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The Montessori answer to the quandary of the Arameans

Arameans? Don't you mean Armenians? How about Argentinians? Austrians? Australians? No, Arameans! But they lived 875 B.C. That's 2750 years B.M.M. (Before Maria Montessori.) Our very ancient quandary has answers in our Montessori roots. The Arameans were neighbors in the vicinity of the Kingdom of Israel in ancient Palestine. As kingdoms were wont to do they went to war with each other. God delivered Israel from Ben-Hadad and the Arameans but the next year Ben-Hadad returned again with just as large an army as the previous year. I Kings 20:23 shares this conversation. "Meanwhile, the officials of the king of Aram advised him, "Their gods are gods of the hills. That is why they were too strong for us. But if we fight them on the plains, surely we will be stronger than they." The Arameans, like many educators, make the mistake of believing God is only God of the hills (translation: He is only God of "spiritual" things.) Montessori starts from a very Biblical base (after all, God gave Montessori the inspiration and insight) that all things are inter-related. Colossians 1:16-17, "All things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." In Montessori we build on foundations that come from multiple disciplines - one thing builds on another, almost seamlessly. We all have had teachers (or maybe even ourselves) who saw no interconnectedness of one discipline with another. A sort of God of the hills attitude. However, we are blessed to be able (and encouraged) to make all the connections of learning and life. Math is an example of order and logic - two of the great attributes of God. We muddy it up when we insist on children memorizing times tables or algebra equations without sharing with them the beauty of its construction or its use. My favorite story from our Montessori friend Betty Golightly, A little boy comes out to the playground and tells Mrs. Golightly excitedly, "Do you know that 2 plus 3 is the same as 3 plus 2?" We have a treasure in Montessori math.

How can you teach science without the wonder of creation? Just look at the botany cabinet

with its variety of shapes and forms. Shame on us when we make it a lesson of only learning the names instead of highlighting the absolute creativity that God put into nature. Chemistry, zoology, astronomy all contain seeds (and forests) of wonder. Do we avail ourselves of the opportunity to point to the Creator and remark on the artistry that is contained everywhere we look. Art is an expression of man's reflection of a beauty-loving god. Music contains both science and art, aesthetics, logic and pleasure.

If we teach history as dates and places without the context of men's hopes and dreams we rob history of its power to show God at work in our everyday lives. History is what we had for breakfast this morning (some things are more important than others - unless you missed breakfast this morning - then that is important.) Where you live is part of history, how mom and dad met is a significant part of history (otherwise you wouldn't be here.) Education, jobs, grandma and grandpa, family, church are all significant parts of a personal history. As you mature, your view of history expands and you see your life as part of a greater reality.

In traditional education we kill language. We rob it of its beauty and power by dissecting it to find nouns and verbs without ever putting it back together to make poetry and prose. We give children no sense of the power of words to bless (and curse) to encourage, inspire, inform and illuminate. Language is the expression of the thoughts of men's minds and hearts. Language often leads to action. The ultimate