

# THE BIBLICAL EDUCATOR

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

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## THE CHRISTIAN THINKER AS TEACHER AN INTRODUCTION

### No. 2: Foundations and the Avoidance of Fantasy

*By David Robinson*

It is said that fantasy consists of such things as wizards, elves, fire-breathing dragons and castles in the air. You and I may read these things, relax, and reflect upon the images that are conjured up in our minds. Within the bounds of imagination, fantasy works in a wonderful way, and indeed, is the best way to express some things—a point made repeatedly by C.S. Lewis.

There is also another meaning to the word fantasy. Fantasy can also signify the *mistaking* of the unreal for the real; a belief that that which is not is really that which is. When this occurs, we say that a person is "out of touch," or some such euphemism; we may smile at the condition in another, or feel ourselves embarrassed by it. If the condition is serious enough, counseling may be necessary. All of which is to say that we recognize the abnormality of the condition: We recognize that there is a difference between enjoying fantasy and becoming lost in it; we delight in the one, and hopefully discourage the other.

Now I would hazard to guess that this places many who teach (including not a few who teach history) in a rather dubious position. "Yes, we shall teach history, and it shall be founded upon the WORD, and by the end of the year the students will be thinking in a Christian manner about the Adam-Onis Treaty, and the Commonwealth, and 1492 and 1776 and 1783 and 1812 and 1865 and 1914 and 1929, and please, Lord, help me to *make it* to 1929. . . ." The assumption having been made, it is now taken for granted that this formidable task will be accomplished evidently through some sort of intellectual osmosis, for it is seldom pursued in a manner which would justify the confidence with which the quest is proclaimed in endless lesson plans. Instead, most classes pay lip service to the ideal (perhaps), indulge in some form of ritual magic (a daily prayer, regular chapel, or that versatile performer, the class devotion), and then thoughtlessly pursue a curriculum which does little, if anything, to consummate the supposed vision of "Christian Education." By the end of the year, the "objective" has been attained, the students have "arrived" (or are on the way—at least that proportion above this or that point on the infamous Bell Curve), and the instructor may sell shoes during the summer, well assured that he has discharged his stewardships to the best of his abilities.

I am concerned about this, for I fear that many of my colleagues fit in such a category—a category that would, in the light of the above discussion, tend to be labeled fantasy, connotation two. In effect, an educator affected by this misconception believes that he is "really" instructing in a Christian fashion, when in actuality he is doing just the opposite. Herein we perceive the tragedy of mistaking the unreal for the real; the teacher has constructed a castle in the air. His course is being built from the roof down, presuming that the foundation just "is." Now we on the ground might accept this if we realized that we,

like Alice, had gone through the looking glass, and that such things were to be expected. It is quite a different thing, however, to understand that we are still on this side of the mirror, and any structure made from the roof down is doomed to a rude awakening. The very good that we would do, we do not, while we do the very evil that we say that we hate. If we do not start with the foundations in our curriculum, we will never know the joy of consummation—worse yet, our students will never know it. Worst of all, many of these same students will assume that they *do* know it, have experienced it, and thus will tend to stride out of our courses of study clad in a "full armor" that bears embarrassing resemblance to the emperor's new clothes. This constitutes a very deadly sin to perpetrate against the minds of our students, this lie of a house without foundations. Great will be the ruin. . . .

But how does one escape the thralldom of castles in the air, of proclamation without justification? The answer lies, I think, in the construction of the very foundations that we assume by our actions to exist. They do not. Let us concentrate on the specific example of the teaching of a high school U. S. History course. How shall I go about this task of foundation building?

There are doubtless many possible answers to this question, but it is my conviction that the first month or so of the class can be put to good use by pursuing the sorts of questions that are not generally explored these days even at the college or seminary level. It is truly amazing to me that this should be so, when it can be remedied so readily. Have you ever discussed what history *is*? Now I am not referring to that barren wasteland of reading the few paragraphs that the textbook might contain on the subject, to be followed with hackneyed phrases (also usually few) and a "rap session" in class, before we get on with it. (1492 and all that, unless you are one of those "advanced" instructors, in which case Leif Erickson will do. . . .) Rather, can you lead your students into the fascination of differentiating *geschichte* from *historia* or *historikos*? In what way does the historian function like the poet? We say that we are Christian thinkers—do the minds in your classroom reflect upon, and discuss, and organize their thoughts in written form on who the triune God is, and what creation *ex nihilo* means to the historian, and what the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ imply for the processes and interpretation of history?

Why study history? It is not too surprising that, when the above has been tasted, much of the "why" begins to fall into place as well. Wisdom on His throne would undoubtedly be pleased by the offering of the living sacrifice of minds who begin to grapple with "why." And how much more fitting to deal with the subject here, in the beginning, than at some other point in time dictated by student hostility—"Yeah. Howkum I gotta study this stuff?" Sufficient time spent on what history is will usually be amply repaid by a certain redundancy concerning *why* history, although it is obvious that weeks could be spent in developing answers to this question alone.

Where is history going? An excellent query, none the worse for wear in its being asked countless times, and even finding itself on the cover of John W. Montgomery's stimulating book of the title. The Christian

*eschaton* and conception of the shape and direction of history from creation to culmination is surely an awesome issue. Is it possible that we can allow our students to pass such a subject without having some exposure to the difference between the Christian picture of history and, say, the Hindu or Epicurean or Stoic or Marxist views? An obvious point, perhaps, but none the less important.

Other potential directions have no doubt occurred to you. The riches of Christ to the seeking mind are infinite, whether you are exploring the nature of time and the contributions of a not so relative relativity to the Christian pursuit of history, or the moral and ethical implications of revelation to historical interpretation, or the joys of research producing some sought-after truth. It might even be something as fundamental as the rediscovery of the delight and awe in learning and coming to greater understanding that both you and your students had before you came loose from the foundations of your youth. Proper foundations provide a home for joy, as well as a basis for growth. Do not expect to gain much in the study of the divine right of kings or the Renaissance or Adolf Hitler without them. Do not expect much at all. You are, after all, a victim of fantasy, floating high in a world of self-delusion—and this, after all, cannot be the joyous realm whose foundations were laid once for all.

You have departed, and yet have not begun.

## AN EDUCATIONAL COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE

By Rodney N. Kirby

### #11 "Punishment and Evangelism" (Genesis 4:1-15)

We have mentioned in a previous article the fact that Scripture draws a parallel between God's disciplining of us, and our disciplining of our children. If we are to be Godly in our dealings with our children, we must see how God deals with us. Our text this month records another instance of God's method of punishment. We will note several points, and seek to apply them to discipline in the school.

First, we may notice in vs. 6-7, that God detects Cain's attitude of rebellion, before it breaks out in an outward act. Speaking anthropomorphically, we may say that God could tell that Cain was up to no good. He could tell that Cain was upset about the non-acceptance of his offering, and that wicked plans were running through his mind. And so God warned Cain, *before* he committed the outward transgression. "If you obey, and come to Me on My terms, I will accept your offering. But sin is lying in wait for you; watch out! You must conquer your sin."

God, of course, being omniscient, could look into Cain's heart and see where he was heading. Even though man is not so omniscient, he nevertheless can generally tell what a person who is being tempted to sin has on his mind. This is especially true in regard to children. Every parent and teacher of young children knows how to "read" their children; you can see what their scheming little mind is up to. "Johnny, don't you dare even *think* about doing that."

We must warn our children *before* they do wrong. It is all too easy to sit back and watch them do wrong, and then pounce on them. We must make the rules clear ahead of time (no "post facto" laws), and must warn of what will happen for disobedience. Our goal is not to *punish* our children, but to *teach* them in the right paths. If a warning will prevent disobedience, the punishment will not be necessary; the child still will learn obedience. Of course, we are not condoning the all-too-common "warning," "If you do that one more time, so help me, I'll . . ." What we mean is warnings that come before any actual disobedience has taken place.

In vs. 12, God tells Cain that the ground will no longer respond to him, as it had before (cf. vs. 2), and that he will be forced to wander. In essence, God removes Cain's dominion from him. Cain will no longer be

able (successfully) to exercise dominion over the earth. Cain had shown himself to be irresponsible as a viceregent of God, and so he is removed from a position of authority.

Even so, we may punish disobedience in our children by taking away responsibilities from them. If a student is given the responsibility of taking a note to the office, for example, and he abuses that responsibility (by stopping in the restroom for a smoke), then (along with other punishments) he should not be given that responsibility again. If your son is caught drag racing down Main Street, his car keys should be taken away until he gives evidence of having learned godly responsibility. Students who demonstrate irresponsibility thereby demonstrate their inability to exercise dominion properly, and that dominion is removed from them.

Verse 11 brings up an important point. Cain was "cursed," in contrast to Adam and Eve (see Gen. 3:16-19), who were not directly cursed. The difference is to be seen as rooted in the different states of the souls of Adam and Cain. Adam confessed his sin to the Lord (3:12—"and I did eat"). Adam responded to God's chastisement with a recognition of the grace of God. In 3:20, Adam sees that through his wife, God will sustain life, ultimately through the promised seed (cf. 3:15). God symbolically washed Adam and Eve from their sins by the death of a substitute, and by clothing them with the skin of that substitute (3:21).

In contrast, Cain never confessed his sin. In fact, the only response he made to God was a complaint. He complained that his punishment was too severe, that he would not be able to stand it (4:13-14). Cain maintained this, even though he knew God's punishment was what he deserved, or rather that God was not even punishing him as severely as he deserved (Rom. 1:32). Cain deserved to die (Ezek. 18:4), and God was showing mercy to him in not destroying him at that moment.

One man was regenerate, one of the elect of God; the other was an unrepentant reprobate. Thus, God did not "curse" Adam, while He *did* "curse" Cain. The differing states of the respective souls was reflected in differing punishments.

In applying this to our work as Christian teachers, we must immediately make a distinction between our discipline and God's. God can see the heart of man; God knows who the elect and who the reprobate are. Men (not even teachers!) do not have this ability. However, we *can* detect the difference between a repentant student and a hardened, unrepentant student. The godly student will manifest his regenerate nature in outward acts; the unrepentant student will likewise manifest his true nature (Matt. 7:17-18).

And so we should make a distinction in our punishment between the repentant and the unrepentant students. God surely punished the repentant Adam, but He punished more severely the unrepentant Cain. So we may punish an unrepentant student more severely than we do the repentant student. Two students may throw rocks through school windows. One, who evidences genuine repentance over his sin, may be required to work to make restitution for the damage. The other, who shows no signs of sorrowful repentance, may be expelled from school. The unrepentant student (or his parents) will often complain (as did Cain) about "unfair" punishment; the godly student generally will submit to punishment.

Such unrepentance in a student points to a need for evangelism. This student must be shown that his lack of sorrow over sin shows his sinful heart. The teacher will point out to the student that, when he complains about the severity of his punishment, he is acting just like the reprobate Cain. He should be told that he deserves much more severe punishment than what we administer—that his sin deserves death, and places him under the wrath of God. He should be implored and commanded to repent, forsake his sins, flee to Christ, and seek forgiveness from God. Remember, the goal of punishment by men is the *restoration* of the offender. We do not desire to expel the offending student, but desire his reconciliation to God, and resulting godly obedience. Let us not forsake this opportunity to evangelize the children God has entrusted to us.

BOOK REVIEW  
By David H. Chilton

*Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith*, by James H. Billington (Basic Books, Inc., 10 E. 53rd St., New York, NY 10022). 577 pp., \$25.00

One of the most ignored facts of our age is that the ideology of revolution is a *faith*, an "anti-Christian christianity," as Clarence B. Carson calls it in *The World in the Grip of an Idea* (reviewed last month). We have seen, again and again, the revolutionary fascination with religious rhetoric, documented in *Marx's Religion of Revolution*, by Gary North (out of print), and in Otto Scott's *Robespierre: The Voice of Virtue and The Secret Six: John Brown and the Abolitionist Movement*. Because they are created in God's image, all men are fundamentally religious. All cultural activity is essentially an outgrowth of man's religious position: our life and thought are exercised either in obedience to, or rebellion against, God. All men, says the Apostle Paul, are conscious of their rebellion, and they are self-conscious to a degree which leaves them inexcusable; but the avowed revolutionary is self-conscious to a greater degree than many of his fellow men. He will admit, even proclaim—often in so many words—his intention to be God. The religious character of revolution is thus not incidental, but central.

Apart from crackpot conspiracy theorists, the most searching analysis of this issue is James H. Billington's *Fire in the Minds of Men*. It is a fat, heavily-researched study, with enough footnotes to choke even Francis Nigel Lee. As any weary teacher will attest, however, there is a vast difference between enlightening quotation and superfluous padding; and Billington's book, bulky as it is, shows no sign of gratuitous baggage.

At the outset, the author states his thesis:

The revolutionary faith was shaped not so much by the critical rationalism of the French Enlightenment (as is generally believed) as by the occultism and proto-romanticism of Germany. This faith was incubated in France during the revolutionary era within a small subculture of literary intellectuals who were immersed in journalism, fascinated by secret societies, and subsequently infatuated with "ideologies" as a secular surrogate for religious belief (pp. 3-4).

The revolutionary mentality, as examined in these pages, evinces an almost unbounded facility for appropriating as its own the religious terminology of the surrounding culture. Repeatedly we read references to infallibility, regeneration and faith. Revolutionaries were led in France by a council of "twelve apostles"; prayers were offered to "the body of the nation"; some groups practiced baptism; and one revolutionary called for a new version of Holy Communion, in which the priest would proclaim: "This is the body OF THE BREAD which the rich owe to the poor!" German Socialists in 1907 opened their convention with Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress"—replacing *Gott* with *Bund* (League). They spoke of "the holy Communist Church," "the egalitarian church, outside of which there can be no salvation" and for this church they published family devotional literature, responsive readings, and even a "Communists Lord's Prayer": "...No masters and no servants! Amen!/Money and property shall be abolished!" As the apotheosis of the French Revolution heightened, it was called the "Incarnation of '89." The meaning of all this, naturally, is that "man is God"; and, of course, all men are brothers—but, one leader observed darkly, "some are Abels and some are Cains," the latter being the rich, against whom are gathered "the Abels of this world," the oppressed revolutionaries.

Religion must be all-encompassing; and the revolutionary faith transformed everything it touched into symbols of mystic power. An important concern was *communication*—old words were redefined, new words coined, in a dazzling fusion of Christian, occult and sexual

imagery with revolutionary content. The result was a language of revolution—or rather, language was revolutionized, altered for the purpose of defying and defiling authority; and, in the process, degrading language itself. Writings were carefully framed to produce "linguistic shock"; provincial dialects were rooted out to make way for *la langue universelle*, in an attempt to obliterate local loyalties. Yet even as words were being abused, they increasingly received a cultic devotion from the revolutionaries: Restif de la Bretonne (the inventor of the term *communism*), whose "attachment to printing was almost physiological" (p. 79), often composed his works while setting type, in a mystic enthrallment with the medium. Journalism became "the single most important activity" for revolutionaries (p. 308). And just as Christians look forward to a day when every man shall sit "under his vine and under his fig tree," the revolutionaries hoped for a golden age "when every citizen shall be able to have a press in his home."

But words were not the only objects of ardor. Revolutionary revelation was sought in Pythagorean mysticism: a popular song exhorted the faithful to study "Those truths of holy law/Given you by geometry." Prime numbers had occult significance—one theorist even "derived the entire structure of revolutionary history from the number 17" (p. 100). From geometry they looked to music as a source of illumination, seeing it as "the science of harmonic relationships of the universe," a medium which would enable the new men to transcend human limitations. In all of this there is the old, pagan desire to be free of one's humanity, and to liberate oneself from language. One major difference between orthodox Christianity and paganism is the fact that *Christianity is linguistic*: it stresses doctrine, content, the importance of linguistic communication—in short, the primacy of the Word. The Bible is a revelation in *words*, and calls for an intelligible (which is not to say only *intellectual*) response: "What shall we then say to these things?" Pagans, on the other hand, are always carping about the limitations of language, seeking a new knowledge through mystical experience. The revolutionary obsession with words was not due to any love for *truth* (and we even have to be careful about using that increasingly contentless word—a fact which has driven Francis Schaeffer to speak of "*true truth*"), but rather a passionate attraction to what was perceived as the mystical power of words.

If there is one aspect of this book which deserves an award, it is its documentation of the part played in the revolution by Illuminist groups. The fact that a scholar even recognizes the existence of the Illuminati is a rare mark of distinction. The Order of Illuminists, a secret society modeled on the Jesuit hierarchical system, was not so much a fraternity as a militia, organized for the purposes of world revolution, and using Masonic lodges as a sort of boot camp, a training ground for the real thing. After a blaze of glory, the Illuminist movement quickly died out—that is, unless you believe the conspiracy buffs, who see the Order as the invisible force behind everything from Robespierre, Marx and Lenin to fluoridated water, smog and the Chase Manhattan Bank. In Billington's account, however, the Order of Illuminists had a posthumous influence which was greater than during its actual existence: their ideas and symbols were taken up by other revolutionaries. And, in fact, the revolutionary fascination for Illuminism was to a remarkable extent caused by right-wing antagonists, whose fear of an international Illuminist plot was so constantly expressed that the revolutionaries' interest in studying the movement and adopting its principles never waned. Illuminism, Billington argues, was perpetuated (paradoxically) not by the *Left*, but by the *Right*. (At this point my conspiracy-oriented friends would probably observe, in hushed tones, that since Billington is Director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, *he* is probably a member of the Illuminati himself—so of course he would try to cover up their actual history....)

This is a great book, and much more could be said. Billington traces the revolutionary faith as it changed in focus from nationalism to universal proletarian socialism, noting its relationships to unionism, fascism, terrorism, and feminism (which has its origins in the

For our situation, one of the most important issues raised by the book is the revolutionary use of Christianity to promote socialism. "Indeed," says Billington, "communism probably would not have attracted such instant attention without this initial admixture of Christian ideas" (p. 258). Stan Mooneyham and Ron Sider weren't the first to think of the tactic. Billington's research can aid us tremendously in teaching our students to be aware of this tendency in the past, that they may understand it—and counteract it—in the present.

I read a publication recently which listed this book, among others, under the heading: "For the Advanced Student of Economics." While I would readily grant that most Ph.D's in what passes for economics these days *should* read it, I must nevertheless disagree with such an assessment. The seventeen essays and addresses by Mises collected here positively sparkle with clarity. The book is easy reading: if your high school students are unable to work their way through it, send them back to Phonics 1-A.

Ludwig von Mises was a lifelong, uncompromising champion of the free market, and this volume contains some of the most lucid expositions of that system ever to hit print. With incisive logic and simple illustrations, Mises uncovers the fallacies of government intervention into the marketplace—a policy which can only result in the opposite of its purported intent: inflation, unemployment, poverty and depression. To the planners who protest that they are merely trying to assist the free market, Mises answers: "There is no other planning for freedom and the general welfare than to let the market system work. There is no other means to attain full employment, rising real wages and rates and a high standard of living for the common man than private initiative and free enterprise" (p. 17). "The alternative is not plan or no plan. The question is: whose planning? Should each member of society plan for himself or should the paternal government alone plan for all?" (p. 45)

Probably the most economically devastating government policy of the century has been the practice of credit expansion, which is simply legalized theft. For banks to lend out many times more than they hold in reserves is *not*, as John Maynard Keynes boasted, the “miracle . . . of turning a stone into bread”; it is instead, Mises pointed out, “the not at all miraculous procedure of eating the seed corn” (p. 71).

In opposition to the recent agitation of "Christian" socialists such

In the middle of the eighteenth century conditions in England were hardly more propitious than they are today in India . . . . The great change that within a few decades made England the world's wealthiest and most powerful nation was prepared for by a small group of philosophers and economists. They demolished entirely the pseudo-philosophy that hitherto had been instrumental in shaping the economic policies of the nations. They exploded the old fables: (1) that it is unfair and unjust to outdo a competitor by producing better and cheaper goods; (2) that it is iniquitous to deviate from traditional methods of production; (3) that labor-saving machines bring about unemployment and are therefore an evil; (4) that it is one of the tasks of civil government to prevent efficient businessmen from getting rich and to protect the less efficient against the competition of the more efficient; and (5) that to restrict the freedom and the initiative of entrepreneurs by government compulsion or by coercion on the part of other powers is an appropriate means to promote a nation's well-being. In short: these authors expounded the doctrine of free trade and laissez faire. They paved the way for a policy that no longer obstructed the businessman's effort to improve and to expand his operations . . . . At the outset of industrialization was the philosophy of private enterprise and initiative, and the practical application of this ideology made the capital swell and the technological know-how advance and ripen (pp. 200ff.).

Planning for Freedom is not, however, merely a polemic against Marxism and its little sister, interventionism ("revolution by installments"); it is a powerful presentation of the way the unhampered market works. The essays on "Profit and Loss" and "Capital Supply and American Prosperity" are especially excellent in this regard. With Sider and his many imitators in the pages of *Christianity Today* (which is rapidly becoming the evangelical version of *Pravda*) calling for the Church to baptize their institutionalized envy, it is crucial for our students to study *real* economics. Contrary to the lazy-minded economics is *not* boring (these days, in fact, a better description would be *hair-raising*); and contrary to Walter Chantry and The Banner of Truth Trust, concern with economics is often a mark of sanctification (see—better yet, don't see—Chantry's *God's Righteous Kingdom* (1980)).

Mises' last essay briefly outlines his contributions to economic theory, which is followed by Murray Rothbard's superb analysis, *The Essential Von Mises*, an enlightening explanation of the Austrian School and the life and thought of Mises. For an all-around introduction to the thinking of a great economist, you cannot find anything to match this book. Although it is far from simplistic, I repeat: it is not difficult to read and comprehend. Teachers, buy a set for your class—it can be used as a textbook for a semester's economics course, or at least as a supplementary text. As the bare minimum, if your school is on a shoestring (isn't everybody's?), break the piggybank and get one copy for the library. Libertarian Press is very prompt in its shipments and there's little time to order your copies for the second semester, if you write today.

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