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## The Christian And Arts; A Much-Needed Dialogue

By R. Page Fulgham  
For the Baptist Press

From the very beginning, Christians have been uncertain about the place of art in their relationship with God.

The term "divorce" more aptly describes the historic relationship between the church and the arts.

Some expressions of Protestantism have become associated with a cultural insensitivity.

Southern Baptists in particular, in their more conservative moments, generally identify with those who maintain the separation between church and culture.

"Avoid all appearance of evil" is the shibboleth.

However unfortunate the content of some modern art, many Christians are interested in renewing the relationship.

Despite a mortification of the arts, the Christian's ignoring the problem has not resulted in banishing the unwanted.

Moreover, this attitude has fostered "beauty-parlor" Christs in Sunday School art and sentimentalism in hymns.

Many good reasons can be cited for a Christian-arts encounter.

For one, the arts give a clue to the fever of our contemporary culture. The arts and artists to some degree represent their era. They are sensitive to the frustrations, hopes, anxieties and sins of a given age.

The creative artist has a kind of antennae that others lack. By examining the works of the artist, the Christian can gain insight into the values, moods, quests and rootless spiritual life of our age.

The arts "mirror" the age. "Sick" art is symptomatic of a wide-spread cultural malignancy.

Modern art not only reflects but analyzes its culture, providing clues to the changing times. Art as barometer serves as an index of the social conditions of contemporary culture.

The failure of Christians to understand the changing times is partly due to a sheltered environment and dulled sensitivity.

Modern art initiates us into the furies and stagnations of our day. The lay prophets and uncanonical witnesses (the artists) often canvass more powerfully the deeper moral and spiritual issues of man today than do the theologians themselves.

A third justification for studying the arts involves the opportunity for assessing modern art on the basis of biblical faith.

The Christian critic has a responsibility to mark those points at which contemporary art passes into unreality, irresponsibility or error.

"Testing the spirits," as this emphasis is called, involves setting up a standard or model for criticism.

The Christian critic's model of discerning the spirits in secular culture should be the Bible and its narratives.

The biblical narratives encompass and interweave the whole story of heaven and earth and of man in a unique fashion.

The over-arching world-plot, the very rich portrayal of human experience in concrete language and the dramatic realism of the biblical narrative provide a workable base for judging the contemporary arts.

The mystery of the incarnation is revealed in the Christian imperative to be involved in God's world, for which He lived and died.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: R. Page Fulgham, associate pastor of Morningside Baptist Church, Atlanta, recently completed a dissertation on the relationship between Christianity and the arts for a doctorate from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His article is condensed from The Christian Index, weekly news publication for the Baptist Convention of the State of Georgia.

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Baptist Press Feature

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TESL Teaches Michiko;  
Michiko Teaches TESL

10/19/73

By Jim Newton

SAN DIEGO, Calif. (BP)--When Michiko Trusty, a Japanese-born serviceman's wife, stepped out of the baptistry several years ago, she threw up her dripping arms and proclaimed: "I so happy, I feel like I fly."

It was almost a double miracle--first that she had turned from her Buddhist background to accept Jesus Christ and second that she could say the words in English at all.

Michiko's transformation resulted from a program called TESL--Teaching English as a Second Language--sponsored by Paradise Hills Southern Baptist Church in San Diego.

Only about five years ago, Michiko could not speak English nor read and write in English.

Today she is an international, unofficial Southern Baptist missionary who has personally used the TESL approach in three countries.

Edith Haggan, coordinator of the TESL program for Paradise Hills Church, first met Michiko when she went visiting with a Japanese lady involved in the program.

The two visitors noticed Michiko's venetian blinds rise and drop just before they walked up to the door. But no one responded to their persistent knock.

The Japanese lady called out in Japanese, telling Michiko that they knew she was there, but not to be afraid. She asked if they could visit for a minute.

Slowly, the door opened, with chain latch still locked. Two scared eyes peered through the slit in the door.

Edith and her Japanese friend asked Michiko if she had any Japanese friends who would like to learn English. Michiko replied, in Japanese of course, that she did and that she wanted to learn English herself.

From that point began a relationship with three different teachers that blossomed into love and eventually resulted in Michiko's baptism.

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After she became a Christian, Michiko became concerned that other people find the same kind of happiness that made her feel like she might fly.

She began to save her money so she could go to Japan to see her sister and share her new-found faith with her. Michiko made that trip, and her sister also accepted Christ.

During periods her husband was assigned to military bases on the Pacific island of Guam and in Germany, Michiko helped establish TESL ministries among the wives of servicemen.

In between the Guam and Germany tours, the Trustys returned to San Diego where Michiko, as her proficiency in English improved, served on Paradise Hills Church's missions committee, did a lot of interpreting and ministering to women and even began to teach a Sunday School class as an associate teacher.

J. Court Shepard, who coordinates the TESL program in the San Diego area for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, is convinced that the TESL approach to missions is a practical, effective means of reaching internationals with the gospel.

"It's concrete, it's real, it's personal, it's effective--it's tremendous," he explained.

"Even shy people, like Michiko, can get involved in TESL because it is all done on a one-to-one basis. You don't have to be a big leader or a dynamic public speaker.

"All you have to do," he continued, "is to be willing to try to help one person and to take a 12-hour workshop that teaches you how to be effective in the TESL ministry."

TESL, according to Shepard, is a form of literacy work. Instead of teaching an adult non-reader how to read and write (literacy), TESL includes teaching conversational English, as well as how to read and write, to someone who speaks another language.

Shepard, a language missionary of the Home Mission Board is concerned not with just teaching internationals to read and write and speak English but with involving them in Bible study and ultimately winning them to Christ.

"I'm interested in reaching people at their point of need and interest, but not as an end in itself," he said.

One of the problems that Shepard sees in the TESL approach is that laymen have not yet really caught the vision of its potential.

Of the 100 volunteers currently involved in the program in the San Diego area, only about 15 of the volunteers are men. The women, especially members of the Woman's Missionary Union, have responded well, but the men have not.

Shepard observed, however, that many men from foreign countries, and especially the Japanese, are reluctant to study English as a second language from a woman teacher because of their cultural background.

"But if laymen ever get turned on and comprehend the effectiveness of this tool (TESL), I think it holds one of the best potentials of any approach," Shepard said.

"It is the most economical, efficient, compassionate thing you could ever get involved in," he said enthusiastically. "It doesn't overload an overworked pastor, and it's something that laymen can and should do."

Baptist Towers Faces  
Suit on Fire Deaths

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ATLANTA (BP)--The Baptist Towers here, a home for the elderly in which 10 persons lost their lives in a fire last November, is being sued for alleged "wrongful homicide and negligent personal injuries," the Atlanta Journal reported.

Five persons, including four children of a man and woman who died in the fire, filed the suit.

The Journal reported the suit also charges that the First Federal Savings and Loan Association, named as a defendant, acted with the Baptist Towers and other defendants to produce \$129,489 in mortgage funds "unlawfully" by charging more than had been approved for a loan to complete construction of the high-rise structure in southwest Atlanta.

Other defendants named were George Snow, general manager of Baptist Towers Corp., Danielson and Paine Architects, ABCO Builders and ABCO's vice president.

Baptist Towers is sponsored by a non-profit corporation formed by seven Atlanta-area Southern Baptist churches. It is not related to the Baptist Convention of the State of Georgia or the Southern Baptist Convention and receives no Cooperative Program funds.

The plaintiffs quoted the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and building trade advertisers as saying an alarm system could have been installed "that would make a noise loud enough to warn the halt, the lame and the blind in time enough to get out before fire or smoke grew great enough to kill or injure."

An investigation following the fire showed that the home met existing fire safety regulations, according to local observers, but it was generally agreed that the regulations themselves were inadequate.

Filing the suit were Mrs. Mary L. Pratt, who was a tenant on the seventh floor, and Vernon, Harry, Gerald Paulk and Mrs. Jacqueline Paulk Turner, the children of Lott George Paulk, 82, and Mrs. Paulk, 75, who died in the blaze.

Mrs. Pratt demands \$50,000 for her personal injuries and \$50,000 as her portion of the "forfeit of usury"--the alleged overcharging for construction costs.

The Paulks ask for \$50,000 for the death of each parent and \$50,000 for their share of the alleged overcharge, the Journal reported.

Mrs. Pratt and the Paulks charge that on a mortgager's certificate of actual cost, \$223,663 was entered, although only \$94,174 had been approved.

They claimed that "all the defendants and the industry" actually knew that 14 months was plenty of time for completion of the construction, but that 21 months were allotted and the contractors were paid \$159,461 for early completion in less than 21 months. The suit claimed this was a "fraudulent device used to deceive by calling it early completion. . . ."

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Tennessee Baptist Editor  
Granted Leave of Absence

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10/19/73

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP)--James A. Lester, editor of the Baptist and Reflector, news publication of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, has been "granted. . . a six-month leave of absence, beginning Nov. 1. . . at his request," according to O. M. Dangeau, chairman of the administrative committee of the Tennessee Baptist executive board.

"During this time Mr. Lester will not have any responsibility with the paper, and Dr. Ralph Norton (Tennessee Baptist) executive secretary-treasurer, will assume complete responsibility for it," Dangeau said in a statement in the Baptist and Reflector.

Norton said Lester cited health problems as his reason for seeking a leave of absence.

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WMU Sets Sunday Evening  
Opening Session in Dallas

WMU

BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention, has slated a Sunday evening starting session for its annual meeting in Dallas, June 9 and 10, and has designated a headquarters hotel for WMU members.

"Several pastors in the Dallas area have expressed enthusiastic support for the unusual missions night we have planned," said WMU President Mrs. R. L. Mathis of Waco, Tex. The session will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the 10,000-seat arena of the Dallas Convention Center.

WMU had Sunday evening sessions last year in Portland and the previous year in Philadelphia. Mrs. Mathis cited outstanding attendance at those sessions but expects a greater turnout in the midst of the big Baptist population in Dallas.

Headline feature for the Sunday evening session is a commissioning service for new foreign missionaries, conducted by Baker J. Cauthen, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Gardner C. Taylor, pastor of Concord Baptist Church, Brooklyn, N. Y., will deliver the keynote address on the theme for the WMU meeting, "Listen to Your World."

Taylor, a leader in the Progressive National Baptist Convention, is former co-chairman of the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Religious Liberty and Human Rights.

Soloist for the session will be Irene Jordan, concert and opera star who has made frequent world tours for foreign missions, and Sidney Buckley, concert artist from Easley, S. C. The Joy Singers from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Tex., will also perform.

George R. Beasley-Murray, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., will be featured pianist. Beasley-Murray was a concert artist before becoming president of Spurgeon's College in London. Joyce Jones, concert organist-in-residence at Baylor University, will be organist.

WMU will also have sessions Monday morning, afternoon and evening.

The Adolphus Hotel in Dallas has been named the WMU headquarters hotel. "This is the first time in several years that we have had a hotel adequate to be called the WMU headquarters," Mrs. Mathis said. "This year WMU members and friends can list the Adolphus as their first choice when applying for rooms."