

THE BIBLICAL EDUCATOR

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

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LIFE-GIVING EDUCATION

by James Kevin Craig

If 150 years from now, the Church of Jesus Christ is able to look back on the final quarter of the 20th century, it will only be because independent Christian schools were able to raise up a generation of soldiers and prophets of God to stay God's judgment of man's suicidal annihilation of human culture. Secular humanism is digging its own grave, and Christians should let the dead bury themselves (Matt. 8:22; Lev. 21:11). It will be to the Church's own peril if we ignore the fact that the humanists, in their last convulsive death-throes, using their every last ounce of energy, are reaching up out of their grave to grab the living and drag them down into the abyss.

Yet as if these Statist ghosts weren't enough, far too many professing Christians continue to go down to the graveyards of humanism to collect for their schools the remaining relics and cherished belongings of the dead race. The presence of chapel and Bible classes in these schools does not efface the marks of death from these corpses. Such schools do not turn to the Lord of Life and His Word for the foundations for their curriculum; they do not see Christ as Lord over government, the economy, the sciences, the arts, the vocation, and over all of human culture.

Instead of seeking true riches from the Word of Life, they nightly visit the graves of humanism to snatch quarters from under the tongues of the dead. With trinkets of humanist text-books and humanist methods, they find their schools haunted by the spectre of death and meaninglessness. Such a school can never produce a living soldier of the cross. A generation of their students cannot save human culture from the judgment of God or the convulsions of the dead. The ashes of humanism can never impart life; only Jesus Christ can save the world, and for such a purpose He came (John 3:16-17). It is because we would have our children after us to believe this fact of the coming of the Son of God into the world to save the world, that we need the Christian school.

"But, you say, it is the business of the church, not of the school, to proclaim this saving grace of God through Christ to men. The school, you add, has to do with reading, writing, and arithmetic, with nature study, with history, with art, with science, and with philosophy. In short . . . about the general culture of the race. Pray then, tell us what does Christ have to do with all this culture? Surely the public school is there to teach our children all about the past, the present, and the future of the human race except for religion, which we take care of in the church and in the home." So asks the great Westminster theologian, Cornelius Van Til.

"But listen," he answers, "to what the Apostle Paul tells us about the relation of Christ to culture: 'For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth' (Eph. 1:9-10)." "Here then is Christ 'the Savior and transformer of culture.' Oh yes, the church and the home may speak of this Christ. But neither the church nor the home can deal adequately with the length and breadth of Christ as the

Savior and Transformer of human culture" (Van Til, *Essays in Christian Education*, p. 23).

Far too many Christians limit the Lordship of Christ to the Church, and relegate history, science, art, nature study, history, and all of human culture to the grave. This is an offense to Christ the King who rules every word, thought, and deed of man (I Cor. 10:31; II Cor 10:5). "The war between Christ and Satan is a global war." It is "carried on where you might least expect it, in the field of reading and writing and arithmetic, in the field of nature study and history. It is the *nature* of the conflict between Christ and Satan to be all-comprehensive" (pp 25, 28). Therefore our schools must be all-comprehensive in their submission to the Word of God. No subject can be left to rot. It must be reclaimed and reconstructed.

The pattern for the renovation of education in every subject has graciously been set down by the Living God of the universe. It is interesting that the Hebrews had no word for "religion." This was because there was no "secular." Every realm of the land, every area of life and thought were religious in the sense that God had given laws to govern them. "Here was a distinct covenant culture; the theocracy was not merely a religion; it had ordinances for every one of the aspects of daily living. Religion was, to be sure, the center of it all. But the whole of life was concentrated on the law, and the heart of the law was: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, and with all your mind,' and 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Matt. 22:37-38)" (p.31f). Such is God's law today (Matt. 5:17-19). We avoid the schools of the dead because we are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of the darkness into this marvellous light" (I Peter 2:9 cf. Ex 19:5,6). Christians must, therefore, remove the "secular" from the school, not by retreating away from mathematics, economics and other "secular" subjects, but rather by bringing them under the authority of Jesus Christ and His Word.

It is to this end that *The Biblical Educator* is dedicated. The Biblical educator understands that he must continually test the curriculum of each and every subject in our schools to see that it conforms to every law and concept found in the Scriptures. The Biblical doctrines of God, man, creation, and ethics shape every subject that can be taught. *The Biblical Educator* will seek to expose weak, beggarly, humanistic elements in Christian school content, method, and philosophy. More constructively, a Biblical approach to the various subjects and methods of Christian education will be formulated. It is hoped that this will be an aid to those who seek to submit their schools and their children to the Lord of Life and Culture; to show the world that there is no King but Christ, in any area of life. "This is what we want our pupils to see. We want the Christian schools to become a mighty bulwark for the defense of the Christian faith and, as such, the means by which the whole man, and mankind as a whole, may be challenged to forsake the Prince of Darkness and turn to him who is Lord of all" (Cornelius Van Til, *Essays in Christian Education*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing co. 1977 p. 42).

A TOOL FOR EFFICIENT TEACHING: THE SLATE REVISITED

By Carol Wilson

How does teaching work? Basically, there are four steps: (1) We present a truth to the student; (2) We do something to see that the student understands the truth, perhaps help him develop a mental image or a verbal paraphrase that is his own; (3) We give the student opportunity to relate and apply this knowledge to his life for the glory of God; (4) And finally, we work to have the student retain this truth.

Observe that three out of four of these steps require exchanges of student-teacher responses. The teacher presents. Does the student get it? In a classroom, does *each* student grasp the truth presented? How does the teacher know? Can the student describe it in his own words? Can he apply it? Does he retain it? Whether we like it or not, this is an individual process for each student, which must be tested by the teacher at each point. For this reason we need an efficient means of communication. There must be a way for a student to signal a teacher that he does not understand. To miss one step in a line of reasoning usually results in the student's failure to grasp the argument as a whole. In a classroom of as many as thirty students, how does the teacher know where each student is? The crux of teaching is moment by moment testing of each student with continual teaching feed-back and follow-up. Is this possible? It is the ideal.

How do teachers usually communicate with their students? First we have oral discussions. The teacher asks a question, and one student answers. This tells the teacher about the comprehension state of one of his students. What about all the others? Then we have paper work. On paper students can write answers which the teacher can check later. This shows the teacher where more of his students are and has the advantage of forcing the students to think through the material enough to write something down, but the correction process, where much of the learning occurs, is rather cumbersome. A third way we might communicate is with teaching machines. These present material and monitor responses in individual fashion. They are, however, limited precisely in that they lack that complex personalism that is so essential in successful teaching.

Remember the proverbial slate that each school child carried in bygone eras? Those were the eras which produced giants in prose and verse, in theology, in statesmanship, and above all in character. I am suggesting that we give each child in the classroom a slate — an individual chalkboard. These boards allow the kind of close and intensive teaching, drill, and discipline, particularly in the language, that produced these great men and women. They allow the child to work out a thought process, a bit of composition, or an organizational skill with a teacher before committing it to paper. What's more, they allow a teacher to observe these processes with a number of students at the same time.

For a ten-dollar sheet of masonite which the lumber yard will be glad to cut and a four-dollar can of chalkboard paint, a

teacher can have twenty-four 12" x 16" boards. Chalk will be needed also, and pieces of rag can serve as erasers if regular ones cannot be obtained.

Let's go back to the scene of the oral discussion, now with every child in possession of his chalkboard. Younger students sit crosslegged on the floor in front of the teacher. Older students sit in tablet-arm chairs, preferably. Material to be taught has been presented, and the discussion is in progress. The teacher asks a question, and this time *everyone* writes an answer on his board. Depending on whether the teacher is letting the students each proceed at their own rate or keeping the class together, the students turn their boards at the request of the teacher, and in a matter of seconds he knows who gets the point and who does not. Then the teacher very quickly makes an appropriate comment to each child, usually taking up his most pressing mistake, but not forgetting praise where due, either. Here, again and again, in a short time many crucial knowledge transactions take place.

These boards are highly versatile for all kinds of classroom work: dictation of sentences, spelling lists, sentence diagraming, math problems, vocabulary sentences and tests, as well as all kinds of comprehension questioning and interpretation. Moreover, all these activities can be carried on at different rates with different students or groups of students at the same time. Motivation is heightened because everybody is involved at a rate which neither bores nor frustrates.

Through the use of the boards the whole complex of the language arts is highly integrated. The student has extensive practice in writing about what he has read. He has many on-the-spot corrections of his spelling, vocabulary, grammar, sentence construction, etc., and all in the context of his own written work. These corrections are more effective than if the same skills were taught only through isolated grammar and spelling exercises.

The disadvantages of the student chalkboards are these:

1. The teacher has to work harder in class.
2. The student has to work harder in class.
3. The teacher's ego is quickly punctured, because the boards show him that most of his presentation and teaching misses the mark, and he has to constantly rethink and reteach until everybody understands.
4. The students will tend to cheat and copy answers from each other. *This must be strictly discouraged.* This practice will render the boards ineffective. The students must be taught that an error or no answer is far better than a cheater's answer. Independence and confidence in one's own work must be encouraged.

As you can see, only one of these points is truly a disadvantage. While classroom work is more intensive, after-hours work for both students and teachers is lightened for a given amount of student progress. With our orientation toward the Word of God, and therefore toward all language, and with our enormous commission in Christian education, this is the kind of tool we cannot afford to be without.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION

by James B. Jordan

The physical education programmes in modern state schools, and in far too many Christian academies, focus in on play and games rather than on productive work. The purpose of this essay is to raise some caveats against a play-centered P.E. programme, and to suggest some alternatives.

Physical education is, of course, an option. Many smaller Christian schools will wisely decide not to fool with it at all. Still, there is a place for the cultivation of a modicum of physical health and strength, and schools should put some emphasis on this. Probably the best book on the whole subject is *Total Fitness* by Morehouse and Gross, published by Pocket Books in paperback and available anywhere. Morehouse, who devised the exercise programmes used by our astronauts, points out that we need only as much muscle as is required to perform our assigned tasks in life, provided our heart is in good health. The principles of exercise that he lays out are sane, non-torturous, and could easily be used to devise a P.E. programme in your school. All that is required is ten minutes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

Morehouse's programme will keep the students in good health. Beyond that there is the question of sports. I'd like to enter a few objections to school sports. First, children will play without being taught to. We all naturally waste time. We need to be taught and constrained to work. Thus, a P.E. programme that centers on sports is to a large degree reinforcing the American fun-and-games-mentality, which is largely irresponsible and has aided the decline of our civilization. Second, many sports are unhealthy for children. Football, the religion of America, is quite harmful to the immature physiques of teenage boys. How many men reading this essay still have bad legs and backs as a result of playing football when young? Even with all the padding and protection, football is still too rough for anyone below about 25 years of age.

I'm afraid we teach our children a whole set of worthless and unusable skills in our current P.E. programmes. If the kids want to play games after school, let them, but use school time to teach productive skills. There is nothing wrong with play, in moderation, but it is and should remain a pastime, not a way of life, as it is in American schools today.

What would be good for P.E.? First, skills relating to work. If your school has a large lawn or yard, put the kids to work planting and harvesting crops of one sort or another. Teach them to dry and can food. This is useful work, and they will be able to use what they learn later in life. Other kinds of useful physical activities can be gleaned from the *Foxfire Books* (again available everywhere) and from *Mother Earth News*. The Bible lays a stress on the soil, and it would be a good thing for every Christian child to be close to the land.

Second, skills relating to self defense. We enter a much more controversial area here, but we must take seriously the increasing decay of our society. Self defense skills are needed more and more today, and this trend will not soon reverse itself. By self

defense skills I do *not* mean polite, gentlemanly boxing and wrestling. Boxing is a form of dueling, a gentlemanly fight, outside the law of God, in which one image of God tries to bust the face of another image of God. It is a sick exercise all around, and it is a sign of sickness in our society that so many enjoy watching two men trying to beat each other into unconsciousness. God hates this type of thing. It manifests a contempt for God, for it surely holds the image of God in contempt.

Moreover, boxing and dueling are lawless. God's law stands against any attempt to settle things by force, by making the men involved in the fight or duel responsible for any damage that may do (Ex. 21:18f., 22f.). If two men have a disagreement, they should settle it by God's law, not by "going down to the gym and putting on the gloves." Such activities are barbaric and lawless, and children should not be encouraged to participate in them. The Christian settles matters by arbitration, not by violence.

No, by self defense skills I mean karate and judo, and similar measures. Our streets are unsafe, and our women are easy marks for rapists and thieves. The ability to dispatch an assailant is increasingly a necessary skill. The oriental arts are increasingly popular among certain violent sub-cultures in our society, and so we would do well to be prepared.

By self defense skills I also mean weapons training. Again, this is an unpleasant topic, but the increasing social chaos around us forces us to consider it. Marksmanship and skill at making bullets and caring for weapons can and should be taught. (On Matthew 5:30, "resist no evil," see R.J. Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 121).

Some of these matters might more properly be extra-curricular activities, but we should see to it that they are included as part of the training our children receive. There are doubtless some men in your church who can teach these sorts of things. Make use of them.

Finally, P.E. should include cleaning the school every Friday. Most parents will be attracted by the notion that you are teaching their kids to sweep, wax floors, and mop out toilets. If some parent's don't want their darlings involved in such dirty work, you don't want such pampered kids in your school. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes make much of the fact that we are to find joy in work. Modern Americans do not find joy in work, and seek it in playing games, or watching other people play games on T.V. As Christians seeking to bring our children up properly, let us focus our P.E. programmes on work, not on play. If our children miss out on the football religion, with its screaming mobs, its frequent injuries, its half-nude dancing girls kicking up their skirts before the crowd, surely our children will be better off.

If your P.E. programme centers on play, don't be surprised if your children turn out to be hedonists and sexually loose. A fun-and-games-mentality cannot be simply turned off when it goes on a date, or when offered a taste of the modern drug culture. On the other hand, if you train your children in disciplined, productive work, you make it far easier for them to resist these temptations.

BOOK REVIEW

Big Story: How the American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington.

By Peter Braestrup.

Anchor Books, 1978. 606 pages. \$8.95

Reviewed by David H. Chilton

Late in January of 1968, the North Vietnamese forces launched a massive series of attacks against South Vietnam's major cities and towns. The Tet (Lunar New Year) two-month offensive was a dice-toss attempt to destroy the "puppet regime" in Saigon and bring about a Communist victory at last. Contrary to their hopes, the campaign resulted in just the opposite: they suffered acute military losses, popular support for the Saigon government was heightened, and the South Vietnamese army was strengthened. The Tet experience was an unqualified disaster for the North. Almost, that is. For the Communists did achieve a major triumph, one that has virtually outshadowed all of their defeats: they captured the American press.

The media version of Tet was vastly different from what serious historians of the period have found. The offensive was portrayed as an unprecedented calamity for the allies and a stunning success for the Communists. The enemy was consistently described as shrewd, wily, fearless, omnipresent and inexhaustible, while the South Vietnamese army was weak, practically worthless in battle, and on the brink of defection.

The major focus of the reporters was the siege at Khe Sanh, a remote Marine outpost near the demilitarized zone. Although it was the most unrepresentative aspect of the entire war, Khe Sanh was treated as in actuality the war in "microcosm" by Walter Cronkite and others, and the impossibility of an allied victory was assumed. On March 29, 1968, The CBS Evening News reported: "So there really is no end in sight . . . for the Marines and the Seabees and the rest here, there is nothing to do but sit and take it . . ." The very next day, the Marines did in fact move out, against very little opposition. Reality was far removed from the journalistic fantasies spun out by the news mills.

All this, and much, much more is documented in copious detail by Peter Braestrup, chief of the Washington Post's Saigon bureau during Tet. Braestrup is no leftover hawk attempting to justify our presence in Vietnam. Rather, with respectable liberal credentials, he himself claims responsibility for producing reports contrary to fact, a practice common to most of the news agencies, according to this book. Braestrup contends that the problem was not "ideology"; there were no Communist plotters, the reporters weren't spouting a party line as such. He writes of the insufficient number of journalists, the meager information, the unsystematic methods of gathering data, and a general cultural and military ignorance. Thus, as one chapter is titled, "First Reports Are Always Partly Wrong." But the first reports involved merely venial journalistic sins; as time went on and more information became handy, media coverage grew more riddled with error — mistakes not about "facts" only, but about the meaning and significance of those facts. For instance, as Braestrup notes,

By emphasizing Khe Sanh so heavily, many in the media appeared to believe (and suggest) that the foe was still exerting heavy military pressure throughout Vietnam

long after that pressure had in fact eased (p. 257).

Khe Sanh was of dubious military significance, but it *was* a story, and "filled a journalistic need. It had inherent dramatic values" (ibid). And any drama not inherent was cheerfully supplied by the commentators who insisted on reading Khe Sanh in terms which were quite alien to the real situation. As Braestrup points out, "By far the most popular journalistic exercise of Tet was comparing the Khe Sanh siege to the ill-fated 56-day defense . . . of Dienbienphu by the French that climaxed the 1946-54 French Indo-China War" (p. 262). While this untenable thesis was maintained, the public impression of the war grew increasingly false. The Washington Post ran a protracted and histrionic article by David Leitch headlined, "Khe Sanh Is Quite Takeable", and Braestrup comments:

Leitch was highly imaginative. He apparently also was blessed with superb eyesight: The North Vietnamese besiegers, he wrote were "brisk, eager little in jungle kit going about their jobs with frightening impassivity." The Marines were both uneducated and "muddy, frightened men," waiting for the "coup de grace" . . . the only Marines leaving "are the dead ones in rubber bags or the wounded on stretchers."

It did not take a military expert to see that Leitch was overexcited. Nevertheless, the Post gave his apocalyptic impressions more space than any other story it printed about the siege (p. 318).

This was not news, it was theater: "the spotlight was on a story that was potential, not real" (p. 323). Yet, understandably, it was *observed* as real by the reading and viewing public. President Johnson's popularity fell to an all-time low, and on March 31 he announced his willingness to negotiate with North Vietnam and his decision not to run for re-election.

The importance of this book for Christian teachers should be obvious. We all have a tendency to read a newspaper as if it is bound in leather, and Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* was all-too-prophetic in its depiction of a society for which the only reality is what is seen on television. The New York Times is not the final standard of truth. Christians are to grow up to maturity, not tossed about with every wind of doctrine, and that goes for every area of life. Our students desperately need to learn the ability to judge, to discriminate, to analyze all things in terms of the Biblical standards of truth. Furthermore, they must be educated to sniff out the other fellow's presuppositions, to listen for the grinding of an ax. The issues raised by Braestrup have to do not only with our understanding of Tet, but with basic historical problems. As Christians our response must neither be submission nor retreat, for we cannot serve two masters. Our responsibility is to disciple the nations to the obedience of Christ, and we cannot accomplish that task if we are enslaved to the same gods as the culture we are trying to teach.

While Braestrup does offer suggestions as to how the media can improve their performance, he has no ultimate answers for the problem of *Gestalt*, seeing the trees in terms of a preconceived forest. Presuppositional liberation begins with transformation, the renewing of our minds in conformity to God's word, and from there moving out to bring all thought and activity into captivity to Jesus Christ.