

THE BIBLICAL EDUCATOR

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

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ONE NATION UNDER GOD

by Debra M. Miani

Teaching the Covenant in American History

Pre-school children learn the above phrase as they recite the pledge of allegiance. We see the words "In God We Trust" engraved on coins, but what do these words really mean, to children and even to adults? Most of us are ignorant of our heritage as Americans, and particularly as Christians. We reduce that godly heritage to a few trite phrases. At the same time, we often passively accept the atheistic, humanistic philosophy of our history and heritage which dominates the universities. It is the responsibility of the Christian schools, and ultimately, the individual Christian teachers, to instill in our children a knowledge and deep appreciation of their heritage, and a continual awareness of the covenant which exists between our nation and God.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of Christian-authored texts in the Social Studies and other disciplines; thus, state-adopted textbooks abound in Christian schools. This means added work and constant search for the Christian teacher in order to present a truthful, biblical perspective of our nation's history. The individual teacher faces a two-fold task: 1) to expose and challenge the humanistic bias of the author (and to train students to do the same); 2) to substitute that humanistic bias with Christian perspective. Since students tend to accept words in print as truth, they must be taught to constantly question an author in terms of Scripture. Additionally, they must be provided with information about the Christian principles—particularly the belief in the Covenant—influencing colonial life and revolutionary actions.

America began as a nation under God: the early settlers and later the fathers of the Constitution recognized a relationship between nations and God. As a starting point, it is helpful to teach students the Biblical view of the covenant between a nation and God. Deuteronomy 26:16-19 describes the covenant, as it was first given to Israel. The following two chapters list out the blessings and curses God promises according to a nation's obedience or disobedience to His law. The Puritans and founding fathers were aware of this covenant; they recognized the authority of God's word and their collective responsibility to obey it.

Probably no generation was more visibly concerned with the covenant than the 17th Century Puritans of New England. It is essential to spend ample time studying them, and here it will be critical to challenge the textbooks. Possibly no other group is as greatly misrepresented by modern authors as the Puritans. Current history texts cast heroic light on figures such as Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson and condemn their Puritan superiors for repression or intolerance. Modern authors frequently pass humanistic judgment on the Puritans without any fair explanation of Puritan ideology or the covenant. As a practical device, have students list out every sentence in their text which appears to be an opinion. This will train them to be aware of humanistic bias. For example, ask students to detect the author's bias in the following quote from a state-adopted text:

"The Puritans came to the New World to gain freedom of religion. They controlled both the church and the government of Massachusetts Bay Colony. Everyone in that colony had to live by the strict rules of the Puritans . . . They did not tolerate ideas that were different from their own" (*We the People*, 1971, Heath; p. 62)

Most students can see that the author is negative here, and you can explain that he is negative because he is a humanist. The Puritans' God-fearing attitude is ridiculous to humanists and as a result they provide little understanding, or explanations, of the covenant.

Since the texts are often unreliable, we must delve into primary sources. John Winthrop's journal and his "Modell of Christian Charitie" are both living testimonies of Puritan covenant ideology. He wrote: "We are entered into Covenant with Him for this work. We have taken out a Commission. If the Lord shall please to hear us and bring us in peace to the place we desire then hath He ratified this Covenant . . . if we shall neglect the observance of these Articles the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us". Winthrop's journal and other Puritan writings may be found in *Puritan Political Ideas*, edited by Edmund Morgan (Bobbs-Merrill, 1976). Another excellent reference book on the Covenant is *The Light and the Glory*, by Marshall and Manuel (Revell, 1977).

The covenant was no less powerful during the Revolution and writing of the Constitution. The 2-volume set *Christian History of the Constitution* (Foundation for American Christian Education, 1965) is a valuable reference for primary source material. Authors Rosalie Slatter and Verna Hall trace the original roots of the Constitution to Mosaic law. Included is biographical information, and an excellent discussion of Samuel Adams. Adams, better than most of the founding fathers, articulated the relationship between *liberty* and *virtue*. Liberty and virtue must be equally strong in a free society, said Adams:

"He therefore is the truest friend to the liberty of his country who tries most to promote its virtue, and who, so far as his power and influence extend will not suffer a man to be chosen into any office of power and trust who is not a wise and virtuous man."

Adams' writings and speeches can be used to teach the meaning of liberty. The founding fathers were cautious to distinguish "liberty" from "license", while today the two are confused. They, too, were aware of the covenant, and were intensely concerned that the guarantee of liberties should never lead to license, or the loss of a moral fiber. It is important to teach our students the difference between liberty and license, and to make them aware that license will result in God's curse. Real liberty is summed up in the Apostolic dictum: "Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil." (1 Pet. 2:16)

My ultimate goal in teaching American history is to instill in my students a love for God and their country, and an awareness of their responsibility to the covenant. In a generation which otherwise teaches them apathy (or even anarchy) they must realize their godly heritage and their powerful influence as the "salt of the earth." America has an inescapable, predominantly Christian heritage, and we, as Christian teachers, are called to perpetuate it.

SINGING—Part I

by James B. Jordan

One of the sadder aspects of much Christian education today is the lack of emphasis on music. In the Bible, music is very much a part of life, and music is the God-ordained means of praise in worship. The Books of Chronicles, especially I Chr. 25, show how important music is to the worship of God. How wonderful it would be if our congregational singing could be accompanied by a brass choir, or even a full orchestra! Not for every hymn, of course, but for some of them, allowing the instrumentalists to sing along with the rest of the congregation on some of the hymns. Some churches, such as the Moravians, have always had this.

It would be a fine thing if Christian schools could provide orchestra and brass choir training, but it would be somewhat expensive. One thing that any school can do, however, is to teach singing. First and foremost among the songs the children should be taught is, of course, the Psalter. There are a number of reasons for singing Psalms and other portions of the Bible. We can only give a few here.

First, the Psalter was given to train us in our prayer and praise. Thus, when we learn, sing, and pray the Psalms, we are laying the foundation for a closer walk with God.

Second, the Bible teaches us that wisdom and Christian maturity come through meditation upon Scripture. We are told to meditate day and night (Ps. 1:2), and to talk about God's truth when we walk by the way, when we lie down, when we rise up, and when we sit in our houses (Dt. 6:7). Obviously, we cannot meditate on Scripture at these times unless we have some of it memorized. Singing Psalms and other Scripture portions will give us many sections of Scripture to meditate on during the day. If the children were to sing three Psalms every day, at morning prayer, lunch, and at the close of the school day, they would have the entire Psalter memorized by the time they graduated from school.

Third, Scripture commands us to meditate upon the Psalms and to sprinkle our conversation with them (Eph. 5:19). While this verse does not command us to sing Psalms in church, obviously it hints in that direction, although it does not exclude singing hymns as well.

Fourth, Psalm singing will improve our worship in many indirect ways. In the time of the Reformation, many beautiful hymns were written. These hymns were written by men who were steeped in the Psalms, and thus reflect a very profound understanding of God and man. When the Psalms go out of the church, the hymns decline in quality and strength.

Which Psalms should we teach the children? All of them, of course, even those that *seem* strange to us. If we only sing the ones we particularly like, we will be cutting ourselves off from the opportunity to grow and expand our appreciation for God's truth. *All* Scripture is God-breathed and profitable. . . .

There are a variety of Psalters available, but no one of them unfortunately is ideal. Of those Psalters that are easiest to sing from, all but one are incomplete. These books are the easiest to use because they are printed like regular hymnbooks, with the words printed inside the music. Examples are the United Presbyterian Church *Psalter* (pub. by Eerdmans) and the Christian reformed *Psalter-Hymnal* (pub. by the Chr. Ref. Church). Both of these contain all the Psalms, but some of the Psalms are not complete: whole sections are omitted. Thus, if we want to learn the entire Book of Psalms, these will not do.

There are three absolutely complete Psalters we can choose among. First, there is the Scottish Psalter (Oxford University Press). You can get this with the music, or with the words only. The musical edition has the pages literally split in half, with the words on the bottom pages and music on the top. If you order one, be sure to specify you want

"notation" rather than "sol-fa", because you won't be able to read the "sol-fa" edition. Advantage: the Psalms are in simple meter, and can be sung to familiar tunes. Disadvantages: virtually all the Psalms are in common meter (8 syllables, 6 syllables, 8 syllables, 6 syllables). There is not much diversity. Also, the versification is so literal that some very peculiar grammar and syntax results, which interferes with the meaning of the text. The language is often archaic and weird to modern ears. Also, the music is not very good.

Second, there is the *Covenanter Psalter* (Board of Education and Publication, RPCNA, 7418 Penn. Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15208). The music is generally much better in this Psalter, though some of the songs are really bad musically. Again, an overly-literal versification has occasionally produced strange language and weird grammar.

My preference is far and away for the third alternative, the *Genevan Psalter* (*Book of Praise*, Box 854, Burlington, Ontario, Canada, L7R 3Y7). The music of the Genevan Psalms is excellent. The Psalms are exciting to sing and have a rhythmical beat that children and adults really enjoy, once they learn them. The translations are accurate but freer than the Scottish and Covenanter, so that there is no odd language. The music is unfamiliar, but no harder than gospel hymns. A good song leader is required to teach them. Many of the Genevan tunes were used by Bach, and thus find their way into the great music of all time.

The disadvantage of the *Book of Praise* is that it only gives the melody, so the pianist or organist has to get a book giving the parts. At present the only one available is J. Worp, *Rhythmical Psalter* (Family Christian Bookstore, Mountain Plaza, 661 Upper James, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada). I have in my possession a simpler and better accompaniment book, which I can xerox for you if you send \$5.00 to me (Send your requests to the newsletter address and it will be forwarded).

I suggest you get all of these and look them over, but keep this in mind: a little more effort now will pay off in the future. I believe that the extra effort involved in learning the rhythmical Genevan Psalms, called "Geneva jigs" in the old days, is well worth it. You will be teaching your children good music, along with teaching them the Bible.

Introduce Psalms into your church, so that the children can sing them there as well. I suggest the following: have a Psalm of the month for both morning and evening services. In six years you will know them all. When learning, go through these steps:

1. Piano plays all the way through (use a piano for learning, since it is easier to hear the rhythm on a piano than on an organ).
2. Song leader sings all the way through to piano accompaniment.
3. Song leader sings one phrase at a time, congregation repeating after.
4. Song leader sings one half of the psalm at a time, congregation repeating.
5. Congregation sings through the first verse a couple of times.
6. Congregation sings the whole Psalm.

Teach the Psalms at a relatively slow tempo, speeding up when the Psalm has been learned. Break up long Psalms into shorter sections, based on the natural divisions in the Psalter.

DEBATE AND THE SKILLS OF THE TRIVIUM—Part I

by James Kevin Craig

A most important article in the field of educational philosophy is the classic essay by Dorothy Sayers, "The Lost Tools of Learning" (Reprinted in the *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, Vol. IV, No. 1, pp. 10-25). Sayers puts forth a compelling theory of learning, but one which has not seen much practical application. It is our purpose here to suggest a learning method that will fulfill the intent of Sayers' philosophy, and produce some distinctly Christian advantages unforeseen by Sayers.

There presently exist in many public high schools various programs of competitive academic speech and debate. Individuals compete in public address, analysis of current events, and displays of original oratory. In the debate program, teams of two are matched up, with one team defending, and the other attacking, a proposition of public policy. An example might be, "Resolved: That the Federal Government should enact a Comprehensive Program of Wage and Price Controls." Each member of the team alternately presents an 8-minute "constructive" speech and then a 4-minute rebuttal. Tournaments are held virtually every weekend at some major university or at the high schools of the local speech league. Each year the National Forensic League sponsors a national championship in June. The competitive drive is often high. The most successful debaters are usually the first to be lured to the universities with scholarships and opportunities to debate on the college level. It is virtually the only worthwhile extra-curricular activity in the public high school. It can certainly be an important feature of the Christian Jr. Hi. and high schools.

As a force in the development of the skills of dominion, the concept of debate as an on-going program has few rivals. Its format can be varied constantly depending on the number of students (a large school is not needed), or the demands of the teacher. Teams of two or three can confront each other (suggested formats for these debates can be found in the plentiful supply of texts on academic debate) or the debate can be a one-on-one challenge after the manner of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Individual students may even be pitted against the faculty with the teacher both asking and being asked direct questions to develop the art of cross examination (see Francis Wellman,

The Art of Cross-Examination, New York: Collier Books, 1976.)

A program of academic debate is an obvious way to implement the *Trivium* as discussed by Sayers. By Jr. Hi., students should be moving out of the *Grammar* stage and into the *Dialectic*, or questioning stage. Academic debate forces them to question and to be questioned. Students are required to master the skills of Logical Thinking, Reasoning, and Analysis. A time limit between speeches (e.g. giving the student two minutes to prepare and 8-minute response to the previous speaker) develops quick, agile thinkers. The students must develop the ability to uncover new versions oft-repeated fallacies; to detect similarities and patterns of thought; and to expose his opponent's thesis or underlying objective and destroy it. Analysis must be swift and sharp.

Each debater must to some extent perfect his skills of composition and organization of thought. A debater who rambles does not effectively defend his case. He must develop the capacity for a patterned, rational flow of thought. The debater must be judged on his effective use of language. But beyond this, the mature speaker must concern himself with the third stage of the *Trivium*, that of *Rhetoric*. The most advanced debaters, having mastered the skills of reasoning and logical thinking, begin to polish their style and shape their rhetoric. The skilled communicator is concise, persuasive, and colorful. He appeals to the whole man—emotion as well as reason. He spices his logic with humor. His instructor may wish to include an introduction to the great orators of the past so that the student may study the techniques that made them great. Fine rhetoric, however, cannot be limited to paper. A broad application of the principles of the Rhetoric stage must include the ability to orally communicate one's ideas to a wide range of audiences.

In this present day of bureaucratic double talk and congressional impotence (vis-a-vis the Bureaucracy) it is clear that the skills of reasoned thought, by the power of the spoken word, are woefully absent. The ability to motivate one's audience to action has always been an important one, no less so than in our day of rampant apathy and retreatism. A program of academic debate, judged with an eye to the Law of God, would produce the great preachers of tomorrow. It would generate a new breed of statesmen who would ably defend the Biblical doctrines of economics and politics before our country's legislatures. A program of speech and debate patterned after that already existing in the public schools can thus be an important facet of the Christian reconstruction of education.

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BOOK REVIEW

by David H. Chilton

Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation, edited by E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press. 348 pages, \$7.95.

In 1524, the humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus issued *The Freedom of the Will*, a diatribe against Martin Luther's doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Luther himself praised him for contending with the fundamental point: "Unlike all the rest you alone have attacked the real issue, the essence of the matter in dispute. . . . You and you alone have seen the question on which everything hinges, and have aimed at the vital spot." This question indeed is one of the most crucial points in all theology, tremendously affecting our concept of God. For example, a modern "evangelistic" pamphlet claims:

Genuine love cannot be demanded, ordered or even regulated. It must be voluntary. This tells us something about God. . . . He must have felt, in some sense, a need of being loved. Do you think it is fair to conclude that God "needs" us? I think so. . . .

Thus the principle that man is free and autonomous means that God is contingent, and at the mercy of man. The tract quoted above is appropriately titled: "In The Beginning—Choice," a neat humanistic twist of Genesis 1:1. As Martin Luther clearly saw, if man is autonomous, man is God.

Erasmus, like Luther, was a critic of the Church, but he saw the problem as merely cosmetic—at worst, the Church needed a face-lift. Luther recognized that the main problem was theological: serious error was at the heart of the system, and radical surgery alone would be the remedy. *The Bondage of the Will*, his response to Erasmus, is a classic, and remains "the Manifesto of the Reformation."

Several editions of Luther's treatise are currently in print. The value of this particular volume is that it includes Erasmus' work as well, so the reader can handily refer from one to the other. Step by step, Luther demolishes every line Erasmus wrote (including the preface: no stone is unturned). And, as he delights to point out, Erasmus' arguments make one even more sure that Luther must be right (p. 104). A few of those arguments, with Luther's answers, are summarized below.

Erasmus begins by professing his dislike for *assertions*, or doctrines (p. 37). True Christianity, he maintains, is primarily attitude rather than assertion. Luther, of course, takes a poke at him by observing his inconsistency in *asserting* his hatred for *assertions*; but more importantly, he demonstrates that "a man must delight in assertions or he is no Christian . . . Take away assertions and you take away Christianity" (p. 105f.). Every doctrine of Scripture is important, expressing the revealed will of God. To hold to the unimportance of any Biblical assertion is to call God a fool (p. 135).

Secondly, says Erasmus, even if the Bible does teach this, it is unclear, since many are confused about the matter (p. 38ff.). Luther responds: "It is true that for many people much remains abstruse; but this is not due to the obscurity of Scripture, but to the blindness or indolence of those who will not take the trouble to look at the clearest truth" (p. 111).

But, Erasmus protests, even if these things are true and clear, "it

would not be proper to prostitute them before common ears" (p. 40)—the doctrine of God's sovereignty has had bad effects and should be suppressed: it is not necessary to know it. On the contrary, Luther says, it is vital to know it, for this doctrine is at the heart of the Christian gospel: "If these things are not known, there can be neither faith nor any worship of God. For that would indeed be ignorance of God, and where there is such ignorance there cannot be salvation" (p. 122).

Martin Luther was right. This issue is not peripheral, it is square one of true religion. The children in our classrooms are Erasmians by nature, desperately in need of the Scriptural truths presented in Luther's book. Teach it to your students, and by the grace of God it will be instrumental in turning them from the slavery of self-dependence to freedom in Christ.

(Note: Four 90-minute cassettes on the Luther-Erasmus debate may be obtained by sending \$10.00 to our address. Make checks payable to Charay Productions.)

The God of Hope, by Cornelius Van Til. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978. 334 pages, \$9.95.

There are those who draw a strict distinction between apologetics and evangelism. This collection of sermons and addresses by Cornelius Van Til should demolish that false notion completely. To truly *defend* the faith is to *present* the faith, demanding repentance of those who hear the message. Nowhere in modern homiletics is this more evident than in the evangelistic preaching of Van Til, as these sermons indicate. In the Introduction he observes that "the gospel of the finished work of Christ has never been and is not now proclaimed by the Roman Catholic Church. It is no longer proclaimed by large segments of the Protestant Churches." But it is just that gospel which is the central focus in Van Til's preaching. A sample:

Nothing is relevant to anything, unless the Scriptures be seen as the Word of the Redeemer-God, calling men to himself, to repentance from sin unto eternal life. . . . Herein lies the relevance of Christ, the relevance of the Holy Spirit, calling you to himself. (p. 35)

The second half of the book contains more directly philosophical lectures, dealing with men such as Kant, Barth and Jacques Maritain, and the issues of modern science, orthodox Protestantism and Boston Personalism. Yet here, as in the sermons, the claims of the self-attesting Christ are prominent:

Christianity is true or nothing is true. Christianity is in accord with logic because logic, to be logic, must be in accord with Christianity. Christianity is in accord with the facts of experience because the facts, if they would be experienced, better take refuge under the roof of Christianity. (p. 230).

In our day of increasing warfare between Christianity and humanism, we need to listen to Van Til, that we may train our students in the forthright defense and application of the gospel. Van Til reminds us that faithful proclamation of God's word involves argument, setting forth reasons and destroying objections. And he reminds us too that just as all preachers must argue, so all apologists must preach.