

# THE BIBLICAL EDUCATOR

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

© Institute for Christian Economics, 1980  
Editorial Office: 1007 E. North Street, Anaheim, CA 92805  
Subscription Office: P.O. Box 25, Sterling, VA 22170

## THE WELTANSCHAUUNG IN THE OINTMENT

by J. Griffith

Richard Brautigan, one of the subluminares of what James W. Sire and other critical commentators have called the "New Consciousness,"<sup>1</sup> has written an interesting little story that consists only of the following two paragraphs.

I'm haunted a little this evening by feelings that have no vocabulary and events that should be explained in dimensions of lint rather than words.

I've been examining half-scrapes of my childhood. They are pieces of distant life that have no form or meaning. They are things that just happened like lint.<sup>2</sup>

You're an English Lit teacher, dealing this month with a unit on the short story. One of your students, dying under the weight of the ponderous, Silas Marner-like prose you've been exposing him to, brings in *Lint* one morning and suggests that the class read and discuss it. What to do?

Put aside for the moment any problems raised by the question of proper literary categories. Assume that *Lint* is indeed a short story. (Remember that the young Hemingway received many a rejection slip accusing him of writing "sketches" or "vignettes" rather than stories.) Two reactions to the student's request immediately suggest themselves.

First, if you adopt the viewpoint of the public schools, you would probably respond: "No problem. We'll have everybody read it, and then see if together we can learn how to apply what truths Brautigan teaches us about our world." Second, if you adopt the viewpoint of certain elements within Christian fundamentalism, you might respond: "Not in my classroom, young man. We'll have none of that worldly trash contaminating our minds. Here—give me that book—I'll make sure the incinerator gives it the warm welcome it's got coming."

The first of these possible responses is, of course, that of current society's dominant "religious" value, secular humanism, with all its attendant relativism in full glory. The second, no less dangerous—at least when carried to its logical extremes—is that of pietism, the notion that the Christian must insulate himself from all art that doesn't deal with explicitly Christian subject matter<sup>3</sup> in an explicitly Christian style.<sup>4</sup>

Mightn't there be a third way, one that mediates between the two extreme positions?

R. J. Rushdoony, in his treatise on biblical law,<sup>5</sup> declares that the "purpose of God in requiring Adam to exercise dominion over the earth remains His continuing covenant word: man, created in God's image and commanded to subdue the earth and exercise dominion over it in God's name, is recalled to this task and privilege by his redemption and regeneration."<sup>6</sup> In a work that perhaps deals with some wider ramifications of the biblical revelation, Greg L. Bahnsen states the principle thus: "... Jesus Christ restored man to his creation mandate, to subdue the earth by means

of science, agriculture, the arts, commerce and industry, education, and every other legitimate human pursuit, and to exercise dominion over all things under God."<sup>7</sup> (Emphasis supplied.)

So . . . assuming that literature is one of the arts, and is thus to be subdued to the mind of Christ, let us by no means ignore or unnecessarily condemn the work of talented non-Christian writers. Except for those cases where the pornographic or blasphemous content renders works patently unsuitable for classroom use, let's recognize God's common grace by learning what we can from men of great sensitivity and emotional insight.

This much granted—we are still left with a significant difficulty: How do you, as a teacher, deal with a story like *Lint* without appearing to support the author's worldview? Or, to put it differently, how do you teach young people to ascertain for themselves what view of reality a particular work expresses?

James W. Sire deals with this problem in detail in his fine book *How to Read Slowly*.<sup>8</sup> Certainly students must be trained to deal thoughtfully with the basic literary concepts of plot, character, theme, setting, and so on. These are the essential tools that must be supposed for the purpose of the present discussion. But beyond this tool kit, the student should be trained to differentiate between the *Weltanschauung* embodied in a work of imaginative literature, and that derivative from the revealed Word.

Sire suggests the application of a series of critical questions to the work, questions that cluster around the following broad categories: being, knowing, morality, human nature, and human significance. For example, let's consider *Lint* in light of the following questions:

1. What conception of basic reality is embodied in the story?
2. How do we know, and how do we know we know?
3. What is the ultimate good? Is it relative or absolute?
4. Who are we? What happens to us after death?
5. What is the meaning, if any, of the events of history? Is there a significance, a purpose, to it all?

Because of the brevity of the story under discussion, we'll discuss the questions together. In a longer work, where the story itself would present more detail, a point-by-point treatment would probably be preferable.

One of the first things to hit us, in looking at *Lint* (and indeed, at virtually all of Brautigan's fiction), is the lack of anything resembling the beginning, middle and end of a classical plot structure. Neither does there seem to be any character development—unless we would care to classify the thinking of a few undescribed thoughts as such development. From these two points, we might argue that the story communicates the notion that reality contains no meaningful development or structure.

And such a tentative thesis finds ample support in the words themselves. The remembered events are nothing more than "pieces of distant life that have no form or meaning. They are things that just happened like lint." One could hardly ask for a more honest and straightforward statement of the meaninglessness of life. Brautigan here sees no inter-connectness, no overriding purpose manifesting itself in history. In fact, no purpose of his own manifesting itself in his own life.

It's a very bleak view of reality, and one totally at odds with the biblical

revelation. In *Lint* we find no God the Creator and Superintendent of mankind and history; no man created in the image of a holy and personal God; no propositional revelation that would enable man to know of his own significance, and of his duties to his Creator. All we're left with under this view is "things that just happened like lint."

Much more could be said, of course, but the foregoing should provide enough detail to enable the teacher to apply Sire's methodology to his own discipline, be it English, economics, sociology . . .

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Used here chiefly in the sense of an importation of Eastern pantheism into Western culture. But see James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic World View Catalog* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), chap. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the collection *Revenge of the Lawn: Stories 1962-1970* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> Whatever that is.

<sup>4</sup> Ditto.

<sup>5</sup> *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> Rushdoony, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nutley, N.J.: The Craig Press, 1977), p. x.

<sup>8</sup> *How To Read Slowly: A Christian Guide to Reading with the Mind* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978).

## AN EDUCATIONAL COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE by Rodney N. Kirby

### No. 2—"Creation and Education"

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."  
(Genesis 1:1)

This text, and the following verses, clearly teach the fact that God created the universe supernaturally and directly. This is to be contrasted with the evolutionary theory of cosmogony. Creation teaches that a personal God directly caused all things to exist by the word of His mouth. Evolution teaches that all things came into existence through impersonal means—chance, time, and/or catastrophe. These two beliefs are diametrically opposed to each other; they cannot be reconciled. The distinction between creation and evolution reaches to all areas of life; we will look here at how it affects education.

#### Content

Obviously, we teach the students that creation, and not evolution, is true. This is most evident in the area of science, particularly when dealing with historical geology, anthropology, etc. One word of caution here. Do not be satisfied with a "two-model" approach to the question of origins. This has become popular in recent years, due to the promotion of the idea by certain creationists interested in returning creation to the public school classroom. The "two-model" approach can be summed up in this way: "Creation and evolution are two equally valid hypotheses concerning origins. Let's impartially examine both of them, and see which one offers a more reasonable explanation of the facts." As Christian teachers, we may not take this approach, for it essentially places the truth of God, found in Scripture, on the same level with unbelief, and leaves it up to the individual to decide for himself. The student is to decide whether or not God's word is true by using his own "unbiased" intellect. This is making the student judge over God. Note, in this regard, that this was the serpent-inspired approach Eve used with regard to the forbidden tree in Gen. 3:1-7; she placed God's "hypothesis" on a level with that of Satan, and used her own empirical reasoning to decide which was true. We must present creation as absolutely true, and evolution as false, not as two possibilities.

Science is not the only subject which is affected by the creation/evolution controversy. For example, evolutionary thought has infiltrated into the teaching of history, in such ways as a cyclical view of history (impersonal, fatalistic control of history) and a chance view of history (events merely "happen", with no reason behind them).

This latter view is behind much teaching of history, leading to multitudes of disgruntled students: "All we do is learn hundreds of names, dates, and places. What does all that have to do with me today?" Rather, we must teach a God-created, and thus God-directed history. God works all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11). Events thus do not just "happen;" they all fit together into a coherent, meaningful history, which is the working out of God's purposes.

Since God created all things, and the world is not slowly evolving, truth is absolute and unchanging. The world and all things in it are a certain way, having been created that way by God—they are not evolving into something else. Thus, in our content, we are imparting truth to the students, not groping with them for a handle on ever-changing "truth." Also, the truth we present in one grade must not be contradicted by truth to be presented in a later grade. We must not fall into the easy trap of giving subtle, "innocent" untruths to the lower grades, thinking they are too young to handle the truth, and planning to set the record straight later. For example, the Bible teacher must not teach the first-graders that God loves everybody indiscriminately, when they will be taught in later grades (or should be taught) that God loves His own people, and hates the wicked (Ps. 5:5).

#### Methods

Because God created the child, he behaves, acts, learns in a certain way. His nature is a given—he is not anything we make him out to be. We must therefore study Scripture to determine what God says about this creature He has made, and formulate our teaching approach accordingly. Certain methods simply will not work, because they assume the child to be something other than he really is, as created by God. Since the child is not evolving, we can expect methods which have succeeded in the past to continue to work today. We do not discard methods simply because they are old.

As mentioned above, we are actually imparting truth to the students, and are not with them searching for evolving "truth". Therefore, our methods will primarily be teacher-oriented and teacher-directed. We as teachers possess truth which we pass on to the students. There is no need, as the saying goes, for each generation of students to re-invent the wheel. On the other hand, if evolution were true, we could not know that what we learned in school would still be valid for today, and so we must have the children use "discovery" techniques to find out what is true for them in this day. What right do I, as a teacher, have to think that my ideas are any more valid than those of my first-graders? Now, we are not ruling out entirely the use of student-oriented methods, such as discussion and lab work, but we must see these as supplements to the main method ("lecture").

#### Discipline

Since truth is not evolving, there are absolute standards of behavior. Something commanded or condemned in Scripture is always, in all places, commanded or condemned. Yesterday's immorality is not today's morality. Disruptive acts are not to be condoned as possibly the "next stage of evolution" (as has been suggested for homosexuality).

God created the world; it did not evolve from lower forms of matter. Therefore, our source of power and life comes, not from below (from animals, nature, or demons), but from God. This rules out the popular notion of "self-expression," meaning allowing the child to vent his frustrations by swearing, screaming, kicking, punching, etc. This is based on the desire to return to our "creator" for revitalization; thus, power and life are sought from below, from returning to our more "natural" state. However, Biblically speaking, our power and life come, not from a return to nature, but from a return to God and to His law-word. And so we must enforce His demands in the classroom, and look on deviations from this as rebellion, not as "self-expression."

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The doctrine of creation is foundational to all of life, education included. Let us teach children as creatures of God, not as higher forms of animal life.

# MATHEMATICS: IS GOD SILENT?

## Part III

by Larry L. Zimmerman

The existence of the non-Euclidean geometries is often cited as a refutation of the claim that mathematics is God's thoughts, some of which He reveals to man in the powerful, multi-dimensional language fabric undergirding nature. Since these geometries were derived by beginning with a negation of Euclid's so-called parallel postulate, their postulates contradict Euclid's; they are also mutually contradictory. Those who look upon mathematics as strictly a human endeavor point out that these internally consistent mathematical structures cannot all be true, so if they are the thoughts of God, He is contradicting Himself. From this humanistic standpoint, these geometries and therefore all of mathematics are obviously beautiful abstract art forms created by the people involved.

Morris Kline expresses this viewpoint when he says, "the creation of non-Euclidean geometry caused the mathematicians to see that they must stand on their own feet. They were not recording nature; they were interpreting." (*Mathematics in Western Culture*, N. Y., Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 455).

Incredibly, just a few pages later, he invalidates his own position by stating "... it is possible to erect projective geometry on an axiomatic basis in such a way that the theorems of the other three geometries result in specialized theorems of projective geometry." (op. cit. p. 468, 9).

He is alluding to the work of Felix Klein, who proved there are no contradictions among the "other three geometries"—parabolic (Euclid's), hyperbolic, and elliptic—if the mathematical contexts are kept in mind. To use "parallel" in two or three different frames of reference without identifying them is tantamount to using a word like "drive" without giving the background—golf? roadway? car? basketball? cattle? All these geometries are applicable to the physical creation; the difficulty vanishes when the contextual framework is recognized. In any case, they for sure were not "interpreting" nature. The non-Euclidean geometries were discovered during purely intellectual exercises in abstraction beginning with "What if . . . ?"

Emboldened by contemplating these useful geometries with their seemingly "contradictory" hypotheses, many mathematicians are led to claim that any statement may be hypothesized. Pinned down, some will admit that not every statement should be. To me, this is tacit admission that not everything mathematical (logically valid) is truly mathematics. The existence of valid systems having false conclusions does not imply, as some people would have us believe, that there exist no valid systems with true conclusions.

A statement by Klein is appropos. He said, "You can often hear . . . that mathematics consists exclusively in drawing conclusions from clearly stated premises, and that in this process, it makes no difference what these premises signify, whether they are true or false, provided only that they do not contradict one another. But a person who has done productive work in mathematics will talk quite differently." (*Elementary Mathematics from an Advanced Standpoint, I*, Felix Klein, N. Y., MacMillan, 1932 and Dover, N. Y., 1945, p. 207)

It is clear, then, that unlike humanistically based definitions of mathematics, the theistic definition based on creationist presuppositions is not held in tension against reality but rather harmonizes with it and explains why mathematics "appears as a body of knowledge made by men yet standing independent of them."

Philip E. B. Jourdain who was the son of a vicar and may have been a Christian, put it beautifully, "but mathematics is eternal and unchanging and therefore has no history—it does not belong even in part to Euclid or Newton or anybody else—but is something which is discovered in the course of time, by human minds." (*The World of Mathematics*, E. Newman, p. 67).

Now if there is "something there" in mathematics, the Christian cannot escape the consequences of the universal quantifiers which

saturate Col. 1:15-20—"it was through Christ that everything was created in heaven and earth, the seen and the unseen . . . ; all things have been created through Him and for Him . . . through Him all things are held together . . . that He alone should stand first in everything . . . through Him He might reconcile to Himself all things." Psa. 33:4 says that "all His works are done in truth." And in Romans 1:20 we learn that "since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made . . ."

If mathematics is the basis of creation, its nature is revelatory of God and its purpose is to glorify God; the Christian teacher must desecularize mathematics for his students. That is, he must polish away the patina of secularization with which mathematics has become encrusted so its true, God-reflecting nature shines through. (I know from experience the thoughts incorporated in these articles provide the substance for effective initiation of this process.) Then, as the student beholds the glory of God reflected in the mirror of mathematics, he is changed by the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18), which is his destiny as a Christian. (Romans 8:29) Students also must see the futility of attempting their caretaker function, God-ordained in Genesis 1:27, 28 and Psa. 8, while neglecting mathematics. Without knowledge of the patterns of God's speech in the creation, they are powerless to replenish the earth and will instead be subdued by it.

Now it is true the melody of nature's song can be enjoyed without a knowledge of the underlying mathematical structure. If one is privileged to view creation through a microscope or a telescope, to hear wind or thunder, to hold a baby duck or a baby person, one comes to appreciate the beauty and power in nature whether one is acquainted with The Law of the Mean or not. (See "The Price of Praise," *Christianity Today*, Nov. 18, 1977, or the poetry of G. M. Hopkins)

But the lyric of the "music of the spheres" is mathematics, a knowledge of which unveils not only vistas of beauty and power unsuspected before but also an order, symmetry and infinitude which stuns and awes the beholder. The Christian who sees this as a unique reflection of the glory of God and who understands the critical importance of mathematics to the implementing of God's command to subdue and replenish the earth, is thus provided with a dual spiritual, rather than materialistic, motivation to study mathematics, and is led to worship and glorify the Creator of mathematics rather than mathematics, His creation.

## BOOK REVIEW

David H. Chilton

*Bible Truth for School Subjects, Vol. 1: Social Studies*, by Ruth C. Haycock (Association of Christian Schools International, P.O. Box 4097, Whittier, CA, 90607). \$4.95; \$3.50 each in orders of 10 or more.

What makes a Christian school a Christian school? The mere existence of chapel, morning prayer and Bible class is no guarantee that our children are receiving a theologically integrated program of instruction in which all of life is seen as being under the throne of God. The indispensable starting-point for wisdom and knowledge in every field of study is the fear of the Lord, and we are commanded to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. This is, presumably, the goal of every Christian institution; but if our school courses are based on humanistic principles, if our subjects are taught apart from a Scriptural standard and philosophy, it remains an unattainable ideal.

"But why do we need a 'Christian' view of history?" a teacher once asked me. "Isn't history just facts?" Yes, but those facts are God-created facts, governed by His decree and ruled by His providence. If we are not training our students in terms of this perspective, they are not receiving a

Christian education. Worse still, they are therefore receiving a specifically non-Christian education. "He that is not with me is against me," Jesus declared; there is no neutral ground in any area of life. The principles of Scripture must be applied to our studies at every point, and both the particular facts and the general meanings of our subjects must be interpreted according to Biblical orthodoxy. It is a demanding task, but we are required to do nothing less.

Happily, increasing numbers of parents and educators are grappling with this problem, and more resources are being made available to help them. Dr. Haycock's new series of books is an excellent beginning. This first volume deals with history, geography, economics, government, and social problems. For each subject a list of Biblical principles is given, with annotated references to Scripture. The appendix provides a detailed catalog of teachers' study materials, resources for the classroom, and a directory of all the publishers mentioned.

While Dr. Haycock wrote her book with teachers and administrators in mind, it can be used as a very worthwhile text for students as well. It is simply written, and provides a good basis for further research. The fact that it is not exhaustive (and, as Haycock admits, "some statements may even be debatable") means that the capable instructor should be able to use this guide to teach sound canons of exegesis and interpretation. Dr. Haycock has done an admirable job in bringing these principles together, and the book should not be disregarded just because it may not be the last word on every subject it touches. In Haycock's words, "God has much to say in the social sciences, and for a writer to wait until he has found every Biblical concept and expressed it without fault is to wait too long to be of help to the Christian schools of America."

Get this book, and make good use of it, personally and institutionally. If we are going to train an army of God-fearing adults, we must face squarely our responsibility to teach them the absolute Lordship of Christ over the whole world. Every discipline must itself be disciplined to the dictates of Scripture. The author writes:

To fail here is to say to young people that Bible and the academic subjects are separate—that only in Bible class do we consider what God says. With such a message conveyed to them, students will graduate with what Rushdoony calls "intellectual schizophrenia" and defeat the whole purpose of the Christian school.

*State of North Carolina vs. Christian Liberty*, by Kent Kelly (Southern Pines, NC: Calvary Press); *Your faith on Trial*, by Wallis C. Metts (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press).

In our day of growing tyranny and repression, there are few enough things for which we can be thankful to our benevolent dictators. The outstanding exception is the fact that the concerted attack on Christian schools and churches by the various bureaucracies is forcing God's people to return to Biblical foundations. "Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved," said Luther, and as the war of the twentieth century reaches its peak, Christians are finding it necessary to choose between consistency to Christ and capitulation to antichrist. The authors of the *Humanist Manifesto* (1933) were certainly correct on one point: "Nothing human is alien to the religious. It includes labor, art, science, philosophy, love, friendship, recreation. . . . The distinction between the sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained." Significantly, the conflict of this decade has centered on that issue, and both sides are reali-

zing that we are fighting for all or nothing. Christ's rightful territory includes everything, and we will be ineffectual soldiers until we grasp that point in practical terms. Because the church has been negligent in fulfilling its territorial commission, God has raised up a militant horde of secular humanists to instruct us in the demands of our faith.

The lesson is being learned, but not without cost. The authors of these books are battle-scarred veterans of the Christian warfare in North Carolina and Tennessee. They have wrestled with the power-mad state, and have discovered through experience why the Apostle John called it "the Beast." They are also, sadly, acquainted with the sleazy Jezebels of Christendom, those who urge God's people to abandon their standards and commit fornication with Baal, to submit to statist control of the churches. Against enemies within and without, and occasionally in fear and trembling, they have nonetheless taken their stand with the army of their Lord.

For Pastor Kelly, the struggle began in 1974, when he and other Christian leaders forced the bureaucrats to back down from an attempt to eliminate Christian schoolteachers. The victory was only temporary, they realized: "Slowly but surely it began to dawn on us. The tide of educational religious freedom is not going out—it is gone!" (p.18)

The next phase of the battle took place in 1977. Kelly and the others had already agreed to refuse to divulge certain information required by the state, when the government made an all-out grab for control, ordering the Christian schools to (1) comply with 195 pages of "minimum standards," and (2) submit to a state-authored testing program. The case was taken to court, where the Christian schools won another temporary "victory": "The court struck down the present 'Course of Study' as a mandated curriculum, but left intact the principle of State Board authority to approve a new version tomorrow." Technically, therefore, "our schools still may not exist without State approval" (p. 31). Clearly, the state has only just begun to fight. But Kelly & Co. are not content to sit back licking their wounds, and they are determined to win. The bulk of Kelly's interesting, challenging and often humorous book is devoted to an explanation of the issues involved in the war for religious liberty—issues with which every Christian will need to be familiar in the years ahead.

In his book, Pastor Metts deals with these matters in greater depth, and points out a major distinction which is receiving much attention in the courts: the difference between *preference* and *conviction*. "A religious preference is something that will change under certain conditions . . . a person who has a religious conviction will not change his belief, even under intense pressure" (p. 13). For instance: are we opposed merely to *certain specific requirements* by the state that may be inconvenient—and which, if dropped, would enable us to forsake our opposition? Or are we, rather, opposed *in principle* to *any* state control of the faith, no matter how innocuous it may seem? Moreover, we *say* we hold to Scripture as the final authority on all matters of faith and practice. The sincerity of that profession is coming under legal scrutiny, with state officials scurrying through the Bible to find little-known and seldom-heeded commandments. If our faith, on trial, proves to involve only a *selective* obedience to God's word, we will be rightly judged to be holding a mere preference, not a conviction—and the case will be awarded to the prosecutors. If we are going to win the war for the succeeding generations, we had better get busy. We are fighting for our children. They are *holy* (I Cor. 7:14), and the Lord Jesus commanded: "Give not that which is holy unto dogs."

The Biblical Educator is published every month by the Institute for Christian Economics, a non-profit, tax-exempt educational organization. It is mailed free of charge to those who ask to be put on the mailing list. Subscriptions: P.O. Box 25, Sterling, VA 22170. Donations are fully tax deductible; checks should be made out to Institute for Christian Economics.