

THE BIBLICAL EDUCATOR

"To know wisdom and Instruct/on; to perceive the words of understanding" Proverbs 1:2

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HELP HAS ARRIVED!

By David Chilton

About a year ago, I shared a pot of tea with Debbie Miani, a young lady who is probably the most effective schoolteacher I've ever met (Christian school principals have been known almost to come to blows fighting over her). Since I'm the sort who can see the black cloud in any silver lining, I began complaining to her about one of my chief woes — the abysmal lack of really good textbooks for Christians schools. I became rather eloquently mournful over the situation, and went on at length about the paucity of resources with which to solve the problem. "What can we do!" I wailed miserably,

"I was hoping you would ask that," she said, drawing a thick folder from her handbag. She opened it up and dumped a year's worth of *Weekly Readers* on the table, "This is one of the strongest tools of humanism in modern education," she pronounced. "If we can duplicate it—from a Reformed, Vantillian perspective — we'll go a long way toward reconstructing Christian education. Usually, you have to assign material if you want students to read something. But they really enjoy getting their own newspaper. If we had a Christian 'weekly reader,' the kids would eat it up."

Trusting that her last sentence was meant to be taken metaphorically, I thought about her idea, and got excited about the possibilities. A couple of nights later I wrote a lead article for *The Biblical Educator*, optimistically titling it "Help is on the Way!" Apparently, it struck a nerve. We got loads of mail — more people responded to that one article than to all other issues combined — and all of the letters were enthusiastic. Everyone thought it was a wonderful idea. Multitudes were cheering us on, and only one minor problem confronted us: We would never be able to publish such a paper.

You see, good intentions aren't enough. In order to put out a weekly paper which would be comparable in quality and sophistication to the humanist *Weekly Reader*, you need a lot of things we haven't got: easy access to news sources and photos, people skilled in art and design, an editor who isn't doing something else, speedy distribution to get the papers out two weeks ahead of time (you *know* we haven't got *that*), and a host of other essentials. Ideally, the organization to do the job would be a Christian magazine which would have the resources on hand already. With a solid base in an established publishing structure, an attractively-produced Christian school newspaper could be successful. So my wife and I and Debbie prayed, and the Lord shot a bolt out of the blue by the name of Joel Belz, who just happens to be the managing editor of the *Presbyterian Journal*.

He called me to say that he and members of his staff had been thinking along the same lines, and that they would begin work on the project immediately!

As you can imagine, I was thrilled. But, as I noted before, about my uncanny ability to see dark clouds, I'm a skeptic —and probably a conceited skeptic to boot. I knew the ICE wasn't geared up to publish the paper; still, I wondered, how can this paper really amount to anything if we're not running it? I mean, Joel Belz is a nice guy, but . . . Well, I'm happy to say that Mr. Belz has proven me wrong beyond my wildest imagination. He found Norman Bomer. To describe Norm as qualified for the task, would be a grave understatement. Think of someone who is solidly grounded in the Reformed world-and-life view, skilled in journalism and editorial work, gifted in bringing Christian philosophy down to a fourth-grade level (*accurate/y*), with an obvious love for young people —and you're beginning to get a picture of Norm Bomer. He was hired as the editor of what came to be called *It's God's World*, the new weekly reader for Christian schools. Aided by the excellent artistic skills of Anne Peck, Belz and Bomer have produced a winner.

Each edition begins with a current news story, such as the PATCO strike, Sadat's assassination, Reaganomics, or terrorism. Every lead article ends with a "Newthink" section, which explains biblical principles that relate to the story and asks the students to analyze current events in terms of Scripture. Then there are shorter news articles, written in a simple yet thought-provoking style. Following these are feature articles dealing with a wide variety of subjects, all demonstrating Christ's lordship over every area of life. One of my favorites was "Cannibal Justice," a clever story that explained the difference between democracy and the rule of law; another was the delightful "Rebecca Can't Fly," on the subject of evolution. Other topics covered are church-state relations, the size of the universe, how seasons change, the Reformation (instead of Halloween!), the origin of language, Interior Secretary James Watt, and much more. The last two or three pages contain puzzles, games, crafts, word lists, and daily Bible readings that correspond to the stories in the paper. I had hoped for a biblical newspaper; *It's God's World* is both biblical and beautiful.

I cannot think of anything better for your school than to have *It's God's World* in the hands of each child every week. The paper is published throughout the school year (30 issues), and is available at the low price of \$3.00 per year (multiple copies mailed to the same address, plus a teacher's guide), or \$8.00 for single subscriptions. Write to Norm Bomer at P.O. Box 3075, Asheville, NC 28602 (or call 704-253-8063), and ask for a free sample copy. But let me give you fair warning: You'll get hooked! The publication is aimed at grades 4-6, but can be used profitably

at the Jr. High level as well—and, in my opinion, if you're too old to enjoy it yourself, you're too old.

The second-smartest thing Norm Bomer ever did was to become the editor of *Ir's God's World*. The *smartest* thing he ever did was to marry a young lady named Carol, who occasionally writes for the paper. She's terrific. Here's a sample from her excellent article on—of all things—Picasso's *Guernica*. The closing words of her analysis explain what this new publishing venture is all about:

Picasso never painted happy pictures. He only saw the suffering and hatred in the world. He painted broken people because he only saw a broken world. He tried to show that there is no meaning in the world.

Picasso did not believe in God. He did not believe the Bible, so he could not understand hatred and wars. He did not know that people have sin in their hearts and live in a fallen world.

Although Picasso saw the problems and ugliness, he did not have any answers. His paintings show us that he didn't know that Jesus has come to *redeem* the world.

Jesus defeated sin when he died on the cross and rose again. There is hope because it is God's world. He has redeemed it.

And so, Miss Miani, and all those who have waited so long— help isn't just “on the way” anymore. It's arrived.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE ARTS

by James B. Jordan

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were given two positive tasks. They were to understand the world, by “naming” everything in it, a scientific task; and they were to beautify the world, by “dressing” it, an aesthetic task. (They were also negatively to “keep” or guard it, implying the test that was to come; Gen. 2:7-23.)

The arts help with both of these basic positive cultural tasks. Let us turn our attention first to the question of

Beauty

God put man in a model environment, the Garden of Eden, and then commissioned him to extend this model environment over the whole earth, following the four rivers out to the four corners of the earth. As mankind grew in knowledge and understanding, he would gradually bring out the potential of all around him, and reorganize the earlier “natural” beauties of Eden into the later “cultural” beauties of the eschatological city-garden, New Jerusalem. The rebellion of man short-circuited this program, but the redemption wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ restored it.

All beauty reflects the beauty of the LORD: this is the Christian presupposition. His beauty is not invisible, nor is “beauty” simply another name for “righteousness.” The cloud of glory which accompanies the revelation of God to men so often in Scripture is a visible and sensible revelation of the beauty and holiness of the LORD. Thus, it is the archetype (model) of which the various houses of God are ectypes (copies). The Temple, the Tabernacle, the clothing of the high priest, and the world itself, each copy the

essential forms and beauties of the glory cloud (see Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, Baker, 1980).

Thus, the beauty of the LORD is architecturally copied in the Temple, according to David (Psalm 27:4). Aaron's garments copied the glory and beauty of the LORD (Exod. 28:2). So does the city Jerusalem (Ps. 50:2). An examination of the various passages in which the glory of God is manifested will reveal that the glories and beauties of this world all have their original in His beauty: sunrise, sunset, clouds, jewels, music, the sound of rushing water, and so forth.

The raw materials for beautification were ready to hand in Eden. Ezekiel 28:14 indicates this by calling attention to the visible presence of “stones of fire” in Eden: fiery stones being jewels which flash with internal fire. The Flood buried many of these raw materials, preventing sinful man from easily obtaining them for evil purposes.

Christians, however, are called to the task of beautification. Isaiah 54:11,12 says: “O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in cosmetic paste, and your foundations I will lay in sapphires. Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies, and your gates of crystal, and your entire wall of precious stones.”

The archetype of the glory-cloud is not some simple Platonic form. The glory of God is seen in many different forms in Scripture, and there are a variety of architectural manifestations of it. Thus, one cannot expect to come up with simple absolutes in the area of aesthetics. On the other hand, the fact that all true beauty reflects the beauty of God means that some things are more beautiful than others, just as there are degrees and kinds of glory (I Cor. 15:40,41; 2 Cor. 3:18). A comic book may have a particularly nice story, nicely drawn, and be a fine piece of art within its genre, but it cannot compare with a play by Shakespeare.

Taste varies considerably from culture to culture. Yet, knowing that there is a Standard of beauty enables us to affirm that there are indeed higher and lower qualities of art, music, and literature. Diversity in culture often arises from differences in language, since man is so fundamentally a creature of the Word. Different languages produce subtly different ways of viewing the world, and the sound of different languages produce correspondingly different musical sounds. Christian people are often less tolerant of cultural diversity than they should be. God intends the gospel to flower in every different tongue and tribe, so that there will be many different cultural expressions praising Him.

Over the long haul, however, the Christian community moves in the direction of a better taste and appreciation in the arts. Such growth cannot be forced, however. Children should be taught and exposed to the finest of art, music, literature, dance, and drama; all within a Christian context. From this foundation they will, God willing, develop further creativity in the arts.

Understanding

Adam's other task in the Garden was to understand the world. The arts help us to understand the world. In general, *art abstracts from life and thereby enhances our understanding and appreciation of life*. This more serious aspect of art is often not associated with the more simple forms of beauty. In fact, we may say that in all cultures, art ranges in a spectrum from the more fine arts to the more folkish arts. Folk arts are usually not as concerned with weighty matters, such as sin and depravity, as fine arts are. Thus, it is generally in the area of the fine arts that we

find the arts assisting man's understanding of the world.

Let us take examples from the art of drama. It is sometimes thought that drama comes only from the Greeks, but drama is found in the Bible, as in Ezekiel 4, where the prophet acts out a morality play every day for the instruction of the people. Similar morality plays were a common part of church life during the Christian centuries of the middle ages.

Shakespeare was almost certainly not a true Christian, but he lived in a Christian culture, and his perspective was generally Christian. Thus, in *Hamlet*, the prince of Denmark knows full well that "the spirit that I have seen may be the devil." Indeed, Shakespeare wants us to know that Hamlet's father did not appear to him at all, but the devil, "for the devil has power to assume a pleasing shape." Satan, in the form of Hamlet's father, moves him to take vengeance, and in the course of the play, Hamlet destroys everything he has ever loved. At the end the stage is littered with corpses. "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay," says the Lord. Shakespeare agreed, and surely *Hamlet* is one of the finest of all treatments of the sin of vengeance.

Shakespeare treats the subject of guilt in *Macbeth*, and the subject of flattery and domestic piety in *King Lear*. True beauty and Godly order are treated in that not-so-funny play, *The Taming of the Shrew*. The husband teaches his wife that true beauty and liberty come from the assumption of her proper role in life. He gives her beautiful clothes, but takes them away again, to teach her that true beauty is first and foremost the beauty of the inner person. The play ends in a madrigal-hymn.

The Merchant of Venice shows us the Jew as a miserable rebel against God, but also as a true human being, not a devil. The character of Falstaff in *Henry the Fourth* and *Henry the Fifth* descends from a comic figure to a disgusting one, sticking his sword into a corpse in order to gain brownie points with his liege. Shakespeare knows that there is indeed a temporary humor in a dissolute life, but that the end thereof is the swinetrough.

Fine art abstracts from life, and enhances our understanding and appreciation of it. This is the primary role of fiction, which is why the Scriptures are so full of parables and other fictional stories designed to make a point.

Francis Schaeffer, in his fine booklet *Art and the Bible* (Intervarsity), mentions what he calls the major and the minor themes in Christian art. The minor themes are sin, depravity, ugliness, and the like. The major themes are salvation, righteousness, beauty, and the like. Because Christian fine arts are realistic, they deal with the minor themes, but they show the triumph of the major themes. This need not be true in each and every piece of art, but will be the message of the corpus of an artist's work as a whole.

Shakespeare is not a Greek tragedian, for instance, for his characters are not caught in a web of fate not of their own devising. King Lear is a self-centered man, who is a fool for flattery. Had he been wise, he would have known which daughter truly loved him. Blind to truth, he came to be blinded in sight as well.

Moreover, Christian art will not fall into the easy trap of poetic justice, whereby at the end of the novel all virtue has been rewarded and all evil punished. While poetic justice is not the horrible evil it is sometimes said to be, it surely expresses an inadequate world-view. Paul Linebarger, the Christian science fiction writer whose books are published under the pen-name "Cordwainer Smith," was partial to calling himself a "pre-Cervantean" writer. By this he meant that his stories were

designed to be open-ended snatches of real life, not closed stories which come to a complete end, as so many novels and stories have done since *Don Quixote*. Linebarger wanted to go back to the Middle Ages, when stories were told without the need to bring history to a close at the end of each one. Tolkein's stories have this same open-ended character.

Because fine arts often deal with the minor themes as well as the major ones, fine arts are not always "beautiful." To bring across the horror of sin, the fine arts sometimes present what we might call "anti-beauty", but the overall tendency is to create a fuller beauty as the ultimate goal.

Tolkein has put it very well in the opening pages of the *Silmarillion*. Satan abstracts one small set of notes from the great hymn of the angels, and harps only on them; but God is able to turn this dissonance into a new tragic melody, which eventually works its way back into the hymn, and the last beauty is greater than the first.

BOOK REVIEWS

By David Chilton

The following titles are recent publications of the Liberty Fund, and are available in both hardcover (\$9.00) and softcover (\$4.00). Write to 7440 North Shadeland, Indianapolis, IN 46250.

Teacher in America, by Jacques Barzun

You've got to get this one. While much of the book deals with college-level instruction, its principles are applicable at any level. With plenty of spice and gusto, Barzun pummels away at the myths and sheer tomfoolery comprising much of what goes by the name of "education": "Under the name of social science, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and economics, many American students today are really offered one single and quite unnecessary subject, namely: Tautology." He argues convincingly that the job of the teacher is not to "educate" but to *teach*, "to turn the young learner, by nature a little copycat, into an independent, self-propelling little creature, who cannot merely learn but study – that is, work as his own boss to the limit of his powers." "The instructor must not act like a priggish moderator with a gavel. He must be willing to go up sidetracks and come back. His imagination must swarm with connecting links, factual illustrations, answers to unexpected questions. He must moreover know how to correct without wounding, contradict without discouraging, coax along without coddling." "The slow subtle growth called Education . . . takes a lifetime of self-discipline and indefatigable passion to achieve. Not everybody is willing to make this investment of effort. . . ."

Following his discussion of the principles of teaching, Barzun demonstrates their outworking in the various disciplines; his chapters on history, art and the classics are especially good. (Did you know, by the way, that some of the words in the original version of "Rock of Ages" have been changed? Find out why, on page 181.) Undoubtedly, you will discover points of disagreement between your ideas and those of the author (particularly if you're a science teacher: "Science teachers may be said to contribute the greatest proportion of backward-looking, anti-intellectual, mechanic-minded members to the faculty" – or a member of a committee: "I shall not go so far as to suggest

abolishing committees. Abolish every other one and see what happens.") But much of the appeal and value of the work is just the fact that Barzun, unlike most writers on "education," actually holds opinions, and is not afraid to tell us what they are. And, even better, he has fulfilled his maxim that "the proper aim of writing should be to make it a pleasure."

The Theory of Money and Credit, by Ludwig von Mises

To the horror of my Econ 101 professor, I did my first book report on this classic work by Mises. It was all done in innocence: I had simply gone to the library and picked it off the shelf, not realizing who the author was or the enormous threat he posed to the eminent instructor. I soon learned. Less than halfway through the course, I told the professor, "What you're teaching isn't just *wrong*. It's *dumb*." Needless to say, I made about as many points with the teacher as he did with me. But the course wasn't a total loss. I learned a lot about economics on my spare time, and in class I studied the inside track of logical fallacy.

Apart from Mises' *Human Action*, this book is the treatise on economics. Most of the errors of modern economists are merely logical conclusions from a false notion of the nature and function of money; and it is in the interests of lawless governments to keep us deceived on that point, so that we will blame inflation on everyone but the true culprits. *The Theory of Money and Credit* will open your eyes.

Incidentally, this is probably the right place to deal with one of the greatest superstitions of economics today – the false rumor that Mises is hard to read. If you have trouble with this book, follow a simple rule, and all will be well. *Pay attention!* After all, if you can read a newspaper—Oh! Sorry, I didn't know. Well, anyway, this new edition is so beautiful that it'll look nice on your coffee table, and your friends will be impressed; and it will put

you one-up on most economics professors, who don't even own a copy.

Economic Calculation in the Socialist Society, by Trygve J. B. Hoff

One of the most important contributions of Ludwig von Mises to economic science was his demonstration that the socialist attempt to abolish the market is doomed to frustration. Without the market system of profit and loss – the mechanism by which prices are determined, through a multitude of individual economic decisions—there is absolutely no way to engage in economic calculation. Where should energy and capital be channelled? How much do materials and products cost? Apart from the market, there is simply no possibility of calculating *anything*. (If you don't believe me, try it. In actual fact, such a society is totally inconceivable: it cannot even be imagined—which is one reason why *no socialist society has ever achieved socialism*. The only thing socialism has ever been able to provide its adherents is the "guaranteed income" of Romans 6:23.)

Mises developed his thesis most fully in his book *Socialism*, which has been out of print for about thirty years. But it was also developed by the Norwegian scholar Trygve Hoff in this important work, first published in English in 1949. Hoff examines every aspect of economic calculation, and applies the concept to the problems of money, prices, profit, interest and rent. He goes on to display the futility of the proposed "solutions" to the issue raised by Mises — "answers" which end up by saying little more than: "Okay, so it won't work. Let's do it anyway."

It must be admitted that Hoff is not exactly Norway's answer to Gary North. His style isn't racy. But it isn't Economickese, either. It is readable, and it should be read, at least by those of you who are teaching social studies at the upper-grade level.

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