

## **Surrealistic Art**

A tiny, dignified elderly lady was among a group looking at an art exhibit in a newly opened gallery. One contemporary painting caught her eye. "What on earth," she inquired of the artist standing nearby, "is that?"

He smiled condescendingly. "That, my dear lady, is supposed to be a mother and her child."

"Well, then," snapped the little old lady, "why isn't it?"

Contemporary art... I call it today's Emperor's New Clothes. Too much is missing to make it identifiable. "How many surrealists does it take to change a light bulb? Two; one to hold the giraffe and the other to fill the bathtub with brightly colored tools." It doesn't make sense. Too much important elements are missing, or too much irrelevant material is added.

Is that possible for a Christian? To pick a few characteristics and let the rest go? We focus on matters of sexual morality often to the exclusion of other weaknesses, and judge a person moral who is faithful to his wife. What of his other duties toward her?

Is that possible for a church? Too many essentials left out to identify it? Is there a focus on a select few characteristics and works, while the others are let go? It has been said that we need balance in our faith.

Balance is not weighing and comparing a few words and works... "so much of this and so much of that." It is giving equal emphasis to the whole counsel of God. Otherwise, all one produces is the spiritual equivalent of contemporary surrealistic art.

## **Converting the Criminal**

Contemporary reasoning states that the answer to crime is "education, education, education." But education alone only makes a thief into an educated thief. Political thought suggests that poverty makes crime, but that line of reasoning is being abandoned, just as the spontaneous generation of Anton von Leuwenhoek who said that mud produced frogs, and dead meat produces flies.

In the 1960's psychologist Dr. Stanton Samenow and psychiatrist Samuel Yochelson, sharing the conventional wisdom that crime is caused by environment, set out to prove the point. They began a seventeen-year study, published in 1977, entitled *The Criminal Personality*. To their own astonishment, they discovered that the cause of crime cannot be linked to environment, poverty, or oppression. Instead, crime is the result of individuals making, as they put it, "wrong moral choices." Samenow and Yochelson concluded that the answer to crime is a "conversion of the wrong-doer to a more responsible lifestyle."

The Creator designed us to be malleable; not only can we change, but with the proper plan we can change ourselves at will. Changing the heart by the gospel is the only way to bring about lasting good. What men need is to repent and be converted to the Lord. "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

## **Outside of Him**

"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:9-10). "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (Rev. 22:13).

Consider the number of words it took to write the thirty-volume set of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Even though there is a momentous number of words, only twenty-six different letters were used. The authors of the *Britannica* did not need to go outside the alphabet to assemble

massive collection of knowledge. The alphabet provided everything they needed to complete their task.

Likewise, Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, and we do not need to go outside of Him for anything we need. We are complete in Him, and He is our "everything" for all situations.

### **I've Learned**

I've learned... That the best classroom in the world is at the feet of an elderly person.

I've learned... That just one person saying to me, 'You've made my day!' makes my day.

I've learned... That having a child fall asleep in your arms is one of the most peaceful feelings in the world.

I've learned... That you should never say no to a gift from a child.

I've learned... That I can always pray for someone when I don't have the strength to help him in some other way.

I've learned... That sometimes all a person needs is a hand to hold and a heart to understand.

I've learned... That simple walks with my father around the block on summer nights when I was a child did wonders for me as an adult.

I've learned... That we should be glad God doesn't give us everything we ask for.

I've learned... That money doesn't buy class.

I've learned... That it's those small daily happenings that make life so spectacular.

I've learned... That under everyone's hard shell is someone who wants to be appreciated and loved.

I've learned... That to ignore the facts does not change the facts.

I've learned... That when you plan to get even with someone, you are only letting that person continue to hurt you.

I've learned... That love, not time, heals all wounds.

I've learned... That everyone you meet deserves to be greeted with a smile.

I've learned... That life is tough, but I'm tougher.

I've learned... That opportunities are never lost; someone will take the ones you miss.

I've learned... That when you harbor bitterness, happiness will dock elsewhere.

I've learned... That I wish I could have told my Mom that I love her one more time before she passed away.

I've learned... That one should keep his words both soft and tender, because tomorrow he may have to eat them.

I've learned... That when your newly born grandchild holds your little finger in his little fist, that you're hooked for life.

I've learned... That everyone wants to live on top of the mountain, but all the happiness, and growth occurs while you're climbing it.