from the TEACHERS' LOUNGE

There are several "teachers' lounges" for which I'm beginning to develop a particular fondness. One of them is Lynden's; for out of it have come several fine articles written, as I understand it, specifically for ***Perspectives****, and unsolicited. The writer is Mr. Robert (Pete) Adams, who this time took pen in hand to address the matter of the rationale for starting and maintaining a Protestant Reformed High School. I wish that there were some way to give the article a bit more prominence in this issue — like colored-type, or something like that. Let me just say that, if there's one article you read twice, I hope it's this one. Whether we're teachers, parents, or teenage students, we need, now and then, a reminder of what we are about. And Mr. Adams reminds us masterfully.*

In Full Bloom

The What and the Why of a Protestant Reformed High School

Pete Adams

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

Have you ever wondered what makes a high school a high school? What is it that differentiates primary from secondary education? Is it just more of the same only harder and more varied (a quantitative difference), or is it schooling of a different sort (a qualitative difference)? I believe the second view is the correct one, and this understanding has a definite bearing on what we should be looking for in a high school for our children.

In 1956, Benjamin S. Bloom, a secular education analyst, wrote a book concerning the levels at which students (and everyone else) think. It has had widespread acceptance and influence in educational circles ever since. Here are his levels, along with a brief descriptive phrase, beginning with the lowest:

1. Knowledge — the ability to recall given data and information.
2. Comprehension — a transla-

tion, internalization; the ability to put information in your own words.

3. Application – to be able to utilize learning in a given situation.

4. Analysis – to be able to compare and contrast.

5. Synthesis – to create a new situation for application of data.

6. Evaluation – critical judgment. This assumes abilities in all other levels plus a conscious value judgment.

Looking at this analysis of thinking, particularly in light of the apostle Paul's statement (see above), we can say that Bloom has expressed truth concerning the way God created us. If so, as Protestant Reformed people concerned that our covenant seed should preserve and develop the truth God has given us, our attention should be drawn to those higher levels of thought. You see, don't you, that if the truth that we have been given so graciously by God is to continue with our children, they have to be able to fight the spiritual battle where it is being fought? They must internalize and apply God's truth, and be able especially to analyze and evaluate new propositions as to whether they are good and proper or whether they are antithetical to the Gospel.

Now high school is precisely where this development of thinking, particularly evaluation, mainly takes place. This is where lifetime directions are being decided upon. It is not that now, all of a sudden, our covenant seed start asking "why" questions. They have been doing that all along. But in high school they need to see that there are real and true answers to all their earlier questions on the deeper, mature, adult level. For instance, a younger child might ask why we go to a Protestant Reformed church and not to another one. We could say that this is the place where we feel God's truth is preached most purely, and that answer probably would satisfy. In a high school Bible class, if this question is asked, or better, if it is being answered all the year long, alternative doctrines and viewpoints can be discussed frequently, and it can be demonstrated how our Protestant Reformed doctrines and viewpoints are correct, based on Scripture. This would encourage at least the beginning of the analysis and evaluation levels of thinking as stated above. Since high school students are still on their way to adult, Christian thought-patterns, however, they need the input and guidance and example that can come only from having Protestant Reformed teachers teaching, at *every* level of learning, in all areas of academic life. If we want our children to graduate from high school with a Protestant Reformed world/life

view, we must exert biblical, Reformed influence on their thinking during their high school years not only in church and at home but in a Protestant Reformed school.

Another man expressed this same understanding of the critical importance of Protestant Reformed high schools in the September 15, 1937 issue of the *Standard Bearer.* In an article entitled, "Our Own Christian High School," Rev. Herman Hoeksema noted that it had been "at least ten years ago" that he had "pleaded for a Christian High School of our own." Rev. Hoeksema believed that, though grade schools of our own were indeed important, the need for a high school was decidedly more urgent. He argued that "the age when our boys and girls attend high school is the period in their life when they begin to reflect, to think for themselves, when, more than in the years of their childhood, they are able to imbibe and understand definite principles and doctrines, when it is of utmost importance that, both with respect to their thinking and to their conduct they are guided in the right direction." What Rev. Hoeksema wanted, he said, was "*specific* instruction" for the covenant young people of our churches. He was not at all content with "so-called *Christian* instruction in the general sense of the word, without emphasis on specific principles." "If we are serious about this," he wrote, "and want to reach this ideal, strive for it, realize this purpose, there is only one way: a school of our own." And he meant a Christian *high* school, a high school "based on specifically Protestant Reformed principles," which, he insisted, "is worth fighting for." (These are quotes taken from *The Standard Bearer,* December 1, 1980.)

What constitutes a Protestant Reformed high school then? Here is a definition I would submit for what I desire high school to accomplish for my children: A Protestant Reformed high school creates an educational environment in which the students are so instructed in all of their subjects that they graduate having the mental/spiritual tools to be wise as serpents as they go out as sheep into this world of wolves.

Is this too spiritual a view of a high school? If a Protestant Reformed high school could provide only the basic academic subjects without a sports program, without vocational courses, and without other nice-to-have subjects, would it be any good? Could it really fill the bill of providing a well-rounded high school education that fits our students for the world of the 80's and 90's? The answer depends on what our conception is of a high school in

general. I think that if we truly attempt to evaluate a high school from eternity's viewpoint we must say, "Even though a sports program, vocational courses, and other subjects may be nice additions, *they are not the essence of secondary education.* What is *essential and sufficient* in a high school is for it to teach sound academics and spiritual truths, developing Protestant Reformed thinking at the highest levels, in young men and women of God."

Now does this mean that all we have to do is to hire some Protestant Reformed teachers, devise a basic curriculum, and call ourselves a Protestant Reformed high school? While these outward actions have to take place, this kind of high school has to start and *continue* in the hearts of the parents and rest of the school society. Without the vision set before our eyes of what we are really about, of what a high school actually should be, any deficiencies will be all that we will see. Let's work to see the blossoming of our children into those prepared to live in the Kingdom.

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Another favorite, as teachers' lounges go, is that of Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed School. Mr. Chester (Skip) Hunter, principal of our school in Doon, writes interesting little essays on the reverse side of informational notes to parents. He has used them even, on occasion, to promote ***Perspectives.*** *But, best of all, he's willing to share them with the editor, so that we have something on hand for use in this rubric. They're all good. We choose one here, more or less at random.*

Finding *The* Answer

Skip Hunter

THE ANSWER. When I was a junior high student, I had a teacher who was constantly distressed by students' worries over finding THE ANSWER. At the time I was perplexed by his distress. After all, wasn't that the object of our school work. Were we not to find answers to put on our papers? We were joyful when problems were assigned which had answers in the back of the book.

It has taken me nine years of teaching really to understand my junior high teacher's distress. As I have spent the first four weeks answering students questions, I begin to feel as distressed as my old teacher. It's not that I don't want to answer questions. Nothing can be farther from the