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## Review of Beauty for Truth's Sake: On the Re-Enchantment of Education

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# BEAUTY FOR TRUTH'S SAKE: ON THE RE-ENCHANTMENT OF EDUCATION

by Stratford Caldecott

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*Beauty for Truth's Sake: On the Re-enchantment of Education*, by Stratford Caldecott. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009, 156 pages, ISBN 978-1-58743-262-0.

Stratford Caldecott's main contention in *Beauty for Truth's Sake* is that education has become disenchanting. He blames this

disenchantment on the historical need for mathematics and the sciences to be quantifiable along with the move from a focus on the importance of the liberal arts and religion as a foundation. He describes the way that education has been presented as separate disciplines, creating fragmentation. The author walks through

chapters focusing on the history of the current system, as well as suggesting ways of rediscovering the poetic imagination, which he describes as an intuitive look at the world, versus the focus on scientific fact. The result of the current situation is a system set in four traditions of thought: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. This results in a lack of focus on teaching students to think in favor of an emphasis on flooding instruction with facts. This promotes a system of student dependence on the teacher, rather than developing students as independent thinkers. The author contends that 'The modern period has seen a concerted attack on our confidence in the human capacity to know' (p. 41). He compels the reader to consider the need to bring about a re-enchantment of education, by exploring the historical perspective of how this focus on the quantifiable came about. Caldecott makes a strong case for a revival of the Liberal Arts, as well as a foundation built on faith. He presents a compelling argument for creating a more balanced and enchanted system of education.

It is nearly impossible to argue with the premise of this author's viewpoint that the current system of education could use some enchanting. He is clear in expressing concern that we tend to consume more, think less, and move farther away from the focus of what is important, enchantment of education. Beauty must be married with reason, faith with numbers, scientific fact with intuition, essentially creating a balance. With a consistent focus in education today on outcomes, assessments, and quantifiable measures, there seems to be less interest in developing the whole child. In addition,

less emphasis is placed on molding creative self-managers and thinkers grounded in the principles of seeking beauty and in possession of an ability to bring faith and reason together. The author maintains that to produce an independent learner, who has ability to think and to meditate, the soul must be whole and balanced. A balanced soul will then allow access to knowledge. For according to Caldecott, freedom is knowledge and knowledge is freedom. In order to embrace meaning there is a need to seek beauty and purpose while creating meaning through faith.

Caldecott proposes that resolution to achieving enchantment lies in the foundation of love and liturgy, suggesting that liturgy be at the center of all things, which will in turn represent truth. 'The road to reason leads through the ordering of the soul, which implies the necessity of an education in love, in discernment, in virtue.' (p. 38) In an enchanted world, faith and reason are in balance. He emphasizes how to look at the beauty in numbers. A great deal of time is spent throughout the text addressing the manner in which one might appreciate the symbolic properties of numbers. The focus of most importance is the Trinity and the need to look up and raise one's mind toward God. The author is careful not to suggest one without the other, but notes the importance of this balance.

Instructors of varying levels and content areas, specifically Liberal Arts and Christian educators, who find they are in need of a new perspective, would benefit from reading this invigoratingly unique way of looking to find some balance in the current educational system with its somewhat extreme focus on

the need for quantification. While the author himself contends that at times some speculations are forced, it is easy overall to agree that connections that he makes are compatible with scripture. This book is a quick read with a refreshing perspective based on the foundation and importance of the beauty of truth. The idea that through Christ all things are possible clearly resonates throughout the book. The world needs healing and education needs balance;

any time focus is placed on virtue and integrity, society as a whole heads in the right direction. If one is to believe, as the author contends, that the purpose of a focus on the disciplines was to contemplate God in an orderly manner, and the purpose of liberal arts is to bring purity to the soul, then how could anyone argue for a life that possessed one without the other? In pairing the two, Caldecott proposes an insightful way to integrate education.