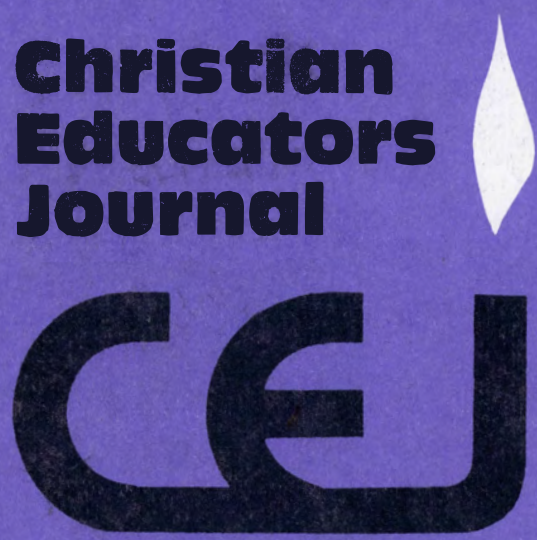
February-March 1985, Vol. 24, No.3

# Christian Educators Journal



# EDITORIAL

# A Tribute to the Administrator

ONE day last fall I painstakingly pulled the Bermuda grass out from under the juniper shrubs that line my yard. As I plucked out those persistent runners one by one, it occurred to me that the work of a school principal probably resembles the task I was doing: if you keep at it, nobody complains, but if you neglect it, everybody notices.

The job of the administrator is probably the most difficult and the least appreciated job in the Christian school system. In some communities it is also the loneliest.

Sometimes we teachers are as guilty as anyone else in the community because we fail to encourage our administrators. Yet we are in the best position to help them in their often thankless role; furthermore, we teachers are usually the direct benefactors when our administrators feel appreciated. I would like to suggest some ways that we can support our administrators.

First, I can faithfully uphold my administrator in specific, meaningful prayer, both in my personal prayers and within the classroom. This kind of support enables me to develop a personal concern for his needs and gratitude for his happiness. He needs my interest and friendship as much as I need his. Sometimes I should invite him and his family to my home, not for school business, but for a friendly visit.

My principal appreciates my confiding in him. He sees a more complete scope of the school system than I do, and often he understands matters that I see only from my point of view. Even when I think my idea will work, he becomes more supportive when I seek his opinion.

I can support my principal by complying with school policy. Whether or not I like the rules, I have the responsibility to respect required attendance and attentiveness at meetings, prompt arrival before class, and participation in student supervision. I find it rather easy to let these items slip a bit, and sometimes I justify myself by saying that more important matters interfere. However, if I believe these requirements are unreasonable, I should calmly discuss suitable alternatives with my principal. He dislikes having to correct as much as I do.

I can help my principal by promptly fulfilling his requests for information and opinion. When I neglect these requests, I require him to ask again or imply that his request is unimportant to me.

I can help my administrator immensely by respecting his schedule. Few of us really realize the burden of the administrator's role in the Christian school system. We ask our administrators to be curriculum leaders, faculty advisors, public relations directors, personnel managers, spiritual leaders, counselors, financial promoters, maintenance managers, policy defenders, disciplinarians, office machine technicians, school bus coordinators, social organizers, patrollers of extracurricular activities, and in the majority of CSI (Christian Schools International) schools, full or part-time classroom teachers. I am sure every administrator can add to the list, but the point should be obvious: we expect them to be "all things to all people." The least we can do is to avoid burdening them with unnecessary requests.

One area that greatly concerns me is that of criticism of the administrator. I must allow my principal to make mistakes, even as I expect him to do for me. That doesn't mean he is above correction, but it does mean that I approach him kindly and Christianly if I dislike the way something is handled. I must assure him that I will respect him as much when he says, "Forgive me. I was wrong," as I do when he is right. Furthermore, I must be willing to forgive once a mistake is cleared up and then go on without bringing up the error.

I must carry that supportive attitude into the classroom and the community. That does not mean that I deny matters that need improvement, but it does mean that I use the proper channels. It means that I always support the administration, whether or not I agree with the specific methods of the person in that position.

Last fall when I weeded the junipers, darkness fell before I had time to finish the last three shrubs. Long strands of unsightly Bermuda soon poked through the bushes next to my driveway. I realized that I would have to get back to my unfinished task. Meanwhile, I hoped my neighbors would graciously overlook those ugly three and focus instead on the much longer row of neatly weeded shrubs.

That's how I hope I treat my administrator too. I do appreciate him.

LVG

# The Administrator

Dorothea Kewley

He walks a fiscal tightrope without a net of tenure,
balancing budgets in his head over and over,
no applause for his performance; it's assumed he will get there.
Not for him the joy of teaching, faces alight with learning.
No statue of him will commemorate what he is doing.
This prosaic side of education doesn't bring
cheers, so praise his act when possible,
when passing give him a steadying smile,
help him up, if you can, after his occasional fall.

# The Role of the Principal

Barry Koops, Doug Mulder, Ruth Machiele, Doug Paauwe

WHAT does the principal do for the school?

One teacher received the following answers to that question:

"He fixes broken windows."

"He rings the bell."

"He makes sure you don't say bad words."

"He rules the school."

"If people are bad, he gives spankings."

"He has fire drills."

These are kindergarteners' views of the principal's role, but some adults hold misconceptions that are equally distorted. Many of us do not really understand what all is expected of principals and superintendents. Some of us are more aware of their salaries than of their responsibilities.

We decided to let several principals discuss their views on ways that boards, faculty members, and administrators can grow to understand one another and work together in unity.

Dr. Barry Koops of Woodlands Christian and Contra Costa Christian in Walnut Creek, California, states emphatically that one of the the most important things an administrator can do is to make sure faculty members support one another. That support includes prayer. His staff meets weekly before school for thirty minutes, half of which is spent openly expressing needs, concerns, and reasons to rejoice with one another. He believes the administrator can best encourage meaningful devotions by example and enthusiastic participation.

Koops sees his primary role as one of encouraging effective teaching rather than approving bills and other financial matters. That means developing camaraderie with teachers. It means finding time to observe teachers in their classrooms. It means looking for teachers' positive qualities. It

means being honest with teachers when they appear to be ineffective, but saying in a lovingly direct manner: "I want to help you work on this problem."

Teachers can help administrators too, says Koops. He likes to think of people in these two roles as forming a team where everyone is committed to give all, not competing. He wants teachers to make constructive suggestions. He wants them to be candid, but always with the intent of helping, of bearing one another's burdens.

Doug Mulder, formerly a teaching principal in Hills, Minnesota, and now a classroom teacher at Dakota Christian High (New Holland, SD), concurs with Koops' emphasis on faculty prayer. He appreciates staff members praying for specific students by name and sharing each others' personal lives as well. Mulder also encourages teachers to take an interest in the special activities of their colleagues teaching in other disciplines. He believes time spent together in the faculty lounge after school can be very valuable in building unity between faculty and administrator.

From his administrative experience, Mulder also encourages open communication with board members. As a principal, he especially valued visits with board members outside of school.

Ruth Machiele has served as principal of Rochester (NY) Christian School since 1968. She believes her background as a school psychologist in a number of different schools has given her an advantage in seeing how schools ought to be run.

Just after school opens in the fall, the faculty, board, parents, and students of her school participate together in a very unifying session of prayer. Faculty members continue the year in that spirit of sharing one another's concerns. Sometimes Machiele schedules an hour or two expressly to discuss frustrations and to pray openly together, an experience which tends not to occur as quickly in regular teachers' meetings.

She feels a principal needs to model Christianity, and that starts by modeling the love of God. She appreciates the spirit of concern her faculty displays for one another. In fact, she has heard her faculty speak out against merit pay because they fear it would damage the unity of the group.

Michiele urges all teachers to be involved in planning curriculum, but she encourages them to develop their own teaching styles. She wishes she had more time to spend in classrooms, although she usually steps through every classroom once a day. Frequently this occurs as she is showing people through this continually growing school. Because of her expertise as a former school psychologist, teachers sometimes request her to observe student interaction within their classrooms so she can advise them about how to help a student.

Board members visit classrooms every month, not to judge but to become informed. Teachers at Rochester Christian seem pleased with this approach, and Machiele feels both board and faculty are very supportive.

Principal Doug Paauwe spends his day as a classroom teacher at Beaverdam Christian School near Hudsonville, Michigan. After hours he tackles his administrative duties. He sees advantages in being a teaching principal: he can build closer relationships with students and faculty. The drawback is finding time to accomplish all the administrative duties and still having time to prepare lessons.

Faculty members can help teaching principals, Paauwe says, by being conscious of their schedules. Once teachers realize how much time administrative duties require, they are more inclined to turn to other staff members to resolve problems.

*The role of leader is really the role of servant.*

Paauwe has some interesting opinions about the role of school board members. He believes school boards, not just principals, should do more to develop policies for the school rather than focus primarily on dollars and cents. He realizes this is difficult because our product-oriented society encourages us to look for tangible results. Pauuwe says board members whose professions include goal setting can better understand his view of the board member's role.

Paauwe's parting words reflect the attitude of each of the administrators interviewed: "The role of leader is really the role of servant. When the administrator lives by that ideal, things work well."

# Views from the

## Winter's Way

Winter drops
like the white
of the egg
on the world,
laughs farther
than the children
into the happy trees,
stands stiller
than the statues—
is beautiful enough
to put into
a Chinese
woman's silk.

Marion Schoeberlein

HANGING on the wall in many principals' offices one may find a smooth wooden paddle stamped with the words: Board of Education.

My parents had a smooth wooden board of education too—marked off in thirty-six sections and stamped with the name of the local grain elevator.

Somehow, my parents' paddle seems to represent more closely what is the real purpose of the "board of education." It was often used to measure our growth.

Too often we have thought of school boards as people elected to "control the budget." Teachers tend to think board members spend their Monday nights discussing dollars and cents, and board members tend to think teachers remain hopelessly insensitive to the rising costs of education.

If we consider the ideas presented here by several Christian school board members, perhaps both inaccuracies can be avoided.

AS a former teacher, San Jose (CA) Christian School board member Ann Veldman Meester has the advantage of having experienced both perspectives in serving the Christian school. Furthermore, this is her second experience as a board member; some years ago she served on the school board in Washington, D.C.

At San Jose Christian (SJCS) where Ann and Henry Meester's two sons are enrolled, Ann has chaired the education committee for two and a half years. She is the first woman elected to the board, but now two more women have been added. Both schools Ann has served are rather small schools in large urban areas. Here are some of her ideas on board-faculty relations:

"It has been my experience that the classroom teacher is really the school's biggest asset. Teachers should be viewed as professionals entrusted with the most important gift God has given parents—our children. The board members should listen as the faculty expresses their needs or frustrations. The board should act decisively in working out solutions or establishing policies that improve the overall operation of the school.

"Finances have always been a big factor—in the schools I have served they are usually the biggest factor. If textbooks are needed but the board says no, it really may mean that there is no money to pay the bill! Teachers need to believe that the board members also want what is best for the school; seeing each other as a team rather than as adversaries can strengthen mutual support.

"Frustrations and concerns should be discussed with the administrator and board, if necessary. Nobody should allow negativism to simmer because it spreads easily and really can change a positive atmosphere to one that is uncomfortable in which to work.

"The best way I have experienced to encourage board-faculty rapport is for both groups to sit down together (preferably with a cup of coffee) and have a carefully worked out agenda which permits problems to be presented and solutions to be discussed.

"SJCS had a serious financial crisis several years ago. We were literally out of funds by the end of each month. The budget had been cut, but more had to be done. The board decided against simply making drastic changes and presenting them to the faculty; instead we opted for a joint meeting. True, nine board members and fourteen teachers can meet more easily than in some larger systems. But what promised to be a most difficult evening turned out to be a turning point. Facts were presented, but hearts were open on both sides; board

# Board Room

and faculty listened and understood each other. More cuts were made in terms of curriculum needs. The faculty voluntarily took a salary cut, and the school survived. The following year we were able to repay the teachers and put the school on more solid financial ground.

"I believe morale was high and spiritual growth occurred because God blessed that willingness to communicate and respect each other.

"Board control over classroom materials and teaching methods is a difficult and subjective matter for both board and faculty. Certainly the faculty should present textbook recommendations to the board along with their reasons based on their expertise and research. Generally I feel the board should go along with recommendations for which the faculty presents a strong case. The board is, however, responsible to the association of parents that has elected them, and in controversial matters the board must try to determine what is in harmony with the constitution and with any decisions binding the association. Usually it need not come to a power struggle. As chairperson of our education committee, I have found that meeting directly with a teacher concerning a questionable issue that comes to the board usually leads to a solution that can be acceptable. When all communication efforts fail to bring about agreement, the board has an obligation to do what they feel is best for the school; the buck stops here.

"School boards also get involved in control over administrative policies. In both instances while I was serving on school boards, we had a change of leadership. I was involved in the interviewing and selection of the new principal each time. I believe a school board needs to have a written job description for the administrator so that everyone knows what is expected. Practically speaking, however, the person hired is basically the job description. The board needs to select someone with a personality and vision that fits the needs of the school. The administrator needs to be trusted to carry out policy. If the administrator is visible—ours goes to board meetings and committee meetings—then the question of control is not really a problem. If honest disagreements occur, they should be openly discussed until resolved; public contradictions of school policy may undermine confidence in the school.

"I believe God has placed me in this role, and I realize that unless he enables me, I will be ineffective. My goals as a school board member include: strengthening the support of the school in the Christian community at large; building unity between board, faculty, and administration through trust, mutual respect, listening, acting decisively, and encouraging professional growth; updating written school policy. It also includes selecting teachers who love children and enjoy teaching, who are not afraid to share their faith in Jesus Christ, who want to grow professionally, who like working hard to make learning an exciting challenge for students.

"I have seen my goals partially realized, since this is an ongoing process.

"God will honor a board and staff that pray for each other. It's hard work on everyone's part—including parents—but to me, Christian education is the best investment we will ever make for our children."

DAVE Hollander is a school board member for Ripon Christian School in an agricultural community in California. He and his wife Barbara have three children of school age. Because of his work schedule, Dave is probably one of the more visible board members at school; in fact, he seems to enjoy dropping by to talk with teachers and students. Here are some of Dave's thoughts about serving on the board:

"Recently I was asked to give some opinions about being a Christian school board member.

"As I thought about the topic, several ideas came to mind: Christian school funding problems, the changing lifestyle of Christians and how this relates to a loss of dedication for Christian education, and Christian stewardship and the school budget.

"As I reviewed the possibilities I realized they were very negative. By occupation I am a police officer, and as such, most of my working day is spent dealing with negative situations. Was I now involved, even in my off-duty hours, in a primarily negative atmosphere?

"I eliminated these topics because I do not feel they properly represent my time on the board. This is not to say these problems do not exist. They do, and as a Christian school board we are struggling with them.

"I decided to try a more positive subject: The relationship of Christian School Board Members to Christian School Teachers.

"So what is the proper relationship between teacher and board member? Is the teacher to be considered subservient to the board or is the board to be considered a support unit for the teacher? Both are correct. Without the *energetic* support of the board, the teacher cannot be an effective instructor. That the board must supply the 'hardware' needed by the teacher (i.e. room, desks, books, etc.) goes without saying. The board must also be swift to stand behind the teacher in matters of classroom control, discipline, and instruction. Complaints or accusations against teachers must be

handled promptly, considered thoroughly, and disposed of in a Christian manner.

"Teachers must recognize that ' the buck ' has to stop somewhere and does so with the board. The school board must make decisions or the school will flounder. Not all decisions are easy and sometimes the decisions are unpopular, but they must be made.

"What is the bottom line? Even though we're different, we're the same. Neither teacher nor board member can do his God-given task without the other.

"My son came home from school with a ' required reading list. ' I believe that I Corinthians 12 should be on our ' required reading list, ' with special attention to verses 22 through 31.

"And when we have our differences, we must remember that we are ONE, with a common goal: A quality CHRISTIAN education for our students.

"I Corinthians 12:27: Now we are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

NANCY Veldhuizen is the first woman to serve on the Pella Christian High School board (PCHS), to which she was elected in July of 1983. She and her husband Lee are the parents of two high school students and a fourth grader. In addition to meeting the demands of farm life, Nancy serves as patient care coordinator of Hospice of Mahaska County, Iowa, a part-time nursing position.

Nancy believes her role as a mother qualifies her to be particularly aware of school situations. Most of the schoolday's activities are discussed in the first half hour after children return home from school, so Nancy reserves this time to listen. Although she maintains that both sexes possess the ability to be sensitive, caring, patient, and empathetic, women in our culture tend to show stronger tendencies in these qualities whereas men tend to display the analytical, rational, rule-and-order problem-solving qualities. She believes school boards benefit by having a balance of both kinds of input.

After her first year of service, Nancy comments that she finds the PCHS board very supportive, and an atmosphere of cooperation prevails. Her first responsibility as a board member is to God, for she sees the school as a spiritual as well as an educational enterprise.

Nancy spoke with several teachers about building effective board-faculty relationships. She expressed the following ideas:

"Some of the teachers feel that personal interest in their work is most important. In one instance, a phone call from the board president was much appreciated.

"School visiting, the practice of all board members systematically visiting classes throughout the year, should not be viewed as a 'have to' task, with board members waiting till the day before, or even the day of the board meeting. It is important to come with the right attitude in order to see the atmosphere of the school and to appreciate each teacher as a person with a Christian commitment to education and to the students.

"One attitude necessary for all board members is an ability to be confidential. Respect and trust are earned when parents, staff, and fellow board members can be certain that you are capable of strict confidentiality.

"The faculty should also understand the problems a school board faces. The administrator can do much to help them acquire a sympathetic understanding of a board's struggle in making decisions. One instructor I spoke with would like to see a teacher sit in on board meetings, which would enable the faculty to empathize with board members.

"For Christian board members and faculty, daily prayer support and frequent words of appreciation are a necessity.

"In my term as a board member, I want to be effective in the policy-making decisions for PCHS, efficient in the duties entrusted to me as secretary, and fitting as a representative for future women on the board.

"I recommend two books to every new school board member: the Christian Schools International handbook, *What Every Christian School Board Member Should Know!*, and Philip Elve's book, *Managing Christian Schools.* In the latter, he ends with this thought:

> School management is not only a matter of information, education, and skill. It is a matter of sensitivity, concern, and empathy. That empathy is a gift of God, but not a free gift. It is a gift given only to those who work at and for it.
>
> Your Christian school will have what it needs if those who work in and for it have empathy with each other. Empathy is the key element in Christian school leadership and management. It is the one essential ingredient which makes a Christian school something special!"

H.K. Zoeklicht

# A Surprise Appearance

UPON leaving chapel this bracing winter Thursday morning and entering the faculty lounge, the teachers of Omni Christian High happened upon a remarkable phenomenon. There, next to the coffee urn, briefcase in one hand and coffee cup in the other, stood their former principal, smugly smiling Dr. Peter Rip.

The fledgling college professor was wearing a tan corduroy suit with large brown leather patches at the elbows. Sticking up out of his breast pocket, looking much like a periscope, was a Dr. Grabow pipe, its foul smell mixing incongruously with aromatic waves of Mennen's Aftershave. Perhaps the most startling detail in the profile of the new college professor, however, was the new facial decoration. His upper lip was hidden by a thick reddish-brown mustache, and his chin sported a sharply pointed but slightly crooked Vandyke.

"Will you look at those threads," said Matt DeWit. "Must be a sale on at Penney's. Welcome back, uh, Dr. Rip. What brings you here?"

"Oh, nothing much, really," said Rip. "I'm doing some field research for the college, and I wanted to include Omni in my data base."

Bold Bill Silver, business teacher, quickly posed a question. "Now, Rip," he said with slight irreverence, "tell me about those teaching loads at the college. Is it true that you have only nine hours of teaching a week, and that's a full load?"

By now many of the teachers had picked up their goodies and were gathered around their former principal. Rip grinned slightly at the question, sipped his coffee, and responded: "Now wait a minute, Bill. You are right, of course, about the numbers. I do teach nine hours a week. But you have to understand how long it takes to prepare a lecture. You don't just walk into a college classroom and talk, you know; you read books and, uh, things first. And you attend committee meetings and have conferences with students. Let me assure you that we keep plenty busy at Servant College."

Upon hearing this apologia, Steve VanderPrikkel, who was standing at the perimeter of the group, nudged Bill Silver and whispered, "Baloney. My niece is taking one of Rip's courses, and all he does is tell stories about what it's like to be a principal." Silver grinned and shook his head.

Now the new principal, former history teacher Bob DenDenker, broke into the general conversation. "Welcome back, Peter. It really is good to see you. And right now you can be of special help to us."

"And how is that?" responded Rip. "Always glad to be of help, of course."

"Well," said DenDenker, "you know about our efforts to bring the faculty, administration, and board of Omni closer together, to understand each other better and all that. Now, you've had a lot of experience. So I'd like to pick your brain on that."

"Bob is going to need a pick axe to do that," said Silver under his breath.

"Of course," said Professor Rip. "Fire away." He had been trying to light his pipe during this conversation, and hot sparks had fallen from the pipe and were now gradually burning several holes in his necktie.

"Well," said DenDenker, "to start with, what do you think about the idea of having a member of the faculty as a kind of *ex officio* member of the board? That membership could be rotated from year to year, you know, so that various departments would be represented. What do you think of the idea?"

"Yes, yes," responded the former principal. "That's a very good question, Bob. But now, you have to explore such a question from all angles. What do you think would be gained by such an innovation? What are the advantages? so to speak."

"Plenty," boomed VanderPrikkel. "For one thing, we teachers would have someone to speak for us at board meetings. No offense intended," murmured Steve as he looked in Bob's direction, suddenly self conscious about what he had just said.

The college professor flushed a bit and responded. "You may *think* that such an arrangement would benefit you, Steve, but just the other day I was reading an article by, uh, I think it was Dr. Flakey—in the recent issue of, uh, *Educational Research Today,* if I'm not mistaken—I read so much these days—and Flakey points out that his research shows that school board business is hampered considerably by the constant presence of a teacher or teachers at the board meeting. And I must say, based on my many years as administrator, I tend to agree with Flakey that the teacher can better use his time teaching. Flakey points out the rather obvious fact that the principal can and should represent the faculty at board meetings. Yes, he makes that point pointedly, I would say."

"Aw, come on now, prof," needled VanderPrikkel. "I wonder how often you took our side in issues discussed by the board. And that's the heart of the matter. If we don't speak for ourselves, who will? Principals have other obligations."

Dr. Peter Rip began to turn red around his neck, and he began to change his mind about Omni as data base. Meanwhile John Vroom, Bible teacher, sensing that everyone's attention was turning towards the lively dialogue, stepped furtively to the back of the group and grabbed a jelly doughnut from the tray on the coffee table. Opening his eager mouth, he

squirted it full of the raspberry jelly.

Rip's retort to Steve was angry. "Now you look here, Steve, that's not fair. I always had the best interests of my faculty at heart. You know that."

"Well, then," said a slightly subdued VanderPrikkel, "tell us why we never even had a voice in anything around here. Shouldn't we be represented in the choice of, let's say, a Bible teacher? Shouldn't John, who has been a Bible teacher here for twenty years, have a major say in such a choice? Why should an administrator who has never taught Bible, and board members who know even less about it, have all the say?" Whenever VanderPrikkel was angry, his adam's apple wiggled. This time it nearly went out of control.

John Vroom, who had been finishing off the empty shell of his jelly doughnut, now tuned into the conversation again.

"That's an interesting point, Steve. I couldn't have said it better myself. What do you think about that, Dr., uh, Professor Rip? Shouldn't faculty have as much to say about that as the board and the principal?"

"And what about salaries?" piped in Bill Silver. "Why can't we have a choice in that? Who knows our needs better than we do? Why do we have to just take whatever salary the board offers and then say thank you? You know, I think we *should* have one of us on the board. Is there any chance of getting that, Bob? Are you in favor of it?"

DenDenker smiled a bit nervously and said, "I think the idea is a good one, and we've got to explore that. That's why I wanted Dr. Rip's opinion."

All this time Peter Rip had been trying to get his pipe going so that he could hide his head in a cloud of smoke. But he couldn't get the tobacco to burn. Instead, each time he drew on the pipe it made gurgling sounds, as though filled with water. The bell rang for the third hour, and teachers and staff began to leave the room.

"Better clean that pipe and change that filter too, Peter," said DenDenker gently. He sensed that his teachers had been a bit hard on their former principal.

"I guess so," said a subdued professor. And then, confessionally, "I guess I'm still learning to smoke this pipe; sort of goes with the image, you know." Glancing cautiously around to make sure they were alone, Peter Rip added, "If I were you I'd be careful about that teacher-on-the-board business. You can't really speak honestly to the board with a teacher in the room, you know. You certainly remember last year's hassles about John Vroom? How can you talk about sensitive issues regarding personnel if a teacher is always there? No end of trouble that way. Just a word to the wise." Peter Rip placed a fatherly hand on DenDenker's shoulder, then walked quickly from the room.

He left behind the new and younger principal, who helped himself to a second cup of coffee and fell into troubled reverie.

Arnold D. Vogel

# Encouragement—A Mindset

IT is 8:30 p.m. You have just completed your presentation of a written principal's report to the school board and the president turns to you and says,"Thanks for your excellent report once again. I always appreciate the thorough job that you do in preparing your account." On another occasion, you are standing in the hallway during Open House and a parent comes to you and says, "My child is new to this school this year and I just want to say that my husband and I appreciate what has happened to her. It is difficult to believe that she is the same child." At another time you go to your mailbox and find a note that says, "Thanks for the love, encouragement, and understanding you have given. God has transformed me into someone who at least has the courage to try." You walk away from these situations feeling revitalized, fresh, and renewed. You reread the note in order to experience again the pleasure of it. You allow the beauty of these words to penetrate and you share them with a friend or spouse.

As a principal, I appreciate words of encouragement. They provide incentive to continue my work; they give a feeling of accomplishment and acceptance and provide courage to face the next situation. Encouragement can be a bright spot in a day that might otherwise seem overwhelming. My spirit is lifted; I am thankful to the Lord and want to respond to Him and others lovingly.

I am not unique in my need for encouragement. Teachers, students, board members, and parents of our Christian school community can all be transformed by the power of another's loving words.I suggest that encouragement be a mindset in educational leadership.

**What does the Bible say about encouragement?** The Bible speaks often about encouragement. On many occasions the apostles instructed Christians to build each other up in the faith (I Thessalonians 5:11, 14; Hebrews 10:25); Paul wrote comforting letters to the early churches (II Corinthians 7:4, Colossians 2:2) and his co-workers Timothy and Titus; Christ taught and encouraged his disciples and people with whom he came in contact (John 6:20, Luke 8:48, 50); and God himself commands Moses to encourage Joshua (Deuteronomy 1:38, Deuteronomy 3:28). Numerous passages refer to the Bible itself as a source of encouragement to Christians (Romans 15:4-5) and provide the hope of eternal life which encourages all of us (Thessalonians 2:16, 17). Encouragement seems to be a biblical concept that permeates its message.

**What does it mean then, to encourage?** Webster tells us that to encourage means to provide courage, give hope, inspire confidence, cause one to be bold or bolder, give support, or be favorable to someone. In biblical references the word is used to describe guidance, direction, or instruction—a nudging back on course, a reminder of a goal. The direction reminds readers of their hope in Jesus Christ and thus builds their confidence in themselves as they seek their way in an uncertain world. The guidance indicates areas in which persons are to be commended and cautions them to make decisions that would be helpful to themselves or the Christian community. The instruction tells people to keep on going, that the effort is worthwhile. Reminders provide the necessary strength and courage which everyone needs in order to take on a task, whether it is to live a Christian life in turbulent times, to attack a camp at a time of battle, to lead a nation, or to face personal trials. Scriptural encouragement also denotes compassion, support, and warmth. There is an element of kindness, gentleness, respect, mutual trust, and of holding one another in high regard or value. There is an acceptance of where the person or group of people is at any given moment—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. People are enabled to set reasonable and realistic goals and feel supported as they work toward objectives. On one occasion in Psalm 10:17, the psalmist uses the word "encourage" in the context of hearing and listening to the needs of an afflicted person. Never is this term used in a critical, judgemental setting nor is it associated with harsh reprimands and nonsupport. The recipients would have felt good after each of these encounters and if changes were needed or indicated, these children of God would be reinforced, loved, and helped through any difficult transitions.

Administrators and educational leaders in our Christian school community must be encouragers! Our task is not only to set a positive tone in our school but also to promote a spiritual atmosphere where students can enjoy living, learning, and growing. An environment permeated with encouragement will accomplish this task.

**Communication—the Tool for Encouragement.** This environment requires first that we model encouragement. The key word here is communication. We must communicate a loving attitude to all those with whom we work in the school community, whether a board member, teacher, student, or parent. We all consider ourselves loving persons and we most likely are, but do we give evidence of

this love? A recent personal experience will illustrate my point. Two students, on separate occasions, told me that I didn't care about them. I was shocked because I had no negative feelings toward either of them. They both told me that I never said anything to them in the hallways. I had loved them, but failed to communicate that love in ways they would understand. We must not only value all students and see them as important to God and his community, but also let them know that they are special to us! No parent, student, or teacher is unimportant or unworthy of our time and consideration. His or her needs and concerns may seem trivial to us but we must listen patiently. We may not reject, demean, exhort or judge; we must listen, help, and support him or her. We must begin by looking for the good in another's personality, character, or work and make a point of expressing our appreciation and thanks for the good we see.

**Modeling Encouragement.** Principals model encouragement by giving guidance and direction to others as we chart our way through uncertainties. Board members need our support, helpful comments, and sometimes our assurance as they question what the expectations are, labor with an issue, or promote the school. Parents need our understanding and empathy as they struggle with an unmotivated child, try to comprehend the objectives for a particular course, or deal with a rebellious adolescent. Teachers need our guidance as they seek to improve their instruction, relate to students more effectively, or develop a unit that will better meet the needs of their classes. Students need our support, direction, and understanding as they proceed from the beginnings of wisdom—which may involve floundering about and testing things to fullness in Christ.

**Teaching Encouragement.** In addition to modeling encouragement, administrators can take steps to actively promote it within the school. Awareness of its value and significance in interpersonal relations can be increased through discussions in faculty meetings, individual conferences with teachers, workshops, seminars, courses, devotions, and readings. Discussions can be initiated on the development of communication skills, on better understanding of the adolescent, on perceiving children in nonjudgemental ways, and on increasing appreciation for the significance of love as a healing agent in the lives of children. Teachers, in turn, can instruct their students in the ways to encourage, in the personal benefits of encouragement, in the effects encouragement has on the school and Christian community, and in the importance that God places on it. In the resolution of interpersonal conflicts, student can be educated to focus on the positive aspects of others rather than the negative, to express appreciation for one another, and to value every person as a special creation of the Lord.

**Practicing Encouragement in Curriculum and Grading.** A third way in which, I believe, encouragement should occur is in our curriculum and grading system. This is more difficult to accomplish in our schools as currently structured. It seems that our system frequently does not serve as an encourager for academic progress and growth for far too many of our students. Students who receive grades which are below average and study course material at an ability level too advanced for them to comprehend are often not encouraged by the work or the evaluation. They are not built up, given confidence for future success, or given incentive for subsequent tasks. Rather, they are often defeated and robbed of self esteem and motivation. At the other end are the students receiving top grades without being inspired to reach for higher goals. They may become complacent, disinterested, and unstimulated. The challenge to all those involved in education is to meet these needs. They are ones for which no simple solution exists, but ones with which we must struggle.

I have talked about encouragement—its benefit to me, its importance in Scripture. I have shown how it must be a vital part of our relations with parents, teachers, and students, and I have indicated ways in which that can be done. I would now like to challenge each of you to make encouragement a mindset in your school community.

---

*Arnold Vogel is principal of Watson Groen Christian School in Seattle, Washington.*

# Christian School Advocate Present Your Case!

Leonard E. Miller

SOME years ago a sign which was placed in front of a church asked the question, "If you were tried for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" It is a very challenging question put in a friendly sort of way, suitable for the meditation of Christians of all persuasions. Note that the question does not ask for your creed.

A radio preacher recently voiced another expression with the same concern when he said, "I'm so tired of people telling me how much they admire the Sermon on the Mount. The important thing is not whether you *vote* for it, but whether you *do* it!"

In reference to the promotion of Christian schools, these two quotations might be rephrased: "I've read your brochure and now I'm all confused by this business about a Christian educational philosophy. Please tell me in plain English what you actually do that I can recognize as distinctively Christian."

That would be a candidate for the all-time champion fair question, wouldn't it? Yet too often the promotional literature that Christian schools put out does not consider this question.

What was your reaction to the latest announcement that someone from Onesimus Christian School was to speak on "The Importance of Christian Education"?

The word "propaganda" comes to mind. That is a perfectly legitimate word. So is "indoctrination." It is quite appropriate to use propaganda in heralding the cause of Christian schools, and some indoctrination may be necessary to alert parents to the potential such schools have for instilling a consistent world-and-life-view. But look at it this way:

1. Enterprise: school
2. Product: trained and/or educated students
3. Cost: $1000 + /year, carpool duty, 100 hours volunteer labor, 1000 cookies.

No matter how susceptible to propaganda or how readily indoctrinated, about 93 out of 100 Christian parents will find item 3 in that list above the most thought-provoking or interesting one. It is necessary to do something to make items 1 and 2 more meaningful if you are in the position of promoting a Christian school. Suggestions are given below for suitable techniques.

**Communicating Your School's Worth to Prospective Investors.**

a. **Credentials.** Describe the criteria for selecting teachers and other staff members. List teachers' educational backgrounds, including in-service, post-graduate or other training experiences in their specialties. Include short biographies of some, with personal statements of their approaches to their chosen subjects and to dealing with children.

b. **Organizational integrity.** Describe what teacher training and evaluation programs you offer, including the criteria used. Explain how outstanding performance is rewarded. Briefly give the rationale behind the grading system and how the overall development of individual students is monitored. Summarize disciplinary procedures and the code of behavior they are intended to enforce. Show how school and parent efforts are coordinated.

c. **Community standing.** Describe the school's participation in the educational, Christian, and civic communities. Examples might be: the most recent use of the school building for public events; the last topical educational symposium sponsored by the school; the recent "Onesimus grads return to discuss science and the Bible" seminar you held. Holding local elections in your facility would be

valuable publicity.

**Letting Investors Examine the Product.**

a. **Curriculum.** In a readable style, describe the curriculum and the achievement goals for students at each grade level (an insert is recommended for this, to customize the package and to keep the weight down). Also mention how the curriculum is reviewed and updated, and list the major texts or resource materials used. If your school maintains a particular educational philosophy or system of values, prepare something like an "impact statement" to show how it affects the curriculum and/or classroom delivery. Be specific if possible; you may lose your audience again at this point.

b. **Spiritual/moral development strategy.** Have one. Describe how it is intended to work. For example, what means do you employ to give students practical experience and understanding of the concepts of fair play, sharing, self control, respect, or doing one's best? Show how you work with parents of individuals to design and implement the strategy, as well as with the students.

c. **Enrichment activities.** Summarize the types of activities the school uses to supplement and to reinforce what is taught in class, such as science and arts fairs, help for the needy, visits to work sites, or picnics together. Include photos of these activities.

d. **Testimonials.** Include a selection of short statements or quotations from students, former students, parents, or investors giving their opinions as to the part of your school's program which most directly influenced their Christian attitude and conduct or perhaps their preparation for entering the work force. Almost any short subject will do, but avoid "old chum" stories since they are quite common to schools of all types.

These several suggestions, when added to your school's present promotional literature and/or speaker's notes, are guaranteed to raise the level of attention and interest in your audience. At least they will know that, in stating your case for Christian schools, you are aware that the questions they ask are legitimate and fair.

*Dr. Miller is a former member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's Committee on Christian Education, and presently resides in Kensington, Maryland.*

# READER RESPONSE

## Appreciate Recent Issue

The October-November issue of Christian Educators Journal was very well done. Your new lay-out makes the magazine so much nicer reading. When I first heard that you intended to publish an issue on classroom management I was afraid it would become one of those how-to issues. Your editorial characterized the issue well in that it contained just enough of basic perspectives and hints at how these perspectives should be developed. There were enough articles to help us question why we do what we do in the school and classroom and there was enough to encourage beginning teachers. Keep asking the questions which challenge our practice of education. Continue to help us explore new directions.

John Vanderhoek
Christian Schools International
District 11
Curriculum Coordinator

Ivan Thorn

# The Failure of Modern Psychology

***Journalist Ivan Thorn studied in both medicine and psychology prior to his writing career. While studying psychology he became aware that its results did not match its claims. His interest in the similar ideas of Dr. W.K. Kilpatrick led to the following interview.***

William Kirk Kilpatrick is an associate professor of educational psychology at Boston College and the author of *Identity and Intimacy,* one of the first books to criticise the narcistic drift in psychology. His most recent book, *Psychological Seduction: The Failure of Modern Psychology,* (see book review in this issue) has stirred controversy over the infiltration of psychology into religion, particularly Christianity.

**Q** *If your book is about the infiltration of psychology into religion, why the title, "Psychological Seduction"?*

**A** Well, to seduce means to lead away from duty or proper conduct. I think that has been the result of the American flirtation with psychology. The effect of popular psychology is to make us think we only have a duty to ourselves. Of course, for a seduction to be successful the seducer must appear attractive and he must promise a lot. Psychology fits the bill on both counts.

**Q** *With subtitling your book, "The Failure of Modern Psychology" are you suggesting that psychology has failed to live up to its promises?*

**A** When professionals really do know what they are doing you expect that sooner or later the results will show. Now, there has been an enormous explosion of helping professionals in recent years: The American Psychiatric Association grew 400 percent between 1954 and 1980; during the same approximate period, the membership of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry increased 2000 percent, while the American Association of Sex Educators and Counsellors mushroomed from a charter membership of 250 in 1967, to 48,000 by 1976. So, we would expect to see some improvement in the indices of social health. But this has not been the case. The divorce rate continues to climb, as do the rates of suicide, drug abuse . . . and violent crimes. In many ways the situation seems to be deteriorating. As one British sociologist put it, "If, whenever the fire brigade arrives the flames become fiercer, you have to wonder what it is they are pouring on the fire."

**Q** *But aren't there many other factors contributing to these social ills?*

**A** It would be overly simplistic to pin all the blame on psychology, that's true. On the other hand the psychological profession is in no position to argue, "Our theory is all right, it just hasn't been given a chance," because much of the theory is so obviously anti-social. You can't build a family, much less a society, on a principle of self-actualization. And you can't glorify the autonomous individual and then turn around and expect people to live and work in harmony.

**Q** *What's wrong with self-actualization?*

**A** Well, in the first place, it's a very fuzzy concept. It doesn't have the concreteness of the traditional standards by which people once tried to guide their lives—"Honor thy father and thy mother," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Feed the hungry," "Husbands honor your wives," etc. In the second place, actualizations often come in conflict. A father who spends all his time actualizing his career potential may be doing positive harm to his children's chances for developing their potential. To simply say "go actualize yourself" doesn't give us a clue as to what we should do in situations like that, unless it means always put yourself first. Unfortunately, when you read between the lines you see that this is exactly what the popular psychology expert does mean.

**Q** *How about the emphasis on self-actualization—is it important to feel good about ourselves?*

**A** That depends. If you've just done something rotten then you should not feel good about yourself. Here again, "Feeling good about myself" can be used to justify all sorts of behavior. We're all familiar with the cliche "I can't be good to others unless I'm good to myself." But that's the sort or rationale that a man uses when he's contemplating adultery. "This affair," he says to himself, "will make me feel better about myself. And if I feel better about myself then I'll be a better husband." But in reality, as we know, it rarely works that way.

**Q** *Are you condemning all psychology?*

**A** No, it's perfectly legitimate to study and describe human behavior. The problem is that many psychologists are not very good observers of human nature. They tend to leave out many crucial facts. Freud, for example, was the last major theorist with enough perception to notice that there is something drastically wrong with human nature. But too many contemporary psychologists are in the business of prescription rather than description. They make up solutions before they really understand the problems. And, by the way, I don't mean to impugn the idealism or good intentions of psychologists. Many are good people who do good work and genuinely do help people. My criticisms are directed more against the way in which psychology has evolved into a philosophy of life that has filtered into every area of our culture. And I think this philosophy creates more problems than individual therapists can possibly handle. We can draw an analogy here to the welfare system. Although there are many individual social workers and welfare workers who give help to people in distress, we are beginning to wonder if the welfare philosophy itself does not create many of the problems that the welfare system is designed to cure.

**Q** *Can you elaborate a bit?*

**A** Yes. A psychological society tends to be a society of great expectations, and a society of great expectations is often a society of great frustrations. A man who has been conditioned to believe he has unlimited potentials is sooner or later in for a big let down. It's ironic that the most psychologically sophisticated people history has produced should be so prone to depression.

**Q** *On the other hand is it not true that psychologists have developed drugs that may cure depression and other mental illness?*

**A** Yes, although "cure" is a bit too strong a word. Up until now these drugs have been helpful in controlling mental illness but I don't think we can say they cure it. And, of course, they can have nasty side effects. But even supposing we could, by the use of drugs, cure people of neurotic unhappiness, we would still have the problem of what Freud called "normal unhappiness." And here again it seems to me that psychology intensifies the problem because the psychological prescription for happiness is all wrong.

**Q** *How?*

**A** We are led to believe that happiness lies within—that it can be found by greater self-awareness, or by getting closer to ourselves or some similar formula. This flies in the face of traditional wisdom which holds that happiness is to be found outside ourselves in relationship with other people and with God. I think everyday observation demands that we give the nod to traditional wisdom in this case. For example, when we say of someone that he was beside himself with laughter or that he was immersed in conversation we recognize that the best times are the times when we forget ourselves. The word ecstasy, as you probably know, comes from a Greek word which means to stand outside oneself.

**Q** *You have a chapter entitled "The Dismal Science? 1984 and Beyond," what do you mean by that?*

**A** That if we're not careful we're going to end up with the same type of dismal society portrayed in Orwell's book. Only in our case it's more likely to be ushered in by smiling members of the helping profession than by jack-booted storm troopers. Orwell realized that one of the best ways of manipulating people is by manipulating the language, and the behavioral scientists are past masters at doing this. The way we think is, of course, determined to a large extent by the words available to us, so if certain words fall out of use so do certain concepts. For example, we are innundated with words such as "needs," "naturals," and "sexuals" but we don't hear much any more from "virtue," "valor," or "purity." Then too, we don't hear much about raising families today but we hear a great deal about parenting—and that word carries the implication that having a family is no different from any other kind of career. And not necessarily the type of career that requires a full measure of devotion. Mothers and fathers are now referred to by psychologists as "care takers." It's alarming to me that many of our behavioral scientists seem intent on doing the same sort of thing totalitarian societies do—to wipe out all special ties of emotion or allegiance such as might exist between husband and wife or parent and child. And this extreme emphasis on the autonomous individual freed

from family and freed from loyalties leads straight to the police state because extreme individualism is not at all incompatible with totalitarianism. It is families and churches, and neighborhoods, and communities that the totalitarian state fears—not aggregates of isolated individuals.

**Q** *You spoke earlier of psychology filtering into every area of our culture. Can you give an example?*

**A** The most interesting example for me is the influence psychology has had on religion, particularly Christianity. The ironic thing about it is that most popular psychology flatly contradicts the Christian message, and yet many priests and pastors seem hellbent (If I may use that term) on blending the two.

**Q** *If psychology and Christianity are incompatible wouldn't church leaders be able to see that?*

**A** They should but they often don't—for two reasons. The first is that the churches are interested in helping people and psychology seems like a good way of helping people. The second reason is that psychology is a sort of counterfeit of Christianity. It looks like Christianity, sounds like Christianity, and evokes Christian sentiments. Both Christianity and psychology say that we should love ourselves; both talk about the importance of our not judging others; and both say that in certain important ways we should become like little children. As a result, many Christians have let their faith become confused with psychological ideas. But this blending has all happened at the expense of Christianity. It's done enormous harm to the churches.

**Q** *How so?*

**A** Well, it's as though the American government were to hire the KGB as consultants on how to improve the American system. The philosophy of the KGB doesn't lend itself to that purpose. In a similar way the philosophy of popular psychology acts to undercut the Christian position. The prime example is the emphasis on self-acceptance. By-and-large, psychology says we should accept ourselves as we are. "We're O.K. the way we are and we only need to learn how to be ourselves." Christianity, on the other hand, says that there is something wrong with us as we are, that we need a transformation before we start patting ourselves on the back." Now if psychology is right about this, it reduces the good news of the gospels to the status of *nice* news—nice because there was never anything wrong with us. And all this business about needing a savior is rendered superfluous.

**Q** *Can you give another example of this opposition?*

**A** Well, let me carry the logic of my previous statement a bit further. Psychology doesn't have much use for the ideas of sin. But sin is integral to Christianity. If we are not sincerely in need of a savior then Christianity loses its point. Psychology, however, *has* been very successful in its campaign to get us to accept ourselves. The result has been a lowering of the consciousness of sin. In the Catholic Church, for example, there has been an enormous falling off of the practice of confession and this is not because Catholics have suddenly adopted the Protestant idea of confessing sins straight to God but because they know of no sins to confess.

**Q** *Is this mainly a Catholic phenomena?*

**A** No, among some Protestant evangelicals there is a tendency to substitute the psychology of positive thinking for genuine Christian faith. In addition, there is an enormous susceptibility to the philosophy of self-esteem. One very prominent media evangelist has taken to calling self-esteem "the highest value," and he now describes sin as "negative self-esteem." He calls for a "new reformation" based on "self-esteem." In the "emerging reformation" he says, "psychology and theology will work side-by-side as strong allies." No one who reads this man can doubt his good intentions and his bright hopes. But anyone who can read the recent past and see the result of such alliances will not be so optimistic.

**Q** *Couldn't it be argued that this makes religion more relevant?*

**A** It's been said that he who marries the spirit of the times is soon a widower. Those churches which have tried hardest to be relevant have actually lost the most members. When you try to fit Christianity into a procrustean bed of psychology you end up cutting off all

the unique and compelling parts of it. I've seen religious study texts for young Christians that go on and on about whether St. Paul had self-esteem or whether Christ had good decision-making skills. When you start reducing religion to the level of that kind of psychological jargon you lose sight of the fact that there are parts of the faith so awesome and unfathomable that they lie far beyond the reach of the social sciences.

**Q** *Does that mean psychology is incompatible with all religion?*

**A** No, it blends in very nicely with Eastern Religions. Most humanistic psychologists, for example, end up espousing some form of Buddhism or Hinduism. There is a Hindu prayer which goes "I bow to the God within." That seems to be the only type of God psychology is comfortable with.

**Q** *Is your book addressed only to Christians then?*

**A** No, my criticism of psychology is not just that it goes against the grain of common sense. In comparing Christianity with psychology, I'm not making an appeal to faith so much as an appeal to reason. I'm simply saying that Christianity is more realistic about human nature than psychology is. It's willing to paint us as we are, wants and all.

**Q** *Could you give an example of this greater realism?*

**A** Yes, take the area of moral education. At present most American and Canadian schools are dominated by psychological models. The general techniques here are to present ethical dilemmas, discuss them in a neutral manner, and then have the student clarify his own values. Now our ancestors, Christian and non-Christian alike, would have objected on two counts to this procedure. They would have observed that a moral crisis is more like a physical struggle than a mental problem. The reaction to it has to be in the "muscles" as well as the mind. In other words, virtue needs to be practical just as tennis needs to be practiced. This is why the traditional approach to moral education placed such an emphasis on character training. On the second count they would have objected to the modern scheme on the grounds that it provides no motivation for acting morally. Most of us recognize that the difficult part of morality is not so much knowing what is right but actually doing it. What we need are models to follow—models of virtue, courage, and honor, and so forth. For the most part these were provided in stories: The Illiad and The Odyssey for the Greeks, Sagas for Irish and Icelanders, stories from the Bible for Christians and Jews. It's quite obvious that young people are still looking for worthy heroes to emulate. The psychological society simply refuses to give them any.

**Q** *Why do you place such a great emphasis on stories?*

**A** Because we all have a storytelling instinct and we all have an appetite for stories, just as we do for food and drink. It's a need that has been sorely neglected by psychologists. In fact, the psychological society tends to work against the elements that make for the good story: love, loyalty, heroes, and good and evil. This is why so much of our modern literature and film falls flat. Dorothy Sayers once said that you can't have drama without dogma. That is, you need to have prohibitions that are taken seriously. I recently watched a made-for-television film in which a priest has an affair with a married woman. When she finds out about him she is shocked. And when he finds out she is married, he's shocked. And we, the audience, are supposed to be shocked as well. But, of course, we're not, because there is nothing in modern society to suggest in the first place that priestly vows or marriage vows should be taken seriously.

**Q** *Are there other needs which psychology neglects?*

**A** Yes, we all suffer and we all have a need to find meaning in our suffering. We need to feel that our suffering is not wasted. Psychology doesn't have anything to offer on that count. Suffering is made to seem like a mistake that can be avoided by rational living or else it's trivialized by being reduced to the level of a clinical symptom.

Another need that psychology neglects is what C.S. Lewis called the inconsolable longing. We all seem to have a certain desire or need that never is satisfied. No matter how much we have, there is still a part of us that feels unsatisfied and incomplete. Aldous Huxley said, "Sooner or later one asks even of Shakespeare, even of Beethoven,

'Is that all?' " I don't think psychology has any adequate explanation for this longing.

**Q** *In your book you make a distinction between the therapeutic criterion of belief and the religious criterion, would you elaborate?*

**A** The basic therapeutic criterion for judging a belief is to ask: "Will it meet my needs?" or "Will it make me feel good?" The religious criterion is "Is it true?" The interesting thing is that many religious people are now adopting the therapeutic criterion—which is, of course, a completely subjective one. I once talked to a Harvard Divinity School professor who favored the "Gnostic Gospels" over the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John because "the masculine gospels didn't meet the needs of women." It did seem not to matter to her whether or not the Four Gospels were true, nor did she seem to care if the Gnostic Gospels were true. She was only interested in meeting needs.

**Q** *Where did you come by the idea for your book?*

**A** The school of hard knocks. For a number of years I drifted away from Christianity, and for all intents and purposes psychology became my religion. I had a great deal of faith in it but it turned out not to be a very satisfactory faith. It simply did not fit the facts of my life or those of others I knew. I should add that my initial interest in psychology came about at the prompting of priests and ministers. In retrospect, it was a classic case of wolves in sheep's clothing.

**Q** *Do you see this as a deliberate infiltration—a conscious attempt to undermine Christianity?*

**A** No, as I say, most of the undermining is being done by Christians themselves and usually with the best of intentions. I would call it a case of trying to serve two masters. When you try to do that, one of them doesn't get served very well. A good example is a religious study text for Catholics which features a three-page extract on marriage from a book by psychiatrist Carl Rogers but only devotes two sentences to Christ's teachings on the subject. The inference is obvious; the psychological message is the one to listen to. The same applies to a priest who declared children should not be taught the Ten Commandments—it was bad psychology, he said.

**Q** *Many clergy in all denominations seem to be convinced that psychology in general and the idea of self-acceptance specifically, can help Christians with their faith. How do you feel about this?*

**A** It's been my observation that Christian priests who are heavily swayed by psychology tend to use it as the criterion by which they judge Christianity rather than the other way around. I think this is improper. In other words, for them the psychology comes first and the Christianity comes second. The other thing that I think happens is this, that there is so much emphasis in psychology in having harmony and wholeness and superficial peace of mind, and, of course, being free of guilt, that those who are married to psychology will do just about anything to help people get rid of their guilt. The human problem of course is that there is always a discrepancy between our belief, our ideals, and our behavior. Now the traditional Christian or religious response has been to keep the beliefs and to try to change the behavior—realizing that we're only human, and that we fall down, and that we need the grace of God. The psychological idea seems to be that instead of changing the behavior you change the beliefs, beliefs being considerably easier to change than behavior. This is called improving your self-concepts. In other words, if there are particular things which you would like to do but they seem wrong to you for religious reasons or whatever, then the smart thing to do is to readjust your thinking. And in that way you won't have to worry so much about readjusting your behavior, which is a more difficult task. So I think what happens is that the emphasis on self-esteem, on liking ourselves, becomes predominant here so that self-esteem is allowed to cover a multitude of sins. I think in that way that we can really become worse through self-acceptance.

**Q** *Do you have any final observations?*

**A** Yes, since psychology can offer no consolation in the face of suffering and no hope of an afterlife, it places a very great emphasis on being a winner in life. But the fact is, most of us are losers by psychology's standards. How many of us attain to that level of success and mental health portrayed in the self-help books? The standards of success are not only very narrow, they have a narrowing effect on us.

**Q** *I think it has a corrosive effect on our personality—this constant striving after mental health, this ambition to be a winner at all costs.*

**A** Most of the four ideas I've criticized are now being abandoned by serious psychologists as selfish and socially destructive, yet many educators still cling to them, and in particular to the more shallow and naive types of psychology. The irony is that they're climbing on board ship just at the moment the psychologists themselves are abandoning it. It's an unnavigable ship and a leaky one.

---

*Ivan Thorn is a journalist and writer of psychology and sociology for the religious press. He resides in Westbury, New York.*

# So You Have a New Computer?

James H. Jipping

THE telephone in Mr. Van Dork's office rings and the caller is a parent with a gift to give the school. "I understand that Miss Last, our son's third grade teacher, took a computer course this summer. But Timmie tells us that you don't have a computer for her to use in class this fall. Is that true?"

"Yes, that's true, Mrs. Franconi. We really had to spend our money on something more important," comes the reply from Lasco Christian Elementary School's principal, "I hope you understand."

"Yes, that's why I'm calling. My husband and I would like to give the school a microcomputer. If you can keep the cost under a thousand dollars, that is. Just tell us what you decide to get and we'll swing for it. We want Timmie and his friends in Miss Last's class to learn about computers; it is the thing of the future, you know."

"Thank you, thank you, thank you; we will be in touch with you very soon." Van Dork is extremely delighted.

Within three weeks, well before the new school year begins, the new microcomputer is delivered along with several tapes of programs, and Lasco Christian enters the computer age. Does this sound familiar? Is that how your school got started with computer education? And then what happened?

Did your school or school system set up a one- or two-day computer workshop? Were computer courses made available to the members of your staff? Did an "expert" come in for an in-service day? Or did you do nothing, and now the machine sits in the closet?

I suppose there are as many answers to these questions as there are Christian schools in the U.S. and Canada. The computer revolution has descended on us with such lightning

*The uniqueness of microcomputers will not permit them to go the way many fads have gone.*

speed that many of us still have not recovered several years later. We stand in awe and wonder as more and more of our students talk about their home computers and more and more of these machines are brought to school room doors.

Our Christian schools have to stop and take a good long look at computers and their role in Christian education. It is past time that we face the issue in an organized and realistic way. If we respond to this need with only casual, "off-the-cuff" efforts, we are asking for trouble. The uniqueness of microcomputers will not permit them to go the way many fads have gone. Their introduction into schools requires extraordinary preparedness. Look around at the way many schools have introduced computers. You probably see a lot of confusion and even chaos.

ONE attitude which has led to the confusion is the idea that computers are for the bright and accelerated students only. Another misconception is that computers only belong in junior or senior high school where programming can begin. Both ideas are incorrect. They stem, it seems, from the wrong notion that computer literacy IS programming. A student does not have to program to profit from time spent with a computer. A search of the educational literature and journals will reveal a myriad of educational applications that apply to a wide range of student abilities and ages. It is not true that computers are for select groups only.

Before a computer gets to the student, however, it must get past the teachers, and "Computer phobia" is a real problem. So when administrators insist on a computer-literate staff, school boards must cooperate with principals to work out a plan for bringing our staffs to a level of comfort with computers. The staffs must also know what computers can and cannot do, what their strengths and limitations are, and what societal effects they have.

Half-baked, token efforts exemplified by one-day workshops do not solve the problem. Preparing teachers for the computer age cannot be approached this way. A well-designed and adequately-executed plan for meaningful involvement and continual reassessment is necessary. Quality learning experiences demand planning; they do not just happen. An administrator serious about computer literacy might, for instance, set aside an entire year of professional growth meetings to introduce the computer age to the whole staff. A school's faculty cannot afford to be in the dark in a world increasingly affected by the computer.

Such an enlightened faculty could deal with the most critical yet most neglected problem needing attention, the problem of computer integration into the curriculum. Check it out! Take notice! How are computers used in your school? Who uses them? For what? Who planned for their use? Who gets them? Are the computers you have used by a select few, and then only for drill and practice? Does your math or business department have exclusive use of "their" computers?

THESE questions point to a real need in our schools—an effective plan for integrating computers into the curriculum so we can attack computer *illiteracy*. What do we say to our children about the impact this new technology is having on our lives? And even more importantly, what are we saying about a Christian perspective of "computeronics" and all its implications for the future? If we are to be responsible Christian educators, we will want to address the whole range of ideas and problems this computer culture introduces. We and our students must develop a healthy respect for what computers can do for us and for what they cannot and had better not do for us. The key to all this is an articulation of our concept of *computer literacy* and then a plan of action which is based on that.

Some suggest that the place to start an all-out attack on computer illiteracy is at the college level where young people are training to be teachers. It is true that college education departments must require their graduates to be computer literate. But, we cannot wait for these new teachers. Planning must begin now if we are going to succeed in using this new technology instead of being run over by it.

No one is suggesting a computer takeover of your curriculum. Responsible educators will not, may not, let that happen. Computers are and will be a large part of our lives. Computer literacy for faculty and students alike, is a necessity. Obviously, a little work now will pay big dividends later.

Plan now, and use a lot of pedagogical common sense:

1. Define what computer literacy means for your school.
2. Effect a plan to bring your teachers to a defined and acceptable level of literacy.
3. Develop a curriculum integration plan based on your definition of literacy.
4. And then DO IT.

*James Jipping teaches science and computer programming at Holland Christian High School in Holland, Michigan, and is a part-time teaching associate of physics at Hope College.*

Robert J. Keeley

# Computers and Schools: A Statement of Philosophy

***Reaction to this statement would be most welcomed by the committee. Please contact us by writing to: Robert Keeley, Denver Christian Schools, 2135 S. Pearl, Denver, CO 80210.***

THE use of computers in the classroom is one of the major topics facing educators today. There is a vast amount of teaching material available for use in schools from a wide variety of sources. How do teachers decide which material is useful and which is not? What is the value and purpose in having computers in the schools?

The unfortunate thing that has happened in most schools where these questions have arisen is that computers have trickled into the curriculum and the classroom (usually through the math department) and teachers have scrambled to find a way to use them once they were in their rooms. Teachers who were not trained to use computers found themselves compelled to "prepare their students for the future" and grasped at straws to put the computer to use in their room as quickly as possible. Lots of companies peddled their software with claims of great success in teaching students everything from algebra to language arts while making the lessons fun and exciting. The use of computers in many cases involved nothing more than students doing worksheets on a screen instead of on paper.

While the use of computers at the Denver Christian Schools was handled with care and thought, there was no clear purpose or consistent policy towards its use system-wide. Therefore, in the fall of 1983 a committee was assembled with two teachers from each of the schools (elementary, middle, high) and given the following mandate:

1) Review the current use of computers in all classrooms, at all levels.
2) Make recommendations which will provide greater use of the computer as an instructional tool at all grade levels.
3) Make recommendations regarding the allocations of funds necessary to accomplish #2.
4) Make any other recommendations necessary to insure our computer education program remains current.

EARLY in the committee's meetings it was decided that in order to make recommendations of this sort, we needed a clear statement of our philosophy with regard to the use of computers in the classroom. We felt that without a definite purpose laid out carefully, we could not make decisions about what we really wanted in a computer curriculum. The following statement of philosophy was accepted by the committee.*

## STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

As Christian educators we have a responsibility to prepare our students to be ready to deal with the technology around them. The computer is a vital and important part of today's society and will only increase in its availability and importance. For our students to be properly prepared for today's technological society, it is necessary to include instruction in understanding the strengths of computers, their limitations, and a basic knowledge of the steps involved in programming. In addition, the ready availability of microcomputers gives us a unique opportunity to teach problem-solving and logical thought while certain software can allow us to enhance student skills in many other academic areas.

Since technology and computer science is developing and changing at a very rapid pace, it is impossible to predict what the standard languages and procedures of computers will be in ten (or even five) years. Therefore, our instruction in computer use should focus on those things common to most computer systems and which will enable our students to adapt to the changes which will take place. This would include a knowledge of programming, experience with popular software (such as word processor programs), and a brief overview of computer science as a separate discipline. While computers have obvious applications in mathematics and science, they are also valuable teaching aids in all other disciplines. By using computers in all academic areas, the students will have a wide variety of experiences and will be better prepared to use the computer as a tool in their future vocation.

There are a number of different ways a computer can be put to use in the classroom. Care should be taken so that valuable computer time is not spent in activities that could just as easily be done on worksheets. Computers should be put to use doing those things for which computers are uniquely suited. Computers should be made available to *all* teachers for use in their classrooms. *All* teachers have a responsibility to examine their curriculum to see if a unit on the impact of computers on their discipline should be included or if computer use could enhance the education of their students.

*Robert Keeley teaches mathematics for the Denver Christian Middle School in Denver, Colorado, and he also teaches part-time in the math department at the University of Colorado in Denver.*

**This statement is the work of the entire committee; Steve Ahrenholz, Julie Olesen, Robert Keeley, Lance Engbers, Sheryl Boersema, and Marcia Genzink.*

# Seeing Metaphors of the Bible

***In the previous issue Luci Shaw showed how imagination helps us understand truth. This installment shows how imagery adds to our understanding of salvation.***

NOT only is imagination helpful to us as observers and *interpreters* of life, it is an essential part of *the creative* act. C.S. Lewis explained it like this: "With me, the process is much like birdwatching. . . . I see pictures," and"a whole set might join themselves so consistently that there you had a complete story." Elsewhere he said, "As with the Ransom stories, the Narnian tales began with seeing pictures in my head. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* all began with a picture of a faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood."

Some time ago *Time* magazine ran the following brief news item in its Medicine section: "Most inventors struggle on alone. Dr. Sam Bessman, 55, a Los Angeles pediatrician, works in a garage to perfect an artificial pancreas. His chances of making money on the invention are small. But Bessman is unconcerned. Discussing the process of invention, he says, "It's like writing a poem, or composing a symphony, or painting a picture; you see something in your mind. It's the greatest experience in the world!"

Modeste Moussorgsky, Russian composer of "Pictures at an Exhibition," wrote in his journal: "On a snowy day, seen through my window, suddenly appeared a colorful group of peasant women laughing and singing. The image this picture left in my mind became a musical form."

Igor Stravinsky described the process of creating his ballet *Petrouchka* in these words: "In composing the music, I had in mind a distinct picture of a puppet suddenly endowed with life, exasperating the patience of the orchestra with diabolical cascades of arpeggios!"

Dorothy Sayers speaks of the use of images in biblical writing: "The Jews forbade the representation of the Person of God in graven images. Nevertheless, human nature and the nature of human language defeated them. No legislation could prevent the making of verbal pictures: God walks in the garden, He stretches out His arm, His voice shakes the cedars. . . . To forbid the making of pictures about God would be to forbid thinking about God at all, for we are so made that we have no way to think, except in pictures." *(The Mind of the Maker)*

George MacDonald's words echo a similar conviction: "How can we speak of these things at all if we speak not in figures?" he asks. The unseeable, the ineffable, the transcendent must be narrowed, gentled, solidified, contained in metaphors or we could not survive it—we would be overwhelmed and paralyzed and slain. God knows this. And this is one reason for his consistent use of imagery throughout the Bible, not just in the poetic books. As Emily Dickinson has advised us:

> Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—
> Success in Circuit lies
> Too bright for our infirm Delight
> The Truth's superb surprise
>
> As Lightning to the Children eased
> With explanation kind
> The Truth must dazzle gradually
> Or every man be blind—

The word *poet* means, simply, *maker*. God, the first maker, was also the first poet, and it is he who sets his seal of approval not only on creating but on the imaginative mode of expressing and perceiving truth through imagery. Even when God reasons with us, an activity which we might consign to left-brain function, what does he employ to engage our attention? A Creed? A rational, abstract proposition? Dogma? No. In Isaiah 1:18 he flashes a right-brain *image* that we can all see in our heads: "Come now, let us reason together . . . though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool":—vivid pictures that we can neither ignore nor forget because they print themselves in our minds through imagination. God is saying "*This* is like *that:* Your sin has marked you with a stain as deep as a dye, but because I have forgiven you I see you as snow-pure or fleece-white."

Or listen to these evocative words from Isaiah 12: "With joy you will draw water out of the wells of salvation." The Bible is a treasure-house of such metaphors. (Remember the iridescent sunlight leaking into the old house—) The problem is that because so many of them have become familiar to us, we no longer recognize them as figures of speech. But let's see now how such imagery, freshly and creatively seen, adds to our understanding of salvation.

IN Isaiah's brief metaphor, the familiar eastern image of a well in a desert oasis is compared with God, the source of inexhaustible help and blessing, on whom we may draw daily and be filled with joy, as our thirst for him is satisfied continually. (Salvation here is not a one-time event but a continuing process.) *The Good News Bible* puts it this way: "As fresh water brings joy to the thirsty, so God's people rejoice as he saves them" which makes it a little more prosaic, but still—a refreshing thought! What is happening in this metaphor is that some of the meaning attached to a concrete reality (a well, or spring of water) is transferred over to some-

*God shows us what he himself is like, through metaphor.*

thing larger and more abstract and complex and therefore much more difficult for us to grasp, in this case—*salvation.* Metaphor makes it real to us, manageable, comprehensible. (Of course, this may also be a drawback because the very specificity of the metaphor narrows its impact. Salvation is like a lot of other things than a well of fresh water and this particular focus is only one of a number of possible images). Metaphor is imagination *serving* truth. And God is not against this kind of imagination! As we are seeing, he consistently uses this imaginative way of helping us to translate what we may think of as abstract "spiritual truth" into something accessible and possible, and *real.*

That joy drawn from the well of salvation elicits a response of praise. Listen: In Isaiah 55:12 God speaks to his redeemed people: "For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands!" The exhileration of it! Nature joining with human joy to praise the Creator—only a metaphor could express it.

BY contrast, Paul uses a household metaphor to show the contrast between our inadequacy and God's utter adequacy: Think of his illustration in II Corinthians 4—"We have this treasure in clay pots, that the glory may be God's, not ours." I think Paul is showing us a rough, terracotta oil lamp, oval-shaped, with holes at each end—one for a wick of hemp, the other for refilling with olive oil. The flame of the lighted wick is the treasure, shining out from the imperfect clay.

That the glory may be of God

Each day he seems to shine
from the more primitive pots
the battered bowls

Service may polish silver &
gold up to honor
& I could cry to glitter
like porcelain
or lead crystal

But light is a clearer
contrast through my cracks
& flame is cleaner seen
if its container
does not compete

*Romans 10:20-21;*
*II Cor. 4:7*

Paul and the other New Testament writers, inspired by God, used a diversity of metaphors to bring doctrine to life—a well-equipped, well-trained soldier, a disciplined athlete, an industrious farmer, a person looking in a mirror, a clay oil lamp, a fragrance appealing to God, a living stone built into the walls of God's house, a responsible steward, a careful craftsman, a boxer, a wide-awake watchman, a fruit-bearing tree rooted in the ground of Christ, a yoke fellow—each of these unique images tells us something that God expects of us. Conversely, we have the negative images! We are like grass that withers. We are often like sea waves, shifting, unstable, without enduring faith. Or sheep straying. Or slaves of sin.

Robert Frost has defined a parable as a story that "means what it says, and something else besides. And in the New Testament that *something besides* is the more important of the two." Jesus was an unparalleled story-teller, (I am sure many of you have learned the value of teaching through story) and in his parables he constantly points to something we can see with our physical eyes, and then joins it to that something else besides—the spiritually-perceived reality. Many of Jesus' parables are brief—glimpses like these: "You are the salt of the earth." "You are the light of the world." "I am the bread of life." Other stories are more complex—the seed flung across the soil by the sower is likened to the words of God which fall and root in listeners' hearts with varying degrees of success; the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son, all point to the individual's worth in God's sight and the lengths to which he goes to restore that "lost" person. The wise man who constructed his house on a rock foundation, and the short-sighted man who built on sand show us clearly and vividly the importance of the kind of principles that underlie our lives. I could go on, and so could you, but each of these images is timeless, contemporary, concrete, creative. And Jesus didn't always explain his parables; the images he used were nearly always strong enough to speak without explanation. The image itself shows us what we need to see in order to know.

THEN, God shows us what he himself is like, through metaphor. Here are some of his biblical self-portraits: We see him as a King with a kingdom, and subjects, and enemies, and an army, and a strategic plan. Elsewhere in Scripture we see him as a Potter shaping his creatures like clay, into decorative vases, or useful, mundane containers such as water pots or oil lamps. We see him as a Father who loves and disciplines his children, whether rebellious, or obedient. We see him as a Refiner's Fire, burning out the impurity of our molten metal in his fierce yet compassionate furnace heat. In Hosea we see him as an evergreen Tree that provides shade and nourishing fruit no matter what the season. We see him as a Lover persistently and ardently courting a beau-

tiful girl who is both flighty and unfaithful. In John's Gospel we see him as a Vinedresser, carefully cultivating and pruning his grapevines to get the best grapes. You are probably thinking of more images of God. There are scores to choose from.

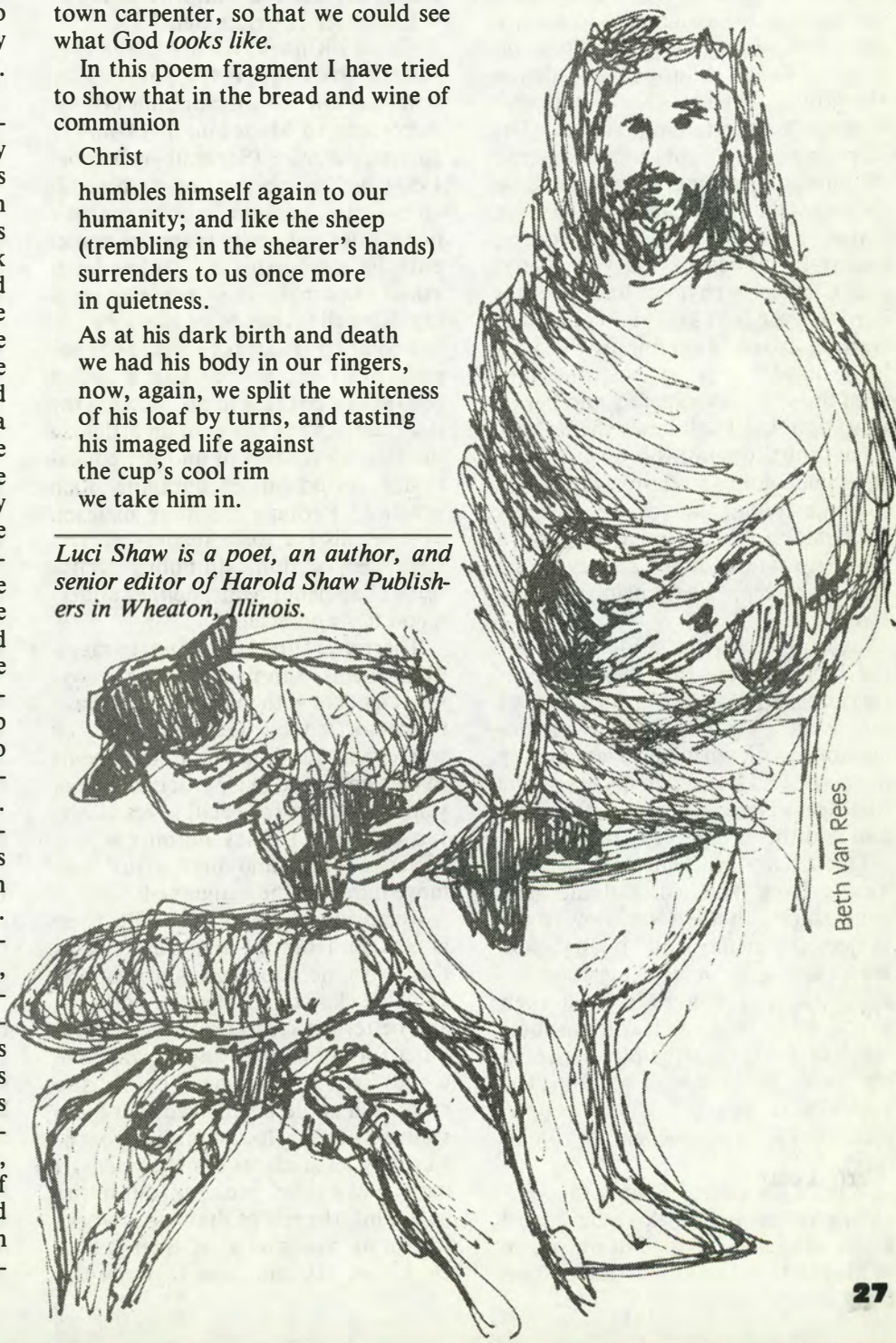
The Holy Spirit, that quiet, powerful, almost shy member of The Trinity is imaged as a dove, as oil, as fire, as water, as a lawyer-advocate. And then there's the kaleidoscope of metaphors that illuminate Christ and *his* work and worth to us: He's the Bread freshly baked and broken. He's the Kernel of wheat that decays in the ground in order to sprout and produce more grain. He's the Wine poured out. He's the sparkling Water in a spring—the divine Perrier! He's the Grapevine, its grapes swelling with the sap that he channels through every branch. He's the Cornerstone of the building. He's the Door to a sheepfold—the place of safety and rest; he swings himself open to admit the sheep but firmly walls out wolves and sheep-stealers. In the same setting the image changes and he is now the Shepherd who names and loves each sheep individually and leads them out to pasture and rescues them from clinging brambles and mountain cliffs. He's the solid Rock Foundation, unshaken by high winds and waves. He's the pioneer who pushed alone through the wilderness to find our salvation. He's the powerful, untamed, golden-maned Lion of royalty. By contrast, he is also the simplicity of a white-fleeced Lamb, innocent, helpless, submissive and sacrificial. He is Bridegroom, he is Morning Star, he is seen through a score of vivid images that flood us with a sense of his diversity and infinity and uniqueness. Yes, Jesus took the risk of reducing himself to what we could see and touch and talk to, of bridging the gap between deity and humanity. Perhaps the ultimate metaphor for Christ is the Incarnation—the Logos made flesh, narrowed down to the span of a small-town carpenter, so that we could see what God *looks like.*

In this poem fragment I have tried to show that in the bread and wine of communion

Christ
humbles himself again to our
humanity; and like the sheep
(trembling in the shearer's hands)
surrenders to us once more
in quietness.

As at his dark birth and death
we had his body in our fingers,
now, again, we split the whiteness
of his loaf by turns, and tasting
his imaged life against
the cup's cool rim
we take him in.

*Luci Shaw is a poet, an author, and senior editor of Harold Shaw Publishers in Wheaton, Illinois.*



Beth Van Rees

Ruth Broersma

# On Memorizing Poetry

ONE of the best things about a Chaucer course I once took with Dr. John Timmerman at Calvin College was his assignment to memorize twenty-four lines from *The Canterbury Tales*. Although I enjoyed everything about the course—Chaucer's entertaining stories, Dr. Timmerman's insights and great sense of humor—learning to read middle English—the lines I memorized have stayed with me longest. Of course, twenty-four lines are not very many, and Chaucer's rhymed lines are not hard to learn, so I kept right on going, starting at the beginning of the Prologue until I knew at least one hundred lines. That was a fair number of years ago, but I still know them. I say them sometimes just for my own pleasure while doing a relatively mindless job like folding laundry. I also say them aloud when I'm driving on a long trip late at night and everyone else is asleep. They help me stay awake.

Recently a former student sent me the kind of note that every teacher treasures. She and her brother, one of our liveliest eighth-graders, were doing homework when he began reciting poems he had learned in my class. She was pleased to be able to chime in with him and she wrote to say thanks.

One of my most memorable New Year's Eves included a dinnertable conversation that led somehow to the subject of memorizing poetry, and soon the guests were taking turns reciting the poems they had in their heads, which they had learned at some much earlier time in their lives, probably junior high or high school. (The guests were mostly business people, incidentally, not teachers of literature).

What's the point? Simply this: Recalling poems is fun! A young man I know admits to having but one poem in his head—"The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert Service—which he will recite while he and his friends are sitting around the campfire at night. What better entertainment?

Galway Kinnell, winner of the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for poetry, suggests another reason for memorizing poetry. According to Madeleine Beckman in *Saturday Review* (September-October 1983), he "memorizes poetry, both his and others', because he believes that a poem does not really enter the reader until he memorizes it." When he is asked to participate in a poetry reading, Kinnell recites from memory.

Requiring students to memorize poems, however, sounds like a rather old-fashioned thing to do. When is the last time anyone has read an article in the *English Journal* or another educational periodical encouraging such practice? Perhaps the mere mention of it recalls for some readers painful memories of dull, stumbling recitations of ancient poems, neither understood nor appreciated.

There are, surely, ways *not* to memorize poems. Simply handing out copies of a poem with instructions to have it memorized by a certain date, or worse still, handing out all the poems to be memorized in a particular school year with dates for each, takes all the fun out of it (to say nothing of the understanding) and makes just one more burdensome assignment.

Requiring students to recite their poems in front of the class makes them very nervous and is a waste of valuable class time. There are other—and better—ways to provide opportunities for public speaking. If someone wishes to say the poem before the class, that could be allowed, but most students prefer a less public approach. I usually let students say the poem to me one at a time, probably out in the hall, while the rest of the class is working on an assignment at their desks. Or I may ask the class to write the poem they have learned (but only after so informing them ahead of time).

While poor methods on the part of the teacher can result in pain rather than pleasure for the students, the choices of poems to be memorized will also affect results. Teachers should avoid assigning poems that are sentimental, moralistic, or quasi-religious.

What poems should teachers choose and what techniques can they use so that memorizing poems will be a rewarding experience for students? Clearly, there is room for all varieties of poetry. The choice depends on the grade level and on the teacher's inclinations. Preferences in poetry are often very personal, and what appeals to one person may not work at all for someone else. In the hope of encouraging the faint-hearted, here are some suggestions, in this case with the focus on junior high.

In about ten minutes seventh- and eighth-graders can learn "I'm Nobody! Who Are You?" by Emily Dickinson. Prompted by a lighthearted manner and generous supply of enthusiasm from the teacher, students will have the poem memorized before they realize it. This can be done in a "by-the-way" fashion on a day when a chance remark brings it to mind or in one of those situations when the lesson is really over and ten minutes remain before the bell. Here's how it might work: The teacher says (in response to a chance remark or one of her own deliberately placed), "That reminds me of that little poem by Emily Dickinson; do you know it?" She recites it (in her best acting style) and then says, "It's very easy to learn. Say the first two lines after me." She goes through the poem this way, a stanza at a time, and then asks students to say the entire poem with her once or twice. End of lesson. The next day she asks if they remember the poem and they say it together again.

Pat Oostenink

From time to time she may ask the class to say the poem with her to reinforce the memory. She may also suggest that they say it at home for the whole family to enjoy. Parents love this.

Frequently poems from the literature textbook are good choices. My eighth-grade students all learn Emily Dickinson's *"I Never Saw a Moor"* and Elizabeth Coatsworth's *"Swift Things Are Beautiful."* Other poems that seventh- and eighth-graders find appealing and fun to memorize are "Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost.

Ninth-graders can be encouraged to stretch a bit. We may begin with Langston Hughes' fairly easy "Dreams" (which they can learn in ten minutes of concentrated effort together in class) and Tennyson's "The Eagle," and progress to Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken," (all found in CSI's *Touchstones* series). A particularly able group may learn "God's Grandeur" by Gerard Manley Hopkins. That one is not easy but it is worth the effort. The class is given as much time as they need to understand it. Often students can point out non-technical items about the form of a poem (rhyme scheme, stanza structure, alliteration) which will help them to learn it.

These are just a few suggestions for starters. Not all of the poems must be serious or even classic. Some students may find strongly rythmic poems attractive; others will like best those that tell a story.

Certainly poems to memorize ought to be of the highest quality and their selection must be appropriate to the students. Proper direction will steer them forward the very best.

Over the course of a year students can learn several poems and carry in their heads a small collection. That's not a bad treasure with which to leave school!

---

*Ruth Broersma teaches eighth and ninth grade English at Creston-Mayfield Christian School, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

# Dorothy Westra

Many towns can claim Dr. Dorothy Westra as their own. Born in Winnipeg, Canada, she resided there only briefly; her father was a minister and the family moved a great deal. After four years in Middleburg, Iowa, and six years in Chicago, Westra's senses were captured by "the West—the mountains, skies, and seas," as she describes Lynden, Washington. Lynden was the stepping stone to South Holland, Illinois, where she attended Chicago Christian High School.

With a major in social studies and language arts, Westra graduated from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1941. Ready to embark on her first teaching adventure, she moved back to Illinois and began teaching at 108th Street Christian School in Roseland (Chicago). When asked about teaching salaries then, she quickly recalled, "Beginning salaries for ten months' work seemed tremendous at eight hundred dollars. It was quite an occasion when the figure

# "Rimmert"

IT was all so new, so different, so . . . so scary-strange. Not at all as Raymond had imagined. His country school in Holland had been small—four grades in one room. For a while, when Aukje was in the hospital, Raymond had been the only sixth grader. And now *this* big room—thirty students all from the same grade, and all with their own desks! Such a long blackboard. A piano. So many windows.

Raymond's mind could hardly take in everything his wide eyes had seen these last three days. Oh, America was so big! Such things to see! Such happenings! The buildings in New York—at least twice as tall as the tallest church steeple in all of Holland! The busy, hurrying airports. The long layover in Chicago where the Boersma family wouldn't leave the plane for fear of getting lost two thousand miles from California. The magic excitement of landing in Los Angeles. The relief in the eyes of Father and Mother at seeing Uncle Sid and Aunt Anne after these many hours, days, years, eternities. So many, many cars. The house without an upstairs that Uncle Sid had rented for them in Bellflower. The halting, choked-up voice of Father as he said a prayer of thanksgiving. The strange, strange sounds of English everyone spoke so fast and so easily . . .

Raymond and Hilda and Gretta would attend Bellflower Christian Elementary School. A good school Uncle Sid said, supported by the Christian Reformed Churches of Bellflower and Artesia. A lot of second generation Dutch parents sent their kids there.

This morning Mother had carefully picked out the children's nicest school clothes. Raymond had asked if he could wear the pull-over sweater she had knitted for his last St. Nicolas day present. It was his favorite sweater, black, with fancy rows of red and yellow diamond shapes. He had first worn it to the Christmas program in the church at Jutryp-Hommerts, five kilometers from his father's farm. He had won first prize in poetry recitation for saying a long poem about Daniel in the lions' den. The prize was a brand new picture book of Dutch heroes. There was a picture of William of Orange on the cover, and the teacher had signed his name on the inside. Raymond had carefully tucked it under his new sweater as he skated home along the frozen ditches criss-crossing the flat Friesian farmlands.

Uncle Sid had taken Raymond and his sisters to school. Uncle talked to the headmaster for a long time. Raymond understood nothing of what they said, and looked down at his shoes in embarrassment when the headmaster asked him a question. Finally Uncle Sid told Raymond to go with the headmaster. He assured Raymond that everything would be fine.

The teacher, Mr. Waver, seated Raymond in the back of the room and moved another boy next to him. Mr. Waver pointed to the boy and said, "John. John Shoemaker. He will help. He will help you. He knows some Dutch words."

Raymond was small for his age and he was glad to see that John was no bigger. Mr. Waver handed Raymond a pencil, a tablet, and a book from which to copy English words. John had permission to whisper the meanings to him. The words were short and in big print.

Raymond felt better when the class was called to order and not everyone stared at him. He started copying. John translated. TABLE—tafel, HOUSE—huis, WALK—lopen. . . .

Raymond looked at the arithmetic problem on the board. He didn't know a word of English, but he didn't need to for arithmetic. What an easy problem! Why did they have such simple problems? If he only knew the English words for numbers. The fat boy in front of Raymond was called up to write the answer. He struggled with it, got it wrong, and came back to his seat. Raymond whispered, "What's his name? Can't he do arithmetic?"

"Alfred Bultsma," John whispered back. "His Grandpa Frank owns the Holland-America store on Central. But that's a hard problem."

Raymond almost laughed out loud. Alfred half turned in his seat and as he did so, Raymond scrawled the answer on his tablet in big careless numbers and showed it to him. Alfred saw the look of triumph. He reached over, closed Raymond's reading book, and planted a fat finger by the number on the cover. Two! Raymond got the message—go back to your second grade book! His face flooded red. He glanced at John and saw no help coming.

Raymond lowered his head and opened the book. Why hadn't he minded his own business? But hadn't Mother told him just this very morning to do his best and everything would work out?

Alfred Bultsma whispered to a girl across the aisle. She looked at Raymond and snickered.

"Give me your sixth grade reading book!" Raymond whispered fiercely at John.

John looked at him, surprised. "Sixth grade?"

"Yes. Let me look at it."

"But I don't . . . This is fourth grade."

"Fourth grade? I'm supposed to be in SIXTH!"

"I guess they want you to learn English first."

"But they never told me. . . . " It wasn't important to them. Uncle Sid had said everything would be just

fine, just go along. . . . Try hard, Mother had said. . . . What did she think he'd been doing all his school years? Messing around? How come he had skipped third grade in Holland then? He had *earned* sixth grade!

English! Thanks to *English* he was a fourth grader studying a second grade book! Oh, he would learn, he would learn!

Under his desk Raymond clenched his fists.

Suddenly, out of frustration, he poked Alfred sharply. Alfred turned angrily and Raymond held up six fingers. "Tell him I'm really in sixth grade!" he demanded of John. Raymond kept his eyes on Alfred. John Shoemaker moved uncomfortably in his seat. He didn't want trouble. He explained to Alfred what Raymond meant. Alfred's eyes narrowed a little. He whispered to John and faced the front.

"What did he say?"

John whispered, "He doesn't believe you, and . . . ," John stopped. Oh, why had he told the teacher he knew Dutch?

"And what?" Raymond urged. "What else?"

"Well . . . something about your sweater. He says . . . ," John hesitated. "He says he likes the colors." John had told a lie. He was glad the noon bell rang.

Raymond sighed in relief. Playtime. He could *play* without talking English! He could do as well as anyone in games! In Holland he'd always been one of the first to be picked for teams. When the class had finished lunch, Raymond eagerly followed John out to the playground.

They passed a basketball court which John said was for sixth graders. Under the far basket Alfred Bultsma was talking to a group of bigger boys. Alfred pointed in Raymond's direction. The group wandered over. There was an uncomfortable silence as they crowded around Raymond and John. Then a voice said, "Ask 'em, Gussie."

A boy with a hard look towered over John. "My brother tells me you translate for the greenhorn."

John made a sound through his nose and looked down.

"Ask him what his Dutch name is."

"Gussie Bultsma wants to know your Dutch name."

Raymond relaxed and let out his breath. "Rimmert." It felt solid and strong and real on his tongue. It meant Rimmert Boersma, the sixth grader running races in Holland . . . Rimmert scoring goals in soccer games . . . Rimmert finding the first killdeer egg in springtime . . . Rimmert pulling his little sister from the ditch . . . Rimmert in green pastures smelling the earth and loving the sky. Rimmert was the good sound of friends yelling across the school ground. Rimmert was the boy Mother had said goodbye to this morning. Not Raymond—Raymond, a name without any bone or muscle . . . Not Raymond, a name as soggy as the oatmeal he ate every morning. "Rimmert," he said again. "Rimmert Boersma."

Gussie wasn't satisfied. "Does he have brothers?"

"Do you have brothers?"

"Sure. Two. Wilbur and Frank."

"Ask him!" There was a strangely hopeful tone to Gussie's voice.

John looked at Raymond. "What are *their* Dutch names?"

"Wytse. Fooke."

"He said it! He said it!" The group exploded into jeering laughter and started to turn away.

Alfred held Gussie back, and asked John, "How do you say *nice* in Dutch?"

"*Mooi.*"

"And how do you say *girl's sweater*?"

John fidgeted and kicked at something in the grass. "I'm not sure."

Gussie stepped closer and said, "Tell him!"

"*Meisje's trui,*" John said softly. He turned away.

Alfred looked at Raymond. He spoke in a mocking girl's voice. "*Mooi Meisje's trui.*" Gussie disappeared around the corner of the building. Alfred hurried after him.

"Say, uh, I'll see you back in class pretty soon," said John. "I gotta wash my hands a minute."

He walked away, then stopped. "Aw, it's all right, Raymond. Gussie picks on everybody. He's really supposed to be in seventh grade."

Raymond didn't hear. His head burned and he saw nothing. He hadn't known the words. He couldn't understand. He didn't know why they laughed. He couldn't answer in English. Without words his mind was no good to him. All it could do was take in the mocking laughter, lock it up in his empty head, and listen to it echo there against his stupid skull forever and ever.

After school Gretta and Hilda chattered excitedly, each wanting to be the first to tell Mother everything.

Raymond slipped into the bedroom. He pulled the sweater over his head. He folded it gently. He looked one last time through its red and yellow diamond shaped windows. He stuffed it in the back of the dresser drawer.

"Rimmert, how did it go with you?" Mother stood in the doorway.

"It went fine," he said, but couldn't look at her. He concentrated on fumbling a piece of paper from his pocket. "I have to learn some English words. And Mother, would you call me Raymond from now on?"

Mother closed the door.

"May I see the English words?"

As Raymond passed Mother the wrinkled paper, their hands touched.

"Mother, they put me back to fourth grade!"

And then his face was against her and his body shook, and the pain and grief of things he would never speak poured out and lapped over Mother and filled the room.

And Mother held him and said, "Rimmert, Rimmert!"

---

*Fred Wind teaches grade five at Bellflower Christian School, Bellflower, California.*

# Autobiography

"My Life" Rich wrote
on his hidden page
—while on the board nouns and verbs played mysterious games
not at all like
the story he wanted to tell.

"How my life was begun," chapter one,
would be sweet and sad
about football with Dad
on the used-to-be yard of home
—divided up now into two distinct properties.

"What I will do," chapter two,
would be lively and new
—once all of the verbs had finished their games
and he could see clear through
to build a unique castle
and plant it lush with green.

"Who I will be," chapter three,
would unfold its glory gradually
from behind those nouns
—shifting dust of chalk that would not talk to him.
He'd be a man of doing things.

"The closed door," chapter four,
would be left out if he could
—he shuddered at the wood that slammed behind him,
echoes in the halls,
long narrow walls,
toward the office where waited the rule:
"Always listen to the teacher. She'll shape your life."

He would have listened if he could.
If the dust had stopped its drifting
—still, he had thought he understood.

Lori Kort