between diverse people or ideas. Christian colleges must not send out graduates who are unskilled in diversity.

Early stages of diversity initiatives on campuses focused on access of underrepresented groups. Today the focus is on the institution and effectively educating a diverse population of students for the society in which they will live (Appel, Cartwright, Smith, and Wolf 1996). In the late 1990s the goal is to undertake course development and other curricular transformation intended to develop knowledge about diversity issues, as well as skills to deal with the challenges of these issues. Courses on diversity topics can lead to a number of positive educational outcomes, including increased student satisfaction with college and greater ethnic reconciliation. On Christian college campuses, these courses offer students the opportunity to explore difficult and psychologically charged topics within a biblical context.

A primary expected outcome of cultural competency skills development is that graduates understand and respect the cultures of others so they can more effectively interact with a wider range of cultures. A second outcome includes the ability of faculty to use diversity-friendly instructional techniques to assist students in understanding, accepting, and respecting cultural diversity as part of the human condition.

How can we create a campus community that embraces all members in their pursuit of academic excellence and success? All academic programs must address diversity issues within the context of curriculum and instructional practices in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Faculty members model, throughout the curriculum of programs, the mechanics of establishing classrooms that are diversity-friendly. The Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities conducted a survey of 53 institutions about campus initiatives to promote racial harmony (Coalition for Christian Colleges and Universities. 1998). The survey identifies two basic categories of ideas: working for racial harmony and integrating racial harmony into the fabric of the educational experience. Suggestions to promote racial harmony include service-learning projects, general educational requirements, incentives for faculty to encourage syllabi development, and test taking strategies sensitive to diversity.

Described in the following paragraphs are five components that I believe are essential for any diversity-friendly curriculum. These include the personal impact of diversity, instruction for equity, use of prior experience in knowledge construction, development of critical social consciousness skills, and establishment of a feedback system.

Personal impact of diversity

Help students view things through multiple perspectives. The apostle Paul says that Gentiles as well as Jews are "members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). One of the first steps in reaching across ethnic borders is self-evaluation and determining the personal impact of culture on individual members of God's household. Defining an understanding of one's ethnicity is critical to understanding the ethnicity of others.

Instruction for equity

Involve students in the decision-making process regarding courses' content, goals, and objectives. For example, ask students to describe what they know and what they want to know about the topic of the course. Administer informal assessments to identify students' styles of learning. Results may indicate whether students best learn with information presented orally, visually, through use of movement techniques, or through group processes. Use feedback from students to assist in refining course content, requirements, and teaching techniques. Incorporate into course syllabi a variety of methods for completing course requirements in order to accommodate different learning styles of students. Within classrooms, implement instructional techniques that encourage personal interaction among students, such as cooperative learning.

Use of prior experience in knowledge construction

It is important that the curriculum draw from and build on the experience and knowledge that students bring to the classroom (Sleeter and Grant 1994). This strategy allows students to construct new knowledge using prior knowledge and cultural experiences. This technique highlights the fact that people perceive the world from the perspective of their own life experiences. Personal experiences of students become the illustrative material for course content and communicate a worth and respect for the impact of culture on learning.

Development of critical social consciousness skills

An oppressive society damages each member. Critical social consciousness skills develop as a result of immersing ourselves in situations in which we must constantly confront our own racism and learn from direct experience. We can assist students in exploring and analyzing the forces acting upon their lives. Affirmation, solidarity, and critique are key elements in the cultural competence-based critical social consciousness process (Nieto 1994).

Andrew Young (1994) describes a personal encounter, during the civil rights movement, with an individual who felt the need to oppress African Americans in particular. This individual bragged on national television, "I'm a good Christian. I don't smoke; I don't drink; I just beat niggers." Instructors can provide opportunities for students to dissect such a comment as a means of building skills in

social consciousness. We must constantly confront our own biases and learn from direct experience. Instructors can assist students in exploring and analyzing the forces acting upon their lives.

Andrew Hacker (1995) related that, in his experience, European American students resisted the idea that they occupied privileged positions in the United States, that is until he proposed a hypothetical scenario in which such students lived as African Americans. Hacker asked his students to describe what they would need to help them in their new ethnic life. Overwhelmingly, his students responded that one or two million dollars would compensate them for this ethnic reversal of fate. Instinctively, his students recognized the unequal access to economic opportunity experienced by African Americans and other underrepresented cultural groups.

As students become emboldened to move beyond their long held comfort zones, the atmosphere becomes conducive to more in-depth examination of how racism and co-dependence have caused traditionally underrepresented cultural groups to maintain unequal positions of privilege and power. Moreover, through exploration and discussion, instructors and their students can actively seek to discover the meaning and value of diverse cultural traditions.

Establishment of a feedback system

Address students' concerns via immediate feedback vehicles such as minute papers and "telegrams." In minute papers, students spend a minute at the end of the class describing what they have learned and what questions still remain concerning the discussion. Using "telegrams," students relay written and oral messages to the instructor at the beginning of class concerning the most critical piece of information from the preceding class session that needs clarification. Faculty members should also use current technology, such as e-mail, or faxes, as means of immediate communication with students. It is often surprising what course issues are puzzling to students. Each of these techniques provides instructors with opportunities to compare the objectives for the class session with the information actually acquired. In the next class session, the instructor can clarify erroneous information or confirm correct information.

Diversity is both the realization and the affirmation that differences exist among humans. It is also evidence of the work of God. Diversity is a goal in as much as we are always moving toward a more representative expression of these cultural differences, but it is also a reality in as much as any gathering of people will necessarily require some degree of individual difference. As an institutional value, diversity marks the positive quality assigned to a plurality of ethnicity, gender, and other cultural indicators among the members of that institution. Diversity is also a challenge in the task of forging a common bond and mission amidst many differences of perspectives. It is the challenge of creating community and respecting the particularities of each member of that community.

"The Year of Ethnic Harvest" describes the cultural changes in the United States as follows: "Whatever the future, it isn't white. Whatever the future, it isn't Western. Whatever the future, it isn't European. Whatever the future, it isn't business as usual" ("The Year of Ethnic Harvest" 1998). A curricular response to diversity involves more than business as usual.

Loving one another (John 13:34-35) is a major goal of knowledge needed to improve society. Consequently, a curricular focus on diversity produces graduates who can live well in a world characterized by cultural diversity. Such graduates not only love their neighbor, but also they become more thoughtful, productive, and reflective citizens. Through a focus on diversity, Christian colleges can more realistically produce graduates who are Great Commissioners, who serve in a manner that glorifies God, who produce unity in the body of Christ, and who can effectively participate in the Revelation 7:9 community—from every nation, tribe, people, and language. ■

References

Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges: Cultural Diversity Research Project. 1994.

Appel, Morgan, David Cartwright, Daryl Smith, and Lisa Wolf. 1996. *The Impact of Diversity on Students: A Preliminary Review of the Research Literature.* Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Coalition for Christian Colleges and Universities, Racial Harmony Council. February 21, 1998. "Gleanings from the 1997 Racial Harmony Survey Responses." http://www.gospelcom.net/cccu/fac-admin/rhccaoa.html.

Hacker, Andrew. 1995. *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal.* New York: Ballantine Books.

Nieto, Sonya. 1996. "Affirmation, Solidarity, and Critique: Moving Beyond Tolerance in Multicultural Education." *In Multicultural Education* 96/97 by F. Schultz. Third edition. Guilford, Connecticut: Dushkin Publishing Group.

Rzepka, Marianne. 1998. "Racist Feelings Often Harbored, U-M Study Finds." *The Ann Arbor News.* January 26:C3.

Sidney, Ken. 1990. "Evangelical Ministries Do Not Attract Blacks, Other Minorities." *Christianity Today.* February 5:41-43.

"The Year of Ethnic Harvest." February 21, 1998. http://www.iphc.org/evusa/culture/harvest.html.

Young, Andrew. 1994. *A Way Out of No Way: The Spiritual Memoirs of Andrew Young.* Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Sleeter, Christine E. and Grant, Carl A. 1993. *Making Choices for Multicultural Education.* New York: Macmillan.

Entranced by Grammar

by William J. Vande Kopple

William J. Vande Kopple is a professor of English at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

I am thankful to David Schelhaas for contributing "Against Formal Grammar Instruction" to the December 1997 Christian Educators Journal. He does English and language arts teachers a great service by drawing attention to such topics as the different kinds of grammars that exist, the distinction between descriptive and prescriptive approaches to language, the differences between standard and non-standard dialects of American English, the question of whether or not to teach traditional grammar, and the challenges that surface errors in writing pose for teachers and editors. His central point that it is futile to try to teach traditional grammar outside contexts of natural reading and writing in order to foster students' expressive abilities.

To respond to that particular point is not my main purpose here. Instead, I would like to respond to an assumption that Mr. Schelhaas and many other writers on traditional grammar appear to make. The assumption is that if teachers cannot find ways to teach traditional grammar within contexts of natural writing and reading to foster students' expressive abilities, then they have no reason to include it in the curricula. I would like to make a brief case here for studying traditional grammar for its own sake, as an interesting and illuminating model of the structure of English and of the nature of language in general.

Where would I include such study? Unfortunately, as the English or language arts curricula in most middle and high schools are currently organized, it would be somewhat difficult to find a place for the kind of study I am proposing. Each spring, while working with student teachers in English classes throughout West Michigan, I visit at least two dozen different secondary schools. While in these schools, I am privileged to learn about their English and language arts curricula. Much that I learn is exciting, even inspirational. But it is distressing to note how little time is formally allocated to the study of language in general or of the English language in particular.

I do not believe that such was always the case. When I started to teach English at the high school level about twenty-five years ago, my department offered both a nine-week course in semantics and a nine-week course in the history of the English language. And I remember that other high schools had similar nine-week courses, usually electives. Today I know of only two comparable courses in the fifty or sixty schools in West Michigan that I have visited in the last fifteen years. What has happened? I do not think that we have lived through a fully deliberate, articulate, and principled rejection of the study of language. I suspect that scheduling problems, national tests, university admissions requirements, or societal fears about basic skills in English put pressure on the kinds of nine-week courses that I mentioned above. I further suspect that in the face of such pressures, people in English and language-arts departments moved their curricula back to semester-long courses focusing primarily on literature or basic skills and simply found it convenient to allow courses in language to slip away from any point near the center of their attention.

I must admit that perhaps the department in which I began teaching was an exception and that across the profession there was in fact not as much formal attention being paid to language as I had thought there was. I also have to admit that there could have been forces other than those I listed above that caused the schools that did have courses on language to move away from them. But in my recent experience it is a fact that few secondary schools offer courses concentrating on aspects of language.

And it is a nine-week or semester-long course in language that I would urge schools' curriculum committees to make room for among their course offerings. Since it would be important to the success of such a course to have students who are capable of abstract thought, I would probably not offer such a course until near the end of middle school or until high school. And if a school or a teacher cannot find a way to offer a nine-week or semester-long course in language, then I would argue for at least a unit focusing on this subject matter (perhaps a unit on dialects or dialects as represented in literature).

Why? I advocate a course on language mainly because language is extraordinarily interesting and important to study. If I spend only twenty minutes or so paging through anthologies of essays on linguistics, it is easy for me to find writers describing language as, among other things, that which lies at the core of our social lives, that which frees us from the grip of immediately present physical stimuli, and that which distinguishes humans from all other living creatures.

Writers producing such descriptions are not usually taking a Christian perspective on language. People with such a perspective, I am confident, would find numerous aspects of language and language use that would spark their special interests. For example, they would proba-

bly be interested in exploring how language functions as a secondary system of representation for humans. In other words, language enables us to give names to stimuli and sets of stimuli from our primary representers of the world, our sense organs. With a secondary system of representation, we can produce finely articulated concepts of ourselves, of God, and of time. (People who lose their linguistic abilities because of a stroke often recall after recovering these abilities that they had to struggle to regain a sense of themselves, of most abstractions, and of the passing of time.) Furthermore, as we refine the ability to learn by relating statements in our minds, we become capable of changing the world to a much greater extent than any other living creature can. In thinking about language, then, Christian students could consider the implications of God's giving us a gift that in great measure enables us to know that we are someone (before the incident at the water pump, Helen Keller writes that she "did not know that I am"), that helps us develop a finely articulated concept of God himself, that enables us to develop a sense of history, and that equips us to be exceedingly powerful agents in this world.

By no means do I imply that there are not many other matters related to language that Christians would find interesting and exciting to explore. A few others that come almost immediately to mind are the almost mind-boggling variety of languages and dialects that have appeared in human history, the powerful ways in which language can serve as either bond or barrier between people, the nature of linguistic creativity and how it relates to other kinds of human creativity, and how our linguistic creativity might reflect God's image.

In the light of the foregoing two paragraphs, I hope that Christian educators can understand how fervently I am proposing that a nine-week or semester-long course in language be added to the English or language-arts curriculum. In addition to topics mentioned in those paragraphs, what else would I include in such a course? The possibilities are numerous, but let me list just a dozen or so: processes and stages of language acquisition, the critical-age hypothesis, language and cerebral lateralization, issues affecting the formulation of national language policies around the world, regional dialects, social dialects (note how much attention Ebonics has received recently), gender dialects, some highlights in the history of English, additions to the lexicon of English throughout history, examples of doublespeak, the nature of usage, and kinds of literacies being called for in the world today. Along the way, I would build in opportunities for the kinds of activities that Schelhaas mentions in his article, such as studying etymologies and playing with language.

In such a course on language, I would also include a unit on grammars or models of language. It would be interesting to spend some time focusing on major traits of structural (e.g. Bloomfield), transformational (e.g. Chomsky), and functional (e.g. Halliday) grammars of English. But if my time were somewhat limited, I would concentrate on traditional grammar. I would do so because this is the grammar that most students are likely to have some experience with, because they are likely to work with it again in the future, because its terminology and procedures are informative for those of other grammars, and because it relates to matters of usage and surface correctness in writing. I would probably present some details of the history of traditional grammar, but I would focus most of my students' attention on how people have used the grammar to describe and explain the structure of English.

Traditional grammar sometimes is criticized because its operating procedure is not all of one nature, but on the whole the grammar is what linguists call a semantic or notional grammar. In a notional grammar, the definition for a linguistic unit is supposed to bring to the minds of all those encountering the definition the very same notion or idea related to the real world. Thus we should know what a noun is if we are clear about what in the real world a noun points to. Such definitions work well if they point to easily identifiable things or classes of things in the world (few students have trouble understanding that *desk* is a noun). But they do not work as well when they point to aspects of the world that are not easily identified. (What exactly does *munificence* point to? What is a complete thought?)

I am not arguing that a notional grammar provides the only way to describe and explain language. I would say, however, that traditional grammar is an old and widely respected grammar, provides a good foundation for the study of many other grammars, reveals to us important things about language, and is very interesting to explore.

In working on traditional grammar, I would not stress memorization of terms and definitions. I would ask students to critique and explore traditional grammar as a kind of linguistic model. I would try to help them become amateur linguists. After going over with them the basic traits of a notional grammar, I could ask them

to examine where within itself traditional grammar is not notional. Even within the definitions for parts of speech we can find examples that are not notional or are only partially notional. For instance, pronouns are usually defined on the basis of their function or what they do ("they substitute for nouns or noun phrases"). And adverbs are sometimes defined in part on the basis of their form ("they often end in -ly"). I would then proceed from definitions of parts of speech to definitions of other linguistic elements, such as the definitions for kinds of phrases, clauses, and sentences.

I would also probably spend some time asking them to extend the grammar. For instance, according to traditional grammar, subjects of sentences are usually defined on the basis of agency. That is, subjects are usually described as naming the agents of the actions designated by the verbs. But it is easy to think of sentences in which the entity named by the subject is not really an agent. What semantic role does the subject play in "I have a headache"? How about the role of the subject in "The knife cut the bread cleanly"? Or how about the role of the subject in "Joel got a new soccer ball for Christmas"? Initially, I would give students such sentences and work with them to come up with words such as experiencer, instrument, and receiver to describe the roles of the subjects in these sentences. But then I would ask them to explore the language to find other subjects that are not agents and to propose good names for the roles that they play. And if they find some subjects that pose tough challenges for the group, so much the better.

In such a context of exploration, I would also show students sentences that illustrate that not all of our knowledge about English is based on notions or semantics. To demonstrate, I like to use lines from Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky": "Twas brillig, and the slithy *toves* / Did gyre and gimble in the wabe. . . ." I generally start the analysis by asking students what part of speech toves is. Every student says that it is a noun. I go on by asking what part of speech *gyre* and *gimble* are. Again they all promptly agree: These words are verbs. But then I ask them what a tove is or what gyring and gimbling are. That is, I ask them what in the real world these words point to or name. If my students are quite poetically inclined, I will probably receive some fanciful and playful responses to my questions, but the point is that those responses never agree with one another. In other words, students cannot agree on what it is in the world that these words name.

If that is so, then how were they able earlier to identify so confidently and quickly what part-of-speech classes the words belong to? Their abilities rest on the fact that not all that we know about English is dependent on our knowledge of the world. Much of what we know is dependent on the form of linguistic elements (an -s at the end of words helps us identify what kinds of words those might be) or the positioning of elements relative to one another (the appearance of *the* usually signals that a noun will follow shortly). Some grammars (for example, structural grammars) work hard to identify and model this kind of knowledge. Traditional grammar, however, does not greatly help us understand formal and positional linguistic cues. Thus, another thing I might have students explore is how we could add information about forms and positions to traditional grammar. For example, in what kind of slot or position relative to other kinds of words do nouns generally occur?

Although I would often be asking students to add to or enrich traditional grammar, I would not want to give them the impression that traditional grammar is a system without merit. "All grammars leak," said F. de Saussure earlier this century, and his statement remains true today. But different grammars have different strengths too, and I would like students to discover for themselves that a grammar like traditional grammar, one that taps into our knowledge of the world and of what we actually do with language, is by no means a worthless model of language and language ability.

How do I hope that students would be different because of studying traditional grammar in this manner? In the first place, I hope that they would know much more about how grammars in general can operate and about how traditional grammar in particular does operate. But I would also hope for effects on students' attitudes and dispositions. During the course of a short devotional once, I heard a student quoting a piece by Mike Yaconelli to the effect that society needs English teachers who find ways to move students to be "intrigued by syntax, entranced by grammar." I happen to agree with Yaconelli, and I am hoping that you will agree that one way to help students become entranced by grammar is to lead them to explore and extend traditional grammar. Further, if Christian schools can enable students to do such exploring and extending within the context of a course focusing on the wonders of language in general, I believe that these students will learn to love language more, will become more eager to explore the nature of language, and will seek ever more consistently to cultivate responsible uses of this powerful gift from God. ■

Beyond Worksheets:
Bible Activities to Nurture Faith

by Beth Lantinga

Beth Lantinga teaches elementary age children part-time and is also a student at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan.

A storyteller once said, "God made people because he loves stories." I'm not sure whether this person meant that God wanted to tell us stories or God created people to be characters in his great drama. But God's story is told through the lives of hundreds of biblical characters, their songs, their letters, and their wisdom literature. These stories have always been part of my life. I grew up never realizing that I, along with my six brothers and sisters, was poor. My mother lived with such joy and dignity that we actually assumed that we were rather rich. Looking back, I know that we were rich—rich in stories. The Bible formed the context for the way my mother lived her life, and she lived with a deep knowledge that she was a child of God. So all the ups and downs that marked our family life never defined her or truly disturbed her basic serenity. Daily Bible story-telling was an important part of her plan to nurture a faith context for our lives.

People such as Jacob, David, Esther, and Josiah came alive through her voice. So alive, in fact, that we cleaned a corner of the barn to make a performance space, a Bible theater. Sometimes we coaxed our neighbors to be our audience. But usually we performed only for our own entertainment. One day in a misguided attempt at realism, we hung the villainous Haman, my younger brother, from a saddle peg with a piece of twine. My mother came in on our little drama and halted the hanging. She calmly suggested that we wouldn't really need the twine if my brother simply made a gagging, choking sound.

Old and New Testament stories became a part of our vocabulary and part of the structure of our lives. We felt sick when King Saul, who began his career with such promise, finally succumbed to madness and hurled a spear at David. We held our breath every time Esther approached King Xerxes, desperately hoping she wouldn't lose her courage. We gave a sigh of relief each time the king spared the Jews and punished wicked Haman. Those stories helped create our spiritual context and our moral framework. It wasn't until much later that we consciously realized that the Israelites' stories were our stories. Whatever decisions we made in later life—whether good or bad—were always in a Bible context.

My mother wasn't a trained teacher, but through regular story telling she taught us the stories of the Bible. She also encouraged us to reenact the Bible stories. Each time we heard or retold a Bible story, we encountered God and his intent for human life. We encountered the themes of the Bible informally. Early in our lives she prepared the soil of our hearts so that a relationship with God could grow there.

My family, along with my church and school, were attempting to do something important. They were guiding and building an understanding of the Bible, its content and message; they were attempting to nurture hearts of faith open to God's call; and they were inviting us to live lives of faithful obedience in response to God's love for us. I believe this is the goal and purpose of Bible instruction: nurturing informed faith that results in faithful living.

Noting some common features of narratives can help uncover the meaning of Bible stories. They include setting, characters, themes, plot motifs, and recurring images. Students can discover more about each feature as teachers guide them in varied activities.

Focus on setting

Several kinds of activities can foster the understanding of setting. By setting I mean the cultural, geographical, and historical events surrounding a Bible story. Have students research the culture and history of the period your Bible course covers. In a number of ways students can use the factual information they uncover to actually connect with their lives:

- Ask students to report orally to the class. Suggest a variety of formats for their presentations, for example a news show or a monologue from the point of view of a famous historical character such as Alexander the Great.
- Have them present their information using music or drama. New lyrics to a familiar tune can carry content in an inviting fashion.
- Have the students create an illustrated or stacked time line to display in the classroom and update throughout the year.
- Create a large wall map of the Middle East. Display it in the classroom and highlight key areas throughout the year. Note locations such as Paul's stops on his missionary journeys or the travels of the Israelites as they journeyed from Egypt to Canaan.
- Celebrate Old Testament feasts with your students. In this way you provide hands-on experience that steeps your students in the Old Testament scripture from a New Testament perspective. You might celebrate Passover at Easter time, Rosh Hashanah at the beginning of the school year, and Purim when you study the book of Esther. Include music, food, and responsive readings.
- Invite guests to address your class—a rabbi, a pastor, or an expert on history—to enrich your students with a classroom visit.
- Prepare three or four thought-pro-

voking questions. Try to include at least one that fosters reflections about the students' own cultural setting. Separate your class into groups of two to three. Give ten to fifteen minutes for the groups to discuss and generate possible answers. Then discuss the topic as a whole group. Following a whole group discussion, you may wish to have the students write a personal journal response.

Focus on the story

Biblical narratives beg us to consider them in the context of the core narratives. We need to find out what was going on between God and God's people. Then we ask what it might possibly mean for our lives—what is going on between God and us.

1. Enliven the initial presentation.

Although students will often read the Bible on their own, it is sometimes appropriate for a teacher to tell a story. Storytelling invites students into the lives of the characters. Your students might "recognize" themselves and their own brothers or sisters if you begin Jesus' parable "The Prodigal Son" with the storytelling technique, "Once upon a time. . . ." We might consider a lecture on parables a better way to start. But think of the emotional distance created by a lecture. A storyteller draws the listeners in and invites them to recall their own prodigal actions, rivalry and jealousy in their lives, and the Father's amazing grace.

Another way to present a story is to create a readers theater directly from a Bible passage rich in possibilities for dialogue. Include as many voices as possible so that you can include as many students as possible. Add music to set a tone or communicate a theme.

2. Allow students to reenact the stories in several modes.

✝ Have students develop story scripts and act them out for audiences such as younger classes, nursing home residents, church groups, or school worship groups. Include music and dance when appropriate. Mime can also be effective.

Example: Select several key episodes from the life of King David. Use episodes that address key motifs and biblical themes such as judgment and mercy, God's covenant faithfulness, repentance and forgiveness. Separate your class into groups, assign a section of the story to each group, and have each group prepare a short dramatic presentation.

✝ Create and use puppets instead of student actors. This option may especially appeal to shy students.

✝ Have students write a readers theater script—a drama that is read only, often with the readers perched on stools. They use only their voices to enliven the words.

✝ Create books—have students retell, write, and illustrate books of individual Bible stories for the school library or for gifts to family or people outside the faith. Encourage your students to include the details of their lives in their illustrations of God's story.

✝ Have students create paintings, drawings, perhaps murals of Bible stories. For example, students choose key events from the life of Abraham that illustrate God's loving care for him and his response of trust and faith. One kindergarten class used its large ground-level windows as a canvas for the creation story.

✝ Have students create cartoon panels and dialogue to reenact a story.

✝ Examine ways that other painters worked with biblical themes and stories by visiting an art exhibit or by having a local artist or expert visit your class. The American painter John Swanson recently gave a presentation called "God Is in the Details." He showed how his painting of the Wedding at Cana worked in some details of his life. Although his surname is Swanson, his mother is from Mexico. This painting explores the implications of his Mexican background for him, the implications this expressive culture has for faith.

✝ Have students create a newspaper as a final activity for a unit of Bible study. Include news stories, editorials, advertisements, cartoons, and advice columns.

3. Encourage students to locate, interpret, and embrace the themes of the narratives revealed in recurring images, motifs, and events. Characters also reveal thematic significance.

✝ After brainstorming a theme or an image specific to a story or a unit of study, have the students create a weaving, banner, drawing, painting, sculpture, photo, or lettering that illustrates the theme.

For example, the Jordan River in the Elisha story of Naaman the leper can be a springboard for a river painting that reflects contemporary and biblical understandings of the river image. There is the river of life in Revelation, but there is also the Jordan River of American slave songs. A large tumbleweed adorned with bright scraps of fabric can serve to symbolize Moses' burning bush and all the other tree images of the Bible.

✝ Have students write/perform skits that present biblical themes in a contemporary context. Ask them to base their skit on a situation that might parallel a Bible story but reflects their own experiences.

✝ Have students write advice from a story to students today. For example, have Abraham tell how God's act of preserving his family from the king of Egypt changed him. Abraham might explain what it means to trust God even when you are terrified. He might also discuss the temptation to betray and compromise our beliefs when we are threatened or afraid. He could even talk about the soul-dangers of material security.

✝ Create and tape a radio show. Some possible formats: drama, panel discussions, advice for teens—or ask an expert to comment on questions of life and faith that come out of a unit of Bible study.

✝ After you/they identify a theme, ask students to read a related excerpt from literature. For example, a brief classroom discussion of a classic piece of literature such as the "Quality of Mercy" speech from Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice can provide a springboard for discussion. It can help students reflect on the need for mercy in their school, family, or international relations. Material you glean from devotional material or Bible study may be a good source of discussion starters. Also look for topics in the newspaper, in films, or in the lyrics of their favorite singers. Class discussion can help students identify what the chosen topic reveals about God, about the way people ought to live, and the relationship between worship and life.

You may also ask students to write their responses in journals.

Take poetry to heart

Biblical poetry has a different form than narrative, yet students can discover much about setting, characters, themes and imagery in poetry as well. And they can use poetry to reflect on their own faith and respond in their own ways.

First, study the text of a psalm. Direct students' attention to its lyric elements, its type (e.g., praise, lament, nature), and elements of parallel structure. Let the images and figurative language soak in. Then have your students respond.

✞ Allow some students to write a paraphrase using contemporary images. Some students, for example, might substitute a different metaphor for God as the shepherd of Psalm 23. Athletic students have substituted the word coach and others have used babysitter or parent. By choosing a concrete metaphor that's real to them, they begin to see God at work in their lives.

✞ Encourage students to write lyric poetry, identifying events and images from their own lives. Have them use the form of the lament or praise psalm.

✞ Create responsive readings/litanies using passages from the book of Psalms as well as other passages from scripture. For example, you might separate your class into small groups and give each group a scriptural theme such as repentance or forgiveness. Group members then gather Bible references using a concordance and create a litany. You might use the litanies for classroom devotions or for school worship times.

✞ Have students illustrate a psalm. To help them "live into" the words of the text, have them use their own life as the model for the illustrations. One recent setting of Psalm 23 contrasts images of inner city fear with the warmth and safety of a loving grandparent's home. For the illustrator, God was in the details of daily life.

✞ Another way to have students interpret the biblical poetry is through creative dance. The words of Psalm 8, for example, suggest movements of reflection and praise. This mode of interpretation may be more natural for some of your students than verbal expression.

✞ Sometimes a psalm or other Bible passage can be experienced through activity stations. Psalm 23 suggests the journey motif. You can set up devotional stations in your room that take your students through activities related to each part of the psalm.

✞ Have students select a familiar song tune and write new words based on a psalm.

I haven't really spent much time on the discussion mode because to be successful, all of these activity modes presuppose a time of discussion and brainstorming. Teacher-guided exploration of Scripture is often necessary especially in the lower grades, and traditional independent student work has its place. I only hope you will consider incorporating some of these strategies in your Bible instruction, and through them open new doorways for God's love to enter your students' hearts. ■

Creating Inclusive Community

Christ-centered educational, psychological, vocational, and advocacy services for people experiencing disabilities.

Consultation services available in areas of:
- **Inclusion**
- **Learning Disabilities**
- **ADHD**
- **Supported Employment**

Christian Learning Center

Contact: R.H. "Bear" Berends, 2520 Eastern Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507 Phone: 616-245-8388 Fax: 616-245-9807 E-mail: CLCnetwork@aol.com

Message to principals: Gloria Goris Stronks is gathering information concerning the types and amount of service required of students in Christian Schools International schools. If your students do service activities, will you answer the following questions?

1. At which grade levels are students required to do service activities? How many hours are required (either per w ek, per semester, or per year)?
2. What kinds of service activities do the students do?
3. Are these activities incorporated into the rest of the curriculum? If so, how? (For example, sometimes students write essays or poems about the research government agencies do to determine how more help can be given to those in need.)
4. What has been the response of the students and parents to this requirement? (I have been told of schools in which a number of parents have complained about this requirement.)

Deadline: March 15
Office telephone: 616-957-6210
E-mail: stro@calvin.edu
Fax: 616-957-6505

"February Chill"

Ron Sjoerdsma teaches in the education department at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The snow outside was melting–one of those rare February days when spring reaches out with false hope, not unlike the false hope Bill Hamilton had had a few weeks earlier when the eighth grade teachers seemed to be resolving their differences about technology. Now things were getting out of hand, and Bill had not experienced such conflicting feelings in all his thirty-five years of teaching high school and middle school mathematics. The Hillendale Christian K-12 technology plan was creating turmoil at all grade levels, but no more so than among the middle school eighth grade teachers.

They would be coming into his room shortly for a demonstration of how he was integrating technology into his teaching. He had to admit that he had asked for this by overreacting in an earlier meeting when he had argued that he was doing just fine with technology without a plan. He had then briefly described a couple of lessons that integrated graphing calculators. It had been a year since his initial purchase, and he was beginning to get settled and comfortable with them. But it was apparently the wrong time to get settled, and he was beginning to feel the long forgotten anxiety attacks from his early teaching years.

Sara Voskamp, the science teacher, had responded to Bill's lessons with characteristic criticism and then had concluded, "But I like your graphing calculators just fine. They aren't the problem. I probably could find ways to use them if you could ever let go."

"I offered them." Bill had wanted that to come out less defensively than it did.

"Yes. But that's been a while."

"I thought you'd lost interest."

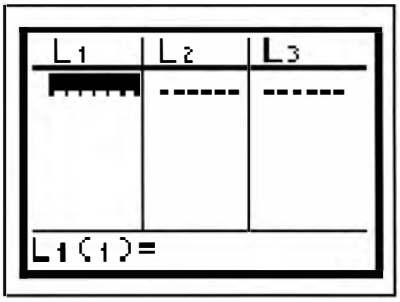
"Well, I wasn't too interested in using them as show-and-tell tools. And that's the only way I could think of using them after looking at your TI idea book."

Bill knew Sara was needling him, but he couldn't drop it. "So you think they're just toys?"

"That's not what I said." Frigid air was swirling.

Kate Wells had interrupted, "Okay kids, we've got work to do here."

Bill had silently thanked the English teacher until she had suggested that maybe he could give them a little demonstration next week at their planning meeting. Jim Sooterma had quickly supported the idea—perhaps, Bill thought, in an attempt to get the heat away from himself. Sara had been relentless in questioning Jim and his committee about everything proposed by the technology plan. Bill was getting tired of Jim's tactic of responding to her with sarcastic comments such as, "What do I know? I just teach history."



During the week following the Monday meeting, Bill had spent every free minute preparing his exhibition of the learning tool's power. He had started by resurrecting a probability lesson that used the calculator's demonstration and column functions and that had been very successful with his students.

But Sara's show-and-tell remark nagged at him, mostly because he didn't fully understand it. Bill figured she probably had constructivism in mind, a concept he admittedly knew little about. Consequently, he had swallowed a little pride and asked Sara to meet him Thursday after school. She had agreed. Bill assumed it was partly because Sara saw him as an ally when it came to combating the current technology plan.

The initial minutes of their meeting had been a little chilly. Bill tossed out a few conciliatory warm-up comments: "So how's that rowdy second hour treating you these days? I basically have to sit on them all first hour."

But Sara had gotten quickly to the point, "Actually, I like their energy. They really dig in to the sequential activities."

Bill thought, "There goes another term I don't understand," but decided he wasn't ready to seem pedagogically ignorant. Instead he said, "Yeah, they do seem to like it when I get the calculators out. That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I've got this lesson that I wanted to show you before Monday's meeting. By the way, I'm sorry about the toy remark."

"I've already forgotten it. And I didn't mean to come on so strong about the Texas Instrument activities; they probably work pretty well in math."

Bill didn't exactly know where to go next. "Well, my Monday demonstration was going to be based on a lesson that worked pretty well a few weeks ago, but your show-and-tell comment has really got me thinking. I guess I'm not sure what you meant."

"Okay." Sara released the word slowly as if thinking. Then the words came in a flood. "I meant that sometimes we are just using all this technology as more up-front stuff for teachers to

Ron Sjoerdsma

do—for example, all Jim's cool Internet PowerPoint demonstrations. I think that sometimes it actually gets in the way of kids needing to construct their own understanding of each concept—in your case, math concepts. Teaching can't be just about lecturing, explaining, or otherwise attempting to get concepts from my mind to students'. It also has to be about creating situations for students that will help them do the necessary processing for themselves, make the necessary mental constructions. At least that's what I think."

An uncomfortable silence followed. Bill didn't know how to respond, so Sara continued, "It maybe was presumptuous of me to do this, but I did a little checking on constructivist approaches to math. I ran across this web site called 'Math in Context.' I think you ought to look into it. Don't look so surprised—I use the Internet all the time."

"I know you do. I was more surprised about 'Mathematics in Context.' Robert, my friend from CC, is always talking about it. Keeps wanting me to check it out. Says I'll like it because it's from my old university, Wisconsin, and from a university in the Netherlands. He doesn't know I don't have a drop of Dutch blood in me."

"I don't have that much either, in spite of my last name. My mother was Scotch-Irish. Anyway, I think you should check it out. I thought they had some really cool ideas for middle school math. And they don't overdo the constructivist language." Bill thought Sara's smile was a little concession and he accepted it.

* * * *

Bill had listened to Sara's ideas and even willingly accepted a book from her about teaching with the student's brain in mind. But as Bill looked back at that Thursday afternoon, he realized that much of the warmth of the conversation, the collegial exchange of ideas, had dissipated in the chilly pressure of the upcoming meeting. He believed he had a good illustration, but he was uncertain about his point. Was he really trying to say that all teachers should make their own decisions about how to integrate technology? Was he ready to radically change his ideas about how to teach? Was his old, but improved, method really so bad?

A few late afternoon snow flurries flew by his classroom window. Heavy snow was predicted. ■

Resources mentioned in this column:

Jensen, E. 1998. *Teaching with the Brain in Mind.* Alexandria,VA: ASCD.

Internet sites:

Texas Instruments Classroom Activities
http://www.ti.com/calc/docs/activities.htm
Mathematics in Context
http://www.ebmic.com

Your journey awaits.

Master of Education Program · Covenant College

Become a part of a community of practicing educators who aspire to connect their Christian faith with scholarship and education.

Spending the month of July for three consecutive summers with nationally respected professors and students from across the continent will transform your vision for God's work as it is accomplished by public school and Christian school educators.

The Master of Education Program at Covenant College offers specializations for classroom teachers and administrators.

Come and share the view from Lookout Mountain.

Master of Education Program
14049 Scenic Highway
Lookout Mountain, GA 30750-9601
1(800) 677-3626 · (706) 820-1560
www.covenant.edu · MEd@covenant.edu

Cruise/Anti-Cruise

Stefan Ulstein teaches media and English courses at Bellevue Christian Junior High School in Bellevue, Washington.

Every teacher knows that some books just lend themselves to discussion. *The Pearl, Of Mice and Men,* and *Lord of the Flies* are just a few examples that come to mind. What teachers love about these works is that they serve as springboards to discussion and reflection. Students are provoked to think about issues they might not have given a second thought—or a first thought for that matter. Every now and then a film comes along that does the same thing.

We teachers don't always recognize these films right away. Such films are like gifted children. We might dismiss them as cranky, self-focused, or inappropriate. I almost missed the true greatness of a quirky little documentary called *The Cruise.* When I saw it at Seattle's Preview Theater, I was one of twenty or so film critics, who, like me, were mostly white and middle-aged. I enjoyed *The Cruise* a great deal but thought it would probably sail over the heads of most of my students and be too idiosyncratic for the rest.

The Cruise is a forum for an eccentric poet of the soul named Timothy "Speed" Levitch, an unpublished free spirit who makes ends meet by narrating double-decker tour bus rides around his beloved New York City. As bored, jet-lagged, and otherwise disoriented visitors from the heartland gaze absently at the magnificent skyline, Speed waxes eloquent about every possible detail. He interprets architecture and gives us the addresses of writers and actors.

At one point the bus blocks an intersection and we behold the snarl of traffic stretching to infinity. "Feel the omniscience of this moment," Speed intones. "You are controlling movement." A few faces light up, but the rest stare blankly.

The late art critic Hans Rookmaker of the Free University of Amsterdam once told me, "American tourists rape the great cities of Europe as they stampede from Venice to Paris to Vienna on six-day tours. They know nothing of what they are seeing. They only want some kind of trophy on their belt for having been there." I was reminded of the Chicago newspaper magnate who embedded chunks of the Blarney Stone and the Great Pyramids in the facade of his corporate building. Like some plundering Visigoth he came, he saw, he looted.

To Speed Levitch, New York is a living, breathing organism. "I have a love affair with this city," he explains at one point, "and recently we almost had a divorce." Speed knows that his city is more than a bunch of notable buildings, its parks more than a grouping of shrubs.

As his bus wheels through Central Park he explains that the whole thing is a Transcendentalist vision of nature, carefully and artificially constructed. "The creators banned baseball and other activities that cause one to sweat," he explains deadpan. "These people who are running, throwing Frisbees, and sweating are not historically accurate. Those sitting on the lawns discussing and

Stefan Ulstein

reading are historically accurate."

At one point Speed holds forth on a particularly baroque facade and explains the difference between light falling on terra cotta and light falling on stone. With tongue firmly in cheek he imagines the light as an erotic interplay between the various architectural details. Standing in the street, he builds to a crescendo in his eccentric monologue as passersby try not to stare.

Speed comments on everything and everyone in a rapid fire, free association that is like an ultra-literate Robin Williams. The title of the film comes from Speed's desire to live for the Cruise, or what some might call the Quest. It's the search for freedom, enlightenment, grace, and knowledge. Speed roams the city, searching for truth and beauty. At one point he runs into a sign barring pedestrian traffic. "The spirit of the Anti-Cruise," he warns, "is everywhere." In the film's final scene, Speed climbs to the forty-seventh story of a building and encounters a fire exit that warns of alarms and punishment if it is opened. "The second to the last time I did this," he whispers to the camera, "no alarms. I found myself face to face with the monument atop the Chrysler Building. But the last time . . . fire trucks, security, I barely escaped with my life. The Anti-Cruise."

I firmly enjoyed *The Cruise* but I wasn't sure who else would. Fortunately, Seattle is blessed with several competent film promoters, and two great ones. Craig Chastain of Terry Hines Associates often lets me take students to film screenings and has even encouraged me to bring them to press conferences. If only all professionals respected students as he does. He encouraged me to take a video screener of *The Cruise* and run it by some teenagers to get their responses.

I showed the film to my Advanced Writing class and realized that I had missed a great deal by seeing it with a bunch of journalists. Many of my students liked the film and some of them loved it. They laughed harder than the journalists did, and although they missed some of the more obscure cultural allusions, they understood Speed's heart. When I asked who'd like to come to the interview with Speed and director Bennett Miller, they jumped for it.

We met in the ornate lobby of the refurbished Olympic Four Seasons Hotel overlooking Seattle's waterfront. Speed, resplendent in a velour suit, came bounding into the lobby and greeted my students as if they were VIPs. I motioned to a grouping of tasteful faux antique couches and chairs and asked him where he'd like to sit. "Here on the couch," he replied, removing his shoes and hopping into a lotus position. "Sit here with me," he motioned to my students. "Let's get some energy going!"

Our interview was a blast. It was a bit like having Byron and Thoreau all rolled up in the persona of a latter-day Borsch Belt comic. We were off and running, exploring *The Cruise* and life. Speed could have been a great teacher, although he's so great he'd probably be fired for being too much of a good thing. Everything he said caused us to ask more questions, not so much of him, but of ourselves. Back at school, we used the Cruise/Anti-Cruise metaphor as a test. School, one student observed, is supposed to empower us on the Cruise, but often it's the embodiment of the Anti-Cruise.

The students who most appreciated Speed and *The Cruise* were the bright, introspective ones who don't always turn in their homework, and who don't do the assigned reading because they have four other books going. We all have students like that. I was a student like that. Too often Christian schools fail such students. These are the ones who ask the tough questions and refuse the pat answers. We often forget that Jesus reached out to just those people, and he did so, not by telling them what to think, but by posing questions that led them to think deeply.

Rent a copy of *The Cruise* and see if it's something you can use to break through to those kids. See if it doesn't help you to ask some new questions and remember why you became a teacher in the first place. ■

Bible Review

by Robin Koning

Robin Koning is a grade four teacher at Abbotsford Christian School, Heritage Campus, in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

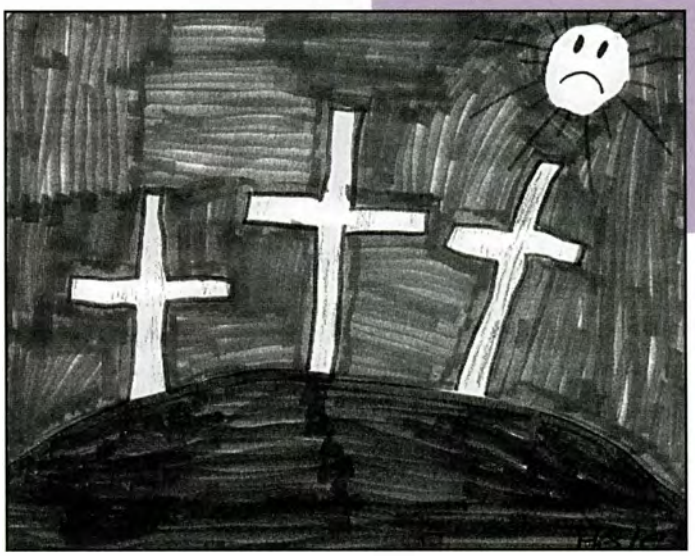
"What is one of your favorite Bible stories?" In my grade four classroom, I use this question to lead into the Bible review that begins the school year. Each student chooses a Bible story to present to the class. We list their selections, eliminate duplication, and discuss alternatives so that a variety of stories will be presented.

Students then choose the method for presenting their story. They may decide to tell the story, draw pictures to illustrate it, act in a skit or mime, give a chalk talk, or present a puppet play. They prepare their presentations during several Bible classes.

After the presentation, some students may ask classmates to identify the story or to explain what is special about that story.

One purpose for this activity is to provide a review of stories studied in previous grades, to lead into the lessons for grade four. It also reveals the strengths of the students. Sometimes a student who has difficulty with written responses is a gifted storyteller. For example, one student revealed a gift for chalk illustrations as he mimed and drew the days of creation until the entire chalkboard was covered with beautiful illustrations.

Some students will have heard the Bible stories many times. This activity is a way for them to demonstrate their Bible knowledge and to lead into the in-depth study of many topics in grade four. ■



Learning to Exhale

by Erika Knight Bakker

Erika Knight Bakker teaches grade two at Vernon Christian School in Vernon, British Columbia.

The Okanagan sun remained strong, and when our little Jetta came to a stop in front of a box-like brown bungalow, my husband and I crawled out of the oven thankfully and concentrated on the tiny breeze that struggled to make it up the hill. This was our first Okanagan summer—in fact, our first Okanagan anything—we had been here just over a week. Everything was new and intimidating. The flat lands of Saskatchewan, trustworthy and never-changing, had been lifted and distorted as we traveled west with all our belongings. I felt small, particularly after winding along narrow roads with looming hills hemming me in.

A brown gate rested open, providing a glimpse of a well-manicured lawn and pool area. We entered the backyard as previously instructed and searched for our hosts. It was a Sunday afternoon, and we had been invited to come for a swim. A tall man had approached us after church that morning, asked where we were from, and stated, "My wife says you guys should come over." He gave directions and retreated to his car. Soon after, a woman with makeup and bright clothes sang, "Bring your bathing suit!" And so now we found ourselves in the backyard of a brown bungalow.

"Hello, hello!" Our hostess floated from the back door, her husband following. After attempting some small talk, we prepared to swim. Thankful for a chance to cool off, I dove in. Chrissy, our hostess, was stepping gingerly down the stairs into the water when two children came rushing toward the pool. They were introduced by Chrissy as her jewels: Jeanine and Brett Dransma. Immediately, my memory awoke. Jeanine Dransma. This was a name I knew, a name I had been pondering ever since I received the list of my soon-to-be students.

"Jeanine! Are you going into grade two?" I barely waited for the timid nod. "I'm going to be your teacher! My name is Mrs. Bakker, and I'm teaching grade two!" I was very pleased. Here was one of the little children that I would love and who would love me back. I would greet her cheerfully every morning, and she would bring me flowers. I would wipe her tears, and help her overcome any difficulties she had. (I had taken a great course in math.) She would wave to me in church and ask her mom if she could sit with Mrs. Bakker. Teaching was going to be wonderful.

I smiled at Jeanine; she hid behind her mother. The husband (was it Blain?) turned toward me and stared. "Ain't you too young to be a teacher?"

"I'm 23," I said, grinning. "I just graduated this spring. This will be my first year of teaching.

"So you're gonna practice on my kid." Blaine was not smiling. In fact, neither were Chrissy nor Jeanine nor Brett.

Later, in the dark of night, eloquent responses to that comment came to mind. But at the time, I just said, "Yep." I saw myself treading water in a stranger's pool, wearing an old bathing suit (we didn't swim much in the prairies), with wet hair stuck flat to my head. I realized how unprofessional I looked.

I shared my lack of confidence with my father via e-mail. His response waited for me the next morning. He wrote:

> Dear Daughter of Dad: As I read through your note and your detailed preparations for September 3, I am not at all worried that you will be more than ready and capable to warmly embrace your little flock of primary tots. Think of it: you've been sitting in THEIR desk for about sixteen years. You have been learning and absorbing and analyzing and questioning stuff from age five to twenty-one, and you always will. You were up to the challenges that the college profs threw your way, and you got your feet wet in Regina as a student teacher. In short, you've been inhaling education all your life; now it's time to exhale. When you enter the classroom on September 3, just breathe out all that you have learned over the years. Let it flow naturally and let your wisdom fall upon these young minds like the morning dew. No need to panic, no need to get flustered, just let it flow. Let the teacher (that has been in you since you were five) be allowed to blossom forth as naturally as you breathe. You'll be nervous, but you'll be fine. Be self-assured, stand tall . . . even when in your bathing suit . . . and speak confidently to those parents that you will teach their little gems how to be Christ's children.

Two days later I was in the Jetta, winding along the hillside to the school. My heart pounded and my palms were sweaty as hundreds of children entered the hallways of the school. Twenty-five of them found their way into my classroom, discovered their assigned seats, and began to compare Kit boxes.

As I looked at their young, expectant faces, the memorized curriculum objectives, teaching strategies, and detailed day plans faded. "These are children!" I thought. "Children with fears, worries, and hopes, children ready to learn from me!" I smiled, and began to exhale. ■

Query

Marlene Dorhout

Marlene Dorhout teaches at Denver Christian Middle School in Denver, Colorado. Address questions to:

Marlene Dorhout
Query Editor
325 E. Iliff Avenue
Denver, CO 80210

Q. I often overhear student conversations with parents in the hallways or on the telephone. Many times the kids are demanding and rude; the parents seem to ignore or give in to the students' requests. Doesn't this kind of backtalk seem more common with kids today? Is this simply accepted or acceptable behavior? Is it any of my business? Should I say or do anything?

A. According to Dr. Karen Hopkins, an associate professor of pediatrics at New York University School of Medicine, backtalk is a sign that children have too much power. "[Backtalk] often arises when children are overindulged." She explains that busy parents try to compensate for lack of family time, and then the children talk back when a parent finally says no.

Dr. Hopkins also attributes backtalk to our culture; popular TV shows using canned laughter following "putdowns" send a strong message that sarcasm and rudeness are desirable. However, sometimes, developmental disabilities, such as ADHD or Tourette's syndrome, can cause backtalk as well. All of these causes would support your theory that backtalk is more common today. Dr. Hopkins recommends that parents find the cause, remedy it, and reclaim authority (Rocky Mountain News, Jan. 25, 1998).

From your question, I suspect you also would like to recommend such advice to parents. However, this interchange between parents and their kids probably isn't considered any of your business. In fact, most parents would not expect the teacher to interfere.

Nevertheless, when heard at school, backtalk may create the opportunity for a teachable moment. When the student hangs up the phone, you might admit to overhearing some comments that disturbed you. If the student doesn't respond positively to such confrontation, you can address this issue generally as a classroom discussion topic, possibly even recording portions of TV shows demonstrating disrespect to parents. After all, what isn't your business today may become your business tomorrow; such backtalk inevitably will be used on other adults, and teachers may soon need to reclaim the authority in their classrooms.

Q. I have been teaching for many years and am concerned about the increasing numbers of children who have ADD or ADHD. These students are taking ritalin or other new drugs to control their hyperactivity. Some teachers don't seem to mind because class discipline is easier if those kids are medicated. Is this just an accepted fact about today's kids, or should we be questioning this practice?

A. Questioning a doctor's diagnosis and/or prescription seems out of our area of expertise. Nevertheless, as educators, we have the advantage of seeing many children in everyday situations. After years in the classroom, teachers can spot some behaviors as simply developmental or age-related. Usually doctors ask teachers to fill in an observation checklist that pinpoints ADD or ADHD, but not always; and exasperated parents can often be quite persuasive.

Certainly I have seen the benefits of prescriptions for certain students diagnosed as ADHD. Not only did behavior improve dramatically, but grades as well. Inability to concentrate or focus can be extremely detrimental and frustrating to kids.

I've also wondered, as you do, about the huge numbers of kids diagnosed as ADD. Is our quick-fix society simply bothered by kids out of control? As educators, we need to be in dialogue with each other and parents and doctors, looking for clear understanding, direction, and answers.

Christ made it very clear how important children are to him: ". . . for of such is the kingdom of heaven." As Christian teachers we must provide the best possible education for all of God's children and help parents determine what that is for their children. If that means we question, recommend, learn, or advise regarding hyperactivity, we do it because the children are important to us too.

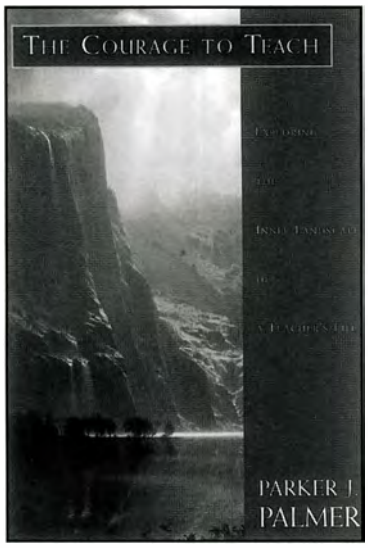
Book Reviews

The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life

Steve J. Van Der Weele

Parker J. Palmer. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 1997. 192 pages, plus index.

Reviewed by Steve J. Van Der Weele, emeritus professor of English, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



The cover photo of *The Courage to Teach*—Albert Bierstadt's lovely landscape portrait of awesome mountains, of sea and sky—deftly supports the sub-title of Palmer's book. The idea of exploring the landscape of a teacher's mind, history—indeed, his very self—structures the book throughout. Although Palmer's purpose is to challenge and encourage the teacher, he supposes that not enough attention is being paid to that person's heart, soul, spirit. He invites us to undergo a process of careful self-scrutiny, of self-analysis—an exercise, as he has observed, that can contribute more to successful teaching than merely manipulating the physical setting or experimenting with the latest pedagogical fad.

This exploration, ideally, will yield two qualities essential to any individual who proposes to take over a classroom: identity and integrity. No authentic teaching can take place if the teacher has not determined who he or she is—not through a narcissistic exercise nor a superficial listing of tastes and interests nor a mere coming to terms with biases and emotions—but through an analysis nothing less than metaphysical. "We teach who we are." The benefits to teacher and students alike are enormous: a poised, confident teacher open to growth, not without normal fears and anxieties but able to use them creatively. Above all, such stock-taking will inculcate a deep passion for the art of teaching, a profession whose gratifications cannot be matched in any other line of work.

This passion for and love of teaching does not, of course, proceed on a level course. The ecstasy of the high classroom moments will be offset by days of heart-breaking failure. Palmer provides examples of both from his own experience. He has, in fact, often been tempted to pursue another calling. But his commitment to education is deep-seated. He has thought long and hard about the secret of successful teaching and has analyzed the interplay between students and teacher and the subjects being taught. He has developed a body of convictions that he now passes on through his writing, workshops, involvement in pedagogical studies in a wide range of colleges, universities, corporations, and foundations. He has become a teacher's teacher par excellence.

What are some of his concerns and recommendations? As for the teacher, Palmer advocates the graces of honesty, humility, integration, together with an acknowledgement of complexities in every phase of learning. The teacher, further, must learn to live with ambiguities, must develop a respect for diversity—not relativism or a spineless capitulation to private opinions—but an openness to the multiple richness of the amazing world in which we have been placed. Posturing, arrogance, banality, a disconnectedness from both subject and student, confusion of techniques with genuine reform—these qualities will eventually lead to disaster.

Palmer insists as well that true learning must be communal—not only in the sense that it involves the community outside the classroom, but insofar as such an orientation reflects reality itself. He is impressed by what physicists now tell us—that even particles of matter display a connectedness, an awareness of each other (metaphorically speaking)—a principle with vast implications for how we view our world and how this recognition should affect our pedagogy. Another chapter recommends that the teacher should teach not only a given subject, but how a student should study such a subject. Palmer advocates giving the student a sense of the whole through a study of a microcosmic segment of the subject—"seeing the world in a grain of sand." In a recent experiment, beginning medical students were taken directly to patients in a hospital setting while the others went to the classroom to hear the normal lectures on the skeleton suspended from the ceiling. The experimental group developed, over time, a

greater empathy with patients than the others and, moreover, contrary to predictions from the skeptics, scored higher on tests involving knowledge of required medical information. In an experiment in a sociology class, Palmer compelled the students to focus on a facet of a subject they thought they already knew—How is race to be defined?

Palmer devotes an entire chapter to the sensitive matter of teacher growth and accountability. Very simply, we must do what people in other professions do routinely: we must open up our classrooms and our performance to our peers. The risks are real; abuse is always possible. This oversight must be done by the right people, at the right time, and in the right places. Safeguards must be established, with cautions against the quick fix and with due regard for the vulnerabilities present in every teacher's heart. A closing chapter sets forth the procedures to be followed when reform is imperative but cannot be achieved within the existing structures. To be avoided is the degeneration of initiatives—a situation where a group of disgruntled people get caught up in their private passions and discontents. At the right time, and in the right forum, and in the right way, the cause must be brought before the public if any good is to be achieved.

We learn that Palmer's writings have appeared in Commonweal and the Christian Century; that he has spent a year at Union Theological Seminary; and that he is involved in issues affecting religious as well as educational institutions. Even without this information, one can discern a religious disposition in this book—underpinnings that are theologically accurate. And his insistence on the sacredness of reality borders on the mystical. To be sure, these nuances are implicit rather than explicit. Does he avoid specifically Christian language to procure a larger audience than he might otherwise have? Whatever the case, this book is worth a dozen works on less significant issues. It gets to the bottom of things. It can help us all approximate more nearly Frederick Buechner's definition of vocation as "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (30). ■

DORDT COLLEGE

preparing leaders in Christian education

Are you striving to integrate your Christian faith in your teaching? Seeking exciting professional development opportunities that fit your busy life? Dordt College's graduate program was designed with you in mind.

Master's Degree

Complete a master's of education degree in K-12 curriculum and instruction in as few as three summers.

DORDT COLLEGE
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250
phone: (712) 722-6236
http://www.dordt.edu

July at Dordt, 1999

One-credit mini-courses and school leadership courses that apply toward CSI administrator certification, plus these graduate courses:

Week One
- Introduction to Graduate Research
- Integrating Technology and Education

Week Two
- Learning theories for Today's Student
- Implementing Instructional Strategies

Week Three
- Current Issues in Education
- Inclusion of Students with Special Needs

Courses can be taken—not for graduate credit—at reduced rates as staff development for state license/certification renewal.

Reader Response

Dear Editor,

Tom Mulder's article "Home or Schooling for Covenant Kids?" in the October 1998 issue of CEJ is excellent. I appreciated his insights on the serious deficiencies of this alternative to traditional Christian school education. I thought Mr. Mulder's analysis as a Christian school principal was outstanding because he bravely asserted that home schooling and Christian schools are "kicking in separate races." He continues that the homeschooled child is overly focused on the family and loses the opportunity to be prepared in the service of "the greater community of Christians." Courageous words.

This issue has direct relevance to me as I observe the results; my own mother has homeschooled one of my siblings, and one of my family members continues to teach his children in the home environment. Mr. Mulder's probing questions "Where will homeschooled children learn to recognize believers of other denominations as brothers and sisters of God's family? Where will they realize the catholicity, the unity of believers? Is the homeschooled family held accountable to the broader Christian community?" get at the heart of the issue that is seldom addressed or understood. These are precisely the issues that I have wrestled with but without the clarity of thought as that of the author.

I appreciate Mr. Mulder's perspective of Christian education as being a "pearl of great price" and that it is more than "just another shopper's selection, a delectable and delicate dessert on the smorgasbord of schooling options." His perspective is growing increasingly less popular as administration and school boards hammer home the necessity to "drum up" business.

Thanks for this excellent journal for Christian educators. I found many of the other articles encouraging and thoughtful.

Leah E. Bouwman
Byron Center, Michigan.

NEWS

Calvin Seminary Receives Grant for High School Youth Program

Calvin Theological Seminary has been selected to receive a grant of $452,000 from Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. The grant will be used to engage high-school-age young people in theological study and inquiry. Calvin Seminary is one of eleven seminaries receiving a total of $1.8 million to implement programs immediately in the Lilly Endowment's new project "Theological Programs for High School Youth."

The Endowment program challenges seminaries to create imaginative programs that give gifted young people a serious intellectual encounter with the best thought of the Christian faith. Through the program students explore in depth theology's significance for their own lives, including their vocational choices.

Programs were pilot-tested at several seminaries before the Endowment announced last spring that it would fund similar programs on a competitive basis at other seminaries. Each participating seminary submitted programs tailored to its needs and situation.

The Calvin Seminary program will begin this summer. It will be a one-month, all-expenses paid experience on the seminary campus and in Israel. The program will be limited to thirty-five high school juniors and seniors who must be nominated by their pastors, church councils, or high school administrators or religion teachers (in the case of students at Christian high schools). Seminary president James De Jong emphasized that the competition welcomes nominations of both public and Christian high school students who meet the program criteria. Applications are due March 1. Selection of the thirty-five participants will be announced in late March. ■