

THE BIBLICAL EDUCATOR

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

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ARE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS THE BEST ANSWER?

by James B. Jordan

We tend to take it for granted that the best alternative to the secular elementary school system is to erect a Christian school, after the same pattern as the secular school. By this I mean the pattern of having 12 grades, one per year, and dividing up the children into groups arranged by grades. We hope that our school will become big, so that each third-grader will have 20 to 30 comrades in his or her class, and that each eleventh-grader will have at least 8 or 10.

Let us stop and ask a few questions about this system, however. One of the questions Christians must ask about education is whose responsibility it is. Obviously it is not the business of the state. Is it the business of the church? No, it is the business of the family to educate the children. When the children are older, and want to pursue education to a particular calling, it is their responsibility to contract with some teacher or teachers for their advanced education. This is *best* accomplished by a system of apprenticeship, but in the modern world it is usually accomplished by a student's paying the faculty of a university to teach him. Here again, however, the arrangement ought to be a simple free market transaction; it is not the responsibility of either church or state.

(Of course, in an age like ours, when Christians are a cultural minority, and the secular state is moving against Christian schools, it may be wise *for the time being* to put schools and colleges under the sponsorship of the church, so as to claim the protection of the U.S. Constitution: freedom of religion.)

If elementary education is the business of the family, why delegate it to the Christian school? The only justification for doing so is that the Christian school teachers are more efficient, and are specialists. What do we lose in the process, however?

First, the child loses a sense of the wisdom of his parents. Soon it is the teacher who is knowledgeable and wise, and any conflict between her opinion and the parents' opinion will be difficult for the child to resolve. Parents will not want to undermine the authority of the teacher, and so may just let the matter ride. Christian schools, of course, try to avoid this as much as possible; but it is a subtle and continuing problem.

Second, the child loses contact with other children of other ages. In the family, the older child may help in the instruction of the younger, and the younger children learn to relate to the older. Additionally, if the child is kept in the home environment, he will learn to benefit from contact with other adults. Bill Gothard makes the point, in his valuable "Institute for Basic Youth Conflicts," that every child needs grandparents as well as parents. If grandparents are not at hand, living in the same town, parents should "adopt" some elderly couple to be as grandparents for their children. Similarly, parents should "adopt" Christian adults to be "uncles and aunts" to their children. "Uncle" Bob may be a good mechanic, and "uncle" Bill a good musician; "aunt" Jane a good seamstress. If our children "hang around" these "uncles,

aunts, and grandparents," they will learn more than in the classroom. It is hardly a socially healthy thing, from the Biblical-familistic standpoint, for children to relate only to people of their own age group. One bad effect of this is the Junior High adolescent fixation on the peer group. Children of this age are terrified of being "different." This simply would not be a problem if schools were not structured by these rigid grade divisions.

Third, locking a child up in school all day, five days per week, locks him out of many educational experiences in the world. At the very least, parents should readily keep their children out of class for any valuable educational experience that comes to town.

Fourth, the child will mature faster in the presence of older children than he will if isolated with kids of his own age. Moreover, he will learn much faster, since what is being taught to the older children will rub off on the younger ones.

You can think of other arguments, doubtless. Of course, the small, family-sized school, with flexible hours, will not be able to provide, the "most important" parts of education: big science labs, full sports program, cheerleaders, etc. It is up to you to decide what you prize the most.

As a matter of fact, of course, some parents are not the best educators, though most could teach their children with little difficulty. Some children, for one reason or another, do not learn as readily from parents as from a third party. A family-sized school might in many circumstances be the best solution. By this I mean a one-room school-house, with children of all grades (or stages of learning) in the same room. If there are too many children for that, then break it down into large groups, say "grades" 1-4, 5-8. Or, divide the one-room school into two, in order to preserve the family size. It might prove ideal to have neighborhood schools, with 30-40 children in each school, and one teacher over them all. (High school, entailing much more specialized kinds of education, will require more specialists to teach, and the one-room schoolhouse method might not be quite as practical there. It is surely worth trying, however.)

The Cono Christian School of Walker, Iowa, has used the "one-room" model for years, and is persuaded that it is best. The older children help teach the younger, and education takes place at a phenomenal rate. The best resource material in this whole area is available from Growing Without Schooling, 308 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116. They sell a variety of books, and publish a newsletter giving addresses of people who are teaching their children at home, as well as legal news. Their perspective is that of radical, ecologicistic humanism; but many of the ideas found in their material are valuable for Christians to adopt. A Christian family that has been doing this for several years, and who would like to be in touch with you if you are interested, are Mr. and Mrs. David A. Dombeck, 1956 Susquehanna, Abington, PA 19001.

I mentioned legal news. The problem with teaching your kids at home is that many states don't like it. More and more court cases are being won in this area, however, and the Growing Without Schooling newsletter will tell you how to keep your family out of the legal spotlight. At the very least, this essay has been designed to encourage Christians who have no Christian school. You don't need one; you can do it yourself at home. If there is just a teeny-weeny Christian school at your church, and it is not growing by leaps and bounds, rejoice! Your

children are probably receiving a better and more well-rounded education in that one-room schoolhouse than they would get at some big Christian school.

(Of course, the big Christian school is still infinitely preferable to the secular school. This essay has not been an attack on big Christian schools so much as it has been a question-raising enterprise. We need to think this matter through. If you don't agree, write an essay defending the other viewpoint, and send it in.)

IS PRIMITIVE MAN REALLY PRIMITIVE?

By Paul Rosenthal

No Christian school would intentionally teach evolution. Yet there are some areas where Christians have uncritically accepted evolutionary premises, and this creates a difficult problem in the school. How do we explain the existence of "primitive" cultures? According to the evolutionist, primitives are examples of the origins of modern man: they exist merely as a part of nature, not having yet developed a sophisticated socio-political organization. As Christian teachers, we must counter this view with the Biblical teaching. Scripture tells us that man was created in the image of God. As ruler under God, he was given the tools for dominion over the earth. He was not simply a part of the ecosystem, but had the knowledge and the responsibility to control his environment. Man's origin is not to be found in primitivism, but in godly dominion.

If this is true, what is the explanation of the primitive? The answer is that his condition is the result of his rebellion against God. According to Deuteronomy 28, dominion is possible only under God's law. Cultural apostasy is inescapably met with the curse in every area, and we can see in the primitive an application of this principle. Primitive tribes often suffer from a scarcity of food and water, and starvation is not unusual (Deut. 28:17, 24). Those tribes that do live in areas of abundant rainfall either are regularly flooded or utilize destructive "slash-and-burn" methods of agriculture, resulting in the spread of the desert (Isa. 7:23; Jer. 12:13).

Primitives are incapable of using science in their dominion efforts. Their religious presuppositions rest in the ultimacy of chaos and chance. Science is based on the presupposition of God's organization of His creation. But because the primitive's categories of thinking and acting are in terms of chaos, science becomes impossible. He has "lost" the knowledge essential for dominion, and is reduced to almost total impotence.

Primitives, under divine judgment, have lost the ability to domesticate animals, and only rarely possess herds and flocks (Deut. 28:18). Some peoples of the South Pacific have domesticated pigs, but these animals ravage the land at such tremendous rates that they must be slaughtered every two or three years in a "pig festival." But for the most part, primitive man is forced to be a hunter and scavenger (Deut. 28:31).

The population of primitive tribes is severely delimited because pollution has drastically reduced the carrying capacity of the land. Among the Kung Bushmen an average-size band comprises about 30 people. These bands roam the Kalahari Desert in search of food, and the reward for a month-long hunt may often be only one animal killed (Deut. 28:65-66).

Most revealing of primitive man's depravity, however, are his religious rituals. Human sacrifices (Lev. 18:21; Deut. 12:31) and mutilation of the body (1 Kings 18:28) are common practices. In many primitive societies, parents sharpen the teeth of their children, leading to profuse bleeding in the gums of the mouth. Often a bone from a dead animal will be inserted into the upper lip so that the lip protrudes outward 4-6 inches from the face (Deut. 14:1; Lev. 11:24, 28, 39).

Other practices which reveal man's total rebellion against God include tattooing of an infant (Lev. 19:28) as well as the binding of an in-

fant's head in straps so that the head becomes deformed. These customs are performed in order to dedicate the child to a sacred deity (Ex. 20:3-6; Lev. 20:2-5). The majority of these societies have witchdoctors who divine the future and perform miraculous acts of healing (Deut. 18: 10-11; Lev. 19:31; Lev. 20:6). The Apostle Paul clearly demonstrates that such activities are evidence of total depravity (Rom. 1:20-23) and that they are of the devil, not God (1 Cor. 10:20). James Henley Thornwell has this to say about paganism: "So far are the heathen from feeling after Him with any real desire to find Him in His true character, that the grand purpose of their inventions is to insult and degrade Him, and to reign supreme in his place. Looked at in its true light, heathenism is a crime, or rather a combination of crimes, so enormous and aggravated that the marvel is how a God of infinite justice and purity could endure it for a single day. Its mother is sin and its daughter is death . . . Heathenism is really an attempt to put out the eye of the soul—nay more, to extinguish the very being of the soul. . ." (*THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF JAMES HENLEY THORNWELL*; The Banner of Truth Trust; Carlisle, Penn.: 1875, pp. 99-100).

Humanism in full flower is primitive man. Having denied the God of Scripture, each man has become a god unto himself. Tension, conflict and opposition necessarily follow, because each man "did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). Colin M. Turnbull (*THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE*; Simon and Schuster; New York, New York: 1972) conducted a field study of an African tribe called the Ik. In this study he described how each individual lived for himself—ripping food out of each other's mouths, trampling over those who got in the way of a desirable commodity, and the total abandonment of children and the elderly to the whims of nature. The Ik paint a revolting, yet true, picture of rebellious man.

Primitive man, then, is not just a portrayal of a "lower stage of social evolution." Primitive man is in an advanced stage of degeneracy. He is exemplary of rebellion against God and His law. Thornwell states, "The true view of heathenism is, that it is the consummation of human depravity. It is the full development of the principle of sin in its workings upon the intellectual, the moral, and the religious nature of man. It is a development directly counter to that which is normal and right. It is the last stage which the mind reaches in its retrograde movement. It is as complete an unmaking of the work of God in man as it is possible to conceive. The only sense in which it is a preparation for the gospel is that it shows the hopelessness of man without it. God has permitted it to take place on a large scale that He might demonstrate the real tendencies of sin" (Thornwell, *ibid.*, pg. 102). Christians should take note of the situation of the "primitive man" and be reminded that the *only* way for a society to function and prosper is to be based upon Biblical law. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Ps. 127:1).

Recommended: A good film illustrating this topic is *THE EMPTY CITIES*, produced by Moody Institute of Science.

AN EDUCATIONAL COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE

by Rodney N. Kirby

No. 3—"The Centrality of Language" "And God said . . ." (Genesis 1:3)

We see here the centrality of language in creation. It was by a word (or rather, *the Word*—John 1:3) that all things were made. While God obviously used "raw power" to create the world, yet the Holy Spirit saw fit to include in the inspired record the fact that God *spoke* when He created.

God's relation with His creation, particularly with man, is not a mystical, feeling-oriented relation, but a linguistically-oriented one—a relation which can be expressed, to a great degree, in rational, propositional statements (propositional truth). We do not here deny the "mystical", emotional aspects of Christianity. However, we must not reduce Christianity to emotions. God saw fit to communicate with man via language, through His Son the Word (John 1), and through the inscripturated Word.

Content

In our schools, we must teach the "language arts"—reading, writing, speech, etc. These must be taught *diligently*, as a foundational part of God's creation. Language is the God-ordained means of communication between God and man, as seen in Gen. 1:28, where God spoke to man. It is also the God-ordained means of communication between men, as seen in Gen. 2:23. Here we see Adam *naming* his wife—a linguistic task. Language is also necessary for the fulfillment of the cultural mandate. In Gen. 2:19, Adam named (linguistically) the animals, meaning he classified them, as a step in the process of exercising dominion over them. And so man has a linguistic relationship to God, to other men, and to the subhuman creation. All this, in order to be most effective, requires precision in the use of language. Our language is rapidly becoming muddy, confused, and ambiguous; thus, it is often difficult, if not impossible, to understand fully what another person is saying. This hinders us in our task of "subduing the earth." We must spend much of our time, time which we could be using to work, to clarify language—both ours, and other men's speech.

Naturally, we must emphasize reading in the curriculum. This is done in the lower grades by teaching reading as a separate subject; in the upper grades, reading is used in all subjects. We must also teach writing. There are several aspects to this. First, we must concentrate on penmanship; writing is useless if others cannot read it! Spelling must be taught for this reason as well. Also, we must teach techniques of clear, organized writing—outlining, sentence structure, logical development of thoughts, etc. It is amazing how many intelligent people will not do something as simple as writing their congressman, or a letter to the editor of the newspaper, merely because they do not know how to organize their thoughts, and put them down on paper in a coherent way.

Another subject, which is often neglected, is speech. We must teach children how to speak properly in public. As the schools have neglected this, we have, y'know, a generation of, uh, y'know, morons, y'know, who can't, y'know, talk, uh, good. We must again concentrate on this necessary skill of speech. Classes can frequently have occasions for oral reports, debates, "show and tell" in kindergarten, etc., in which the student is expected to speak coherently, plainly, and grammatically.

It should also be said that these skills must not be limited to one class—the English class. *All* teachers must demand proper language usage. Language is essential for communication in *all* fields of study. And so, for example, the history teacher should lower the grade on a paper with misspelled words, ungrammatical constructions, or poor logical development.

Methods

Our methods should center around linguistic methods—oral and written. God saw fit to communicate to man, to *teach* man, by language; we, as image-bearers of God, should do the same. To be sure, God revealed Himself by *actions*, such as the Exodus from Egypt, the Incarnation, and the Resurrection. But God did not leave these actions by themselves. We have not the mere *event* of the Exodus to teach us about God's redemptive power, but we have that event as it has been *verbally* interpreted for us in subsequent revelation. The event itself, especially as viewed by sinful minds, could easily be misinterpreted (see, in this regard, the pagan interpretation of an Israelite victory, in I Kings 20:23). However, God has verbally interpreted His "mighty acts" for us so there can be no mistaking their significance.

And so, our methods must be centered around the use of language. This does not rule out other methods. For example, there is a validity to some uses of "experiments" in science. However, if the students cannot verbalize what they have done and learned, the experience is wasted. They should report on their experiments, and seek to formulate a reason for the results obtained. This is not "learning by doing," which centers on the value of the experience in itself, but is verbally-oriented learning, supplemented by practical experience.

Discipline

As with our methods, discipline must be verbally-oriented. When God punished Judah by sending her into captivity, He sent prophets to interpret verbally that action. And so, if a child needs punishing, we do not merely give him a spanking and let it go at that. We must tell the child what rule he has broken, how disobedience to the teacher is in reality disobedience to God, and how God requires us therefore to punish him. There are times when the child will not understand, but we *must* explain anyway. Punishment is not personal revenge, but is a means of sanctification. It can only become this if the child is told why he is being punished, so he can avoid his sin next time.

Also, as we seek to discipline children (make them disciples), we must not overlook their speech. There are two dimensions to this. First, we must not allow ungrammatical speech; the reasons for this have been given above. If a child says something ungrammatically, the teacher should *first* respond to the content of what he says, and *then* correct his speech. Second, we must correct a sinful use of the tongue. In the lower grades, this will take the form of name-calling, tattling, or taunting. In the upper grades, we must be on guard against gossip and sarcasm. In all grades, we must correct lying, swearing, and other unholy speech. The Bible abounds with warnings concerning the wrong use of the tongue (see, for example, James 1:26 and 3:2-12).

"And God said . . ." God's use of language demands that we, as image-bearers of God, use language in a Godly way. This affects all areas of school life, and demands constant diligence from us as teachers.

BOOK REVIEW

by David H. Chilton

Economic Policy: Thoughts for Today and Tomorrow, by Ludwig von Mises (Regnery/Gateway, 1979), \$4.95

Until his death in 1973, Ludwig von Mises was the leading exponent of the Austrian (or "Neo-Classical") School of economic theory. Unlike many of his other works, *Economic Policy* is quite readable for the young student of economics. (Not that Mises ever wrote poorly; but when the average reader attempts to grapple with such terms as "catallactics" and "praxeology," he tends to move toward shallower waters.) The simplicity of this book is largely due to the fact that it consists of a series of popular lectures delivered to a group of Argentinian students in 1958, while the country was still reeling from the destructive policies of Juan Peron's dictatorship. Mises' wife writes: "The audience reacted as if a window had been opened and fresh air allowed to breeze through the rooms."

The response of those students will be echoed by the reader of these lectures. In plain, forthright language, Mises expounds the system of free enterprise, and lays bare the doctrines of socialism with understanding and skill. As Mises points out, when Karl Marx set forth his theory of class warfare, "he could not illustrate his thesis by any examples other than those drawn from the conditions of precapitalistic society" (p. 23). Indeed, "there is no western, capitalistic country in which the conditions of the masses have not improved in an unprecedented way" (p. 13). In dealing with the "revolt of the masses," he observes that "this revolt was not made by the masses: it was made by the intellectuals. And those intellectuals who developed these doctrines were not from the masses . . . All the socialist authors, without exception, were *bourgeois* in the sense in which the socialists use this term" (p. 104).

But in the name of concern for "the people," governments have engaged in policies of deliberate economic intervention, resulting in a perversion of justice: "There are no longer real political parties in the old classical sense, but merely *pressure groups*"—groups which battle for special privileges at the expense of the rest of the nation. The outcome is that "only one thing is *not* represented in the legislature: the nation as a whole" (p. 96f.).

You will be hard put to find a more readable introduction to clear-headed economics than this. If we are going to prepare our students for changing the future, we will need to familiarize them with these concepts. The Austrian School's analysis must be revised in terms of Scripture, but much of it is based (not necessarily intentionally) on Biblical principles. The teacher should involve his students in the task of working out those principles, relating them to the observations of Mises and others. *Economic Policy* is a good place to start.

Age of Inflation, by Hans Sennholz (Western Islands, 1979), \$8.95

In contrast to the book recommended above, this treatise is not light reading; yet few other works are so thorough in exposing the fallacious policies which have produced our current inflationary malaise. Inflation, the author reminds us, does not just happen: it is the direct result of government intervention. Sennholz details both the causes and cure of the disease, and the book is a most valuable resource for understanding and dealing with it. All too often we bewail our misery while advocating "solutions" that will only aggravate our condition. We call upon the state for salvation, and the state gladly steps in—but, with theological consistency, demands that if it is to be Savior, it must be Lord as well. Salvation and slavery are inseparable, and we cannot escape that fact by "talking *Bible* and voting *Babylon*." The sheep will always follow the shepherd, regardless of what they say believe; but if Big Brother is our Keeper, he will be our murderer also.

Beginning with a discussion of monetary theory, Sennholz outlines the steps taken by various governments in gaining control of money:

monopoly of the mint, legal tender laws, and the widespread acceptance of money substitutes. "Finally, when the people had grown accustomed to paper issues, the government could deny all claims for redemption and establish its own *fiat* standard. All checks on inflation had finally been removed" (p. 25). But the state alone cannot be made the whipping boy, for a prime cause of inflation is the greed and envy of the people, who cry for benefits at others' expense. And then the very remedies which government applies to society's ills serve simply to magnify the problems: "Government can spend only what it takes away from taxpayers and inflation victims . . . any additional spending by government curtails the citizens' spending by its full amount" (p. 35). The "boom-bust cycle" is a necessary result of the implementation of the Keynesian principles of money and credit expansion.

But it is not only Lord Keynes and his cohorts who receive a thrashing in this book. The Chicago School of thought is also subjected to a rigorous and damning examination: "From Fisher to Friedman the antidote for depressions has always been the same: reflation" (p. 51). The stages of inflation are illustrated by the example of Germany's hyperinflation in 1914-1923 (when the mark fell to one-trillionth of its value) and its continued monopolistic policies through 1948, when "the victors of World War II chose to replace a defunct *fiat* currency with a new *fiat* system. It cannot surprise us, therefore, that the old forces of inflation and depreciation are gnawing again at the old Deutsche Mark. Since 1948 it has lost almost one-half of its exchange value" (p. 108).

Returning to the problems of this country, Sennholz goes on to describe the origin, development and practices of the Federal Reserve System. "The ominous depreciation of the United States dollar during the last fifty years has been the work of the Federal Reserve System. It created large quantities of money and credit in order to cover the budgetary deficits of the United States Treasury or to stimulate the sagging economy" (p. 113). The Fed has the power to set minimum reserve requirements, which leads to the fraudulent practice of fractional reserve banking. (In April, 1980, the requirement was lowered from 16% to 8%—the Fed originally shot for 4%—a move which provides for a more than \$48 billion increase in credit, and sets the stage for massive inflation in the near future.)

Even more appalling is the Emergency Banking Regulation No. 1, which Sennholz calls "a ready instrument of tyranny," and "one of the most alarming orders ever issued by an American official": it provides for "the instant seizure of most banking deposits" in case of a national emergency, and the government would then have the power to ration your money to you as the bureaucrats see fit (p. 120ff.). The measure "violates nearly every principle of law," specifically the fourth and fifth Amendments to the Constitution, as well as laws of contract, trust, bankruptcy and insolvency.

In spite of all the governmental interference (more correctly, *because* of it), Sennholz warns us that "the American economy is not depression-proof" (p. 127). The only economic stability will come from "the separation of political power from the control of money" (p. 149). Therefore, Sennholz lists the steps which must be taken in dismantling governmental economic controls—which are really "people controls." But since "a free society is the offspring of morality" (p. 170), the crucial issue is whether the people will have the moral backbone to go through a necessary depression without crying again to the state for salvation:

In the pains of a stabilization crisis, will they succumb, once again, to the temptations of easy money and deficit spending? Or will they see it through, all the way, all the way to stable money? (p. 156)

That kind of courage will exist only if there is national repentance and a sound grasp of Biblical economic principles. To that end the Christian school must be dedicated, and to that end every teacher of Bible and social studies should master this book.