

# Chalcedon report

**A Monthly Report Dealing with the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World**

## Education and the Control of the Future

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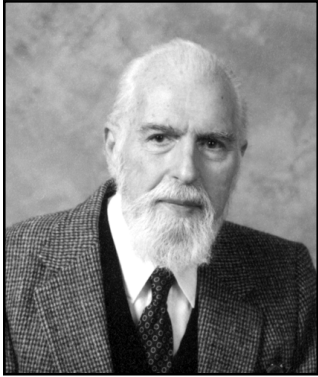
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# Family and Government

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony

(Presented at the California Home Educator's Association meeting in Anaheim, California in 1997)

Over the years, I have again and again stressed, in writings and lectures, the centrality of the family in God's plan. I have been bitterly criticized for this from more than one source. The fact remains that all the basic governmental powers in society, save one, the death penalty, have been given to the family, not to the state nor to the church. *First*, and foremost, is the control of children, and to teach, govern, and guide children means the control of the future. For this reason, the state seeks increasingly to usurp this power. The state's entrance into education has had as its goal the de-Christianization of society and decrease of the family's power. *Second*, in Biblical law, property is family-owned, a trust passed on to one's godly children and never seen as private property but as *family* property. This was Naboth's position in 1 Kings 21:1-2. The Biblical perspective provides the family with a solid and endearing basis in society and makes it a stable and enduring power. *Third*, inheritance is a family power. The godly seed must receive the inheritance, and the main heir has the care of the poorest. Such a view meant that the godly generation to come was always capitalized and enabled to command the future. Today, while we still have community property, alienation is permitted, and the godly seed are not necessarily favored. The state taxes both property and inheritance, contrary to God's law, and it thereby decapitalizes the family. *Fourth*, education, a family power, has become a state power. Here Christian and home schools are regaining lost ground, but much still remains to be done. *Fifth*, charity, the care of the needy, is in God's law a family duty. Modern welfarism has replaced this, with devastating results.

It is well now to review the basic areas of government. Our use of the word *government* is a deadly one: we tend to mean by it the *state*, what colonial Americans and early members of the republic *always* called *civil government*. Unless we are totalitarians, the word *government* has a broader meaning. Its main references are as follows. *First*, the self-government of the Christian man is the primary sphere of

government. The alternative to this is dictatorship, and, without Christian self-government, dictatorship is our logical goal. *Second*, the family is man's basic governmental unit. It is men's first church, school, economic sphere, and much, much more. It is central in God's law, and four of the Ten Commandments are family oriented. *Third*, the church is an area of government although now much weakened by hostile forces. *Fourth*, education or the school is a governing sphere. *Fifth*, our vocation or job governs us. *Sixth*, various voluntary agencies, the community, friends, and more, all govern us. *Seventh*, the state is a government, one among many. At present, the state seeks to govern and control all other spheres, and this is a revival of the ancient pagan powers of the state.

A mark of anti-Christianity is the move to strip the family of these powers. In Red China, it means a denial of the freedom to have more than one child. In almost every country today, the freedom of the family is under attack. In this century, attacks on Christianity have meant attacks on the family as much as the church.

## Humanism

David Ekrenfield, in *The Arrogance of Humanism* (1978), wrote of humanism as "the dominant religion of our time" (p. 3), and said that its:

*Core... [is]... a supreme faith in human reason — its ability to confront and solve the many problems that humans face, its ability to rearrange both the world of Nature and the affairs of men and women so that human life will prosper. Accordingly, as humanism is committed to an unquestioning faith in the power of reason, so it rejects other assertions of power, including the power of God, the power of supernatural forces, and even the undirected power of Nature in league with blind chance. The first two don't exist, according to humanism; the last can, with effort, be mastered. (p. 5)*

Humanism thus begins by severely limiting the nature of reality to this world and especially to reason. Because of this, there is a marked hostility to Christianity and the family. Both are seen as basically irrational and therefore as roadblocks to progress. Man, instead of being viewed as a creature made in the image of God, is seen as an animal whose sole redeeming quality is his reason. The goal of society and of education becomes then the exercise and application of rationality, not the service and enjoyment of God forever. Man's goal becomes man himself as the high point of human evolution.

## The Humanist's Answer to Man's Problems

As we look at the problems we face in our world today, we face a contradiction, in fact, a major division, in attempts to answer them. One began with President John F. Kennedy, who in a major speech defined mankind's problems as essentially no longer *moral* but essentially *technological*. He aptly described the cultural shift that has taken place. Education, humanistic education, and technology are the answers. Problem solving is now entirely shifted from morality and character to education and/or technology. Consider, for example, the so-called war on drugs. Information is provided, and scientific data is presented. Youth are then told, "Just say no." But to say *no* is a moral response. We know that the use of drugs is rare in Christian youth circles where a strong religious and moral teaching prevails, and yet our society refuses the Christian moral approach. The humanistic culture around us rejects

the Biblical premise that the solution to social problems is a religious and moral one. Man is best governed when he governs himself in terms of God's grace, Word, and power. Scientific data on drugs converts no man, and the fear of consequences soon wanes. For example, Herpes II, and then AIDS, *briefly* frightened many into some restraint in their sexual misconduct, but not for long. There is no substitute for a religious moral self-government, and all efforts which by-pass the Christian solution are doomed to fail.

In the economic sphere, advancement is again a matter of character. Thrift plus work are necessary to capitalize a society. This the family does best. A sensate culture faces decapitalization. It is not an accident that five of the six major food-producing countries all reflect the character of Puritanism. Not natural resources, but faith and character determine most the ability of a people to develop economically.

The family is the key. Civilization requires faith and character, and the family is the God-ordained training ground for men and nations. Our problem today is the corruption of the family. A major concern of children in state schools is that, in terms of the standards of statist education, their parents are ignorant and retrogressive. These children should be ashamed of their schools; instead, they are ashamed of their parents, a clear signal of cultural decay. But, despite great hostilities, Christian families, home schoolers, and Christian schoolers are taking the initiative in the restoration of Christian civilization. Instead of being schools for barbarians, they are schools for the children of the Great King.

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# Understanding Our Spiritual Battles

*By Mark R. Rushdoony*

**I**n a well-known passage (*Eph. 6:10-20*), Paul urges the congregation in Ephesus to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” before instructing them to put on “the whole armor of God.” The point of the comparison to armor is often lost in an effort to develop the comparison too far. The point of comparing salvation to a helmet or the gospel to a foot covering was not to examine why salvation was like a helmet or how the gospel protects our walk. Paul’s point is that in order to be “strong in the Lord,” we must prepare. This preparation is necessary because we are not fighting against “flesh and blood,” *i.e.*, people, in real conflict. Rather, our battle is against “the devil... against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Oddly enough, the word “spiritual” is here and elsewhere very frequently the point of departure from Christian thought and activity because it is often thought of in terms of Greek philosophical rather than Spiritual modes of thought.

## Greek Thought

Greek thinking, common in the ancient world, familiar to the early church, and consciously revived in the Enlightenment, was dualistic. Reality was divided between the form or idea on the one hand and the material world on the other. Form, idea, or spirit was seen as a higher way, somewhat far removed from the mortal realm of the physical. Greek gods were men who had challenged or outwitted the gods and had achieved divinity by rising above their mortality. The Greek mind thus appreciated certain aspects of the gospel, such as the divinity of the Jew from Nazareth who could perform miracles. But when Paul preached to the philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens, the Greek audience began to mock when he spoke of the resurrection from the dead. A Greek could understand a dead or ascended divine, but the idea of divinity first being incarnate in human flesh and then, once relieved of his body, returning to it was an absurd series of regressions. Greek gods had transcended the physical; Greek thinking sought the divine by rising above the physical world.

Greek dualism has been a recurring problem in the church. That which is mystical, immaterial, or ethereal is said to be good and spiritual. The material world, the physical, is equated with sin and evil. This thinking caused a longstanding debate over the nature of Christ’s incarnation. Those in the early church with this Greek view of spirituality did not want to accept the humanity of Jesus Christ. This problem was not resolved until the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 that embraced His full divinity and humanity. Greek thought regarding spirituality also led to asceticism and even self-inflicted injury by hermits and monastic orders, all in the name of purer spirituality.

The great error of this non-Christian, Hellenic perspective was that it made man’s problem metaphysical rather than moral. Man’s problem, however, is not that he is a man or that he is in a physical body. These are the constraints of creaturehood established by God before the real moral problem of sin arose. Man’s problem is his sin. Because his problem is not his physical creaturehood, man’s spirituality cannot be viewed as an escape to a higher plane.

## The True Definition of “Spiritual”

The word *spiritual* has to do with God’s Holy Spirit. Spiritual is that which necessitates the power of God’s Spirit, not because we are physical beings, but because we are sinners in need of grace. We must understand “spiritual” as referring to God’s sanctifying work in us, not as a religious goal or a higher state of being. So when Paul says to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” we see what spirituality is all about. The *higher* in our spirituality is not a place we seek to attain, but the source from which our strength comes. That power does not come from a higher level of understanding, a special feeling, or some manifestation of emotional ecstasy. Our spiritual power comes from God’s Spirit that indwells us.

Paul compares our spiritual preparation (*i.e.*, our preparation in the power of God’s sanctifying Spirit) to a soldier’s preparation for battle. Please do not picture righteousness protecting your chest or see yourself

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swinging God's Word like a sword. The purpose of the pictorial metaphor of a soldier is not to picture a soldier; it is to see in the picture the nature of the spiritual battle we face. Paul's point is that just as a soldier would be foolish to go into battle unprepared, the Christian would be remiss not to prepare himself ahead of time. If we do not prepare ourselves for spiritual battles, we will, by definition, be unprepared and more likely to fail. To such failure, we often respond by wondering why God did not help us or we blame our failure on circumstances beyond our control.

I have always been amazed at how Hollywood avoids the idea of moral choice when it portrays adultery. Flirting and compromised situations abound. Then, after the predictable happens, the guilty party inevitably pleads to the spouse, "I didn't mean to, it just happened!" Just once I would like to hear the victimized spouse respond, "You mean it was an accident? Did you say 'Oops!'?" If we deny morality then sin becomes just part of a series of meaningless acts which periodically sweeps us away.

If we approach life in moral terms, then we know we must make moral decisions well ahead of a moral crisis. This is why God helps us by giving us commandments to live by. God is saying, "Here are your moral choices and here are your moral decisions. They are all laid out in 'dos' and 'don'ts.' Learn them and live by them."

If we haven't made the great moral decisions of our life before we have a moral crisis, we have waited far too long. In fact, if we haven't made those moral decisions we have made the wrong decisions, because we've decided to wait until tempted to weigh our options. That is to live on the premise that sin is a viable option available to us.

## Fighting the Good Fight

In order to be strong for spiritual battle, Paul is saying, "Prepare now!" The armor in Paul's metaphor is all that God gives us to fight what is, after all, *His fight*. Because it is God's fight, our battle is not primarily one of opposition to evil men (though this is at times necessary), nor is it one of confronting Satan himself. Neither Satan nor evil men are the focus of our duty. We are called from rebellion against God to faithfulness in righteousness. Our resistance to Satan is thus primarily in the context of being faithful to God. Our resistance to the lures or taunts of evil men must also take the form of faithfulness. These are our primary spiritual battles. They begin in our own lives so that we can become faithful witnesses of God's righteousness.

Greek thinking wants us to see our battle as one of rising to a mystical mountaintop experience, a higher "spiritual" plane. But man's battle is in his heart and his work is in the mundane, straight, and narrow path of faithfulness.

Paul had spiritual battles. Paul was engaged in a difficult ministry to scattered groups that needed more help than Paul could personally give. He had little money and faced critics within the church, subversive ideologies attempting to infiltrate the faith, official persecution, and, on several occasions, abuse just short of death. In addition, much of his work was remote while he was in prison on trumped-up charges. In the end he was beheaded. Paul's spiritual battles were those he fought in the context of his ministry. Paul said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (*2 Tim. 4:7*). Paul's ministry, his appointed work, was the context of his spiritual battles, his battles fought in the power of God's Spirit.

Many believe that Satan is the ruler of the world, and that therefore our thinking must be other-worldly. Paul does refer to principalities, powers, and rulers in regard to Satan (*Eph. 6:12*). But in the ancient world, there were many lesser princes and kings. Herod was one such king who had near absolute rule over his realm but could be replaced at the whim of the emperor. Further back, in the Old Testament era, a king could rule as little as one walled city and its surrounding farmland. Satan is such a lesser prince. The Scriptures say that, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein" (*Psa. 24:1*). Satan reigns over sin and death, not over God's creation and certainly not over God's people. Our Lord rules heaven and earth. He reigns Whose right it is. Paul warns us that Satan is more than flesh and blood, not to frighten us, but to enforce the point of his metaphor — prepare for battle.

The nature of our spiritual battles can be seen in the nature of the weapons God gives us as suitable for the struggle. They are not the means of achieving a mystical epiphany. They are basic elements of the Christian faith and are available to all believers, because spiritual battles will be fought by all who are in Christ. These pieces of spiritual armor are truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the Word, and prayer. They sound so mundane, so ordinary. They are, however, the means of our faithfulness to God in the power of His Spirit.

The next "higher plane" is glory, and our reward there will be based on our faithfulness to God here and now in the power of His Spirit, with the rudiments of our religion available to all. We must look for our spiritual battles and maturity within, where the source of our spiritual strength, God's Comforter, indwells us, and in our mundane, everyday duty. In this context we use God's truth, righteousness, gospel, faith, salvation, and prayer in His Service, in faithfulness. Thus, when our very ordinary responsibilities are over we can say, with Paul, "I have fought a good fight."



# What's Right about Christian Education Today

By Ronald Kirk

For Christian education in America, the “Battle is the Lord’s,” and the victory and glory belong to Him. In this knowledge, Rev. Rushdoony, the founder of Chalcedon, gave a great portion of his energies toward the support of Christian education. He saw the rapid growth of the Christian education movement as a very positive sign. He believed that this movement would lead toward the restoration in America of the Word of God as the standard of education and living.<sup>1</sup> This movement is necessary, he said, because of America’s long adoption of Pietism, the religious movement of the 1800s. Rev. Rushdoony observes, “As a result, relevance to the world and to knowledge came to mean secularism, and the church moved from a theocentric orientation to a man-centered and experiential emphasis. The result was a surrender of the world and of education to humanism.”<sup>2</sup> Today, because of Rev. Rushdoony’s and many others’ work, the educational landscape appears much brighter. We now see increasing expressions of Biblical thinking among Christian educators.

## What Constitutes Rightness in Christian Education?

Religion expresses ultimate concern, and education primarily intends to school persons in the ultimate values of a culture.<sup>3</sup> For the Christian, this means the knowledge of God, His ways, and His requirements of and provision for men. We will limit our consideration to several distinguishing characteristics of this ideal Christian education. First, true Christian education necessarily includes a thoroughly Biblical view of life in all areas of devotion and endeavor. “The function of education and of the curriculum was the preparation of man to glorify God, to enjoy Him, and to serve Him in and through a chosen calling.”<sup>4</sup> Second, Christian education ought to provide the skills necessary to take dominion over every area of life because of the Lordship of Christ.<sup>5</sup> The hazards of godly enterprise associated with Christian dominion additionally require a sturdy character corresponding to faith.

Third, Christian education must teach an understanding of Christian liberty and the skills needed to recover and maintain it. “A liberal arts curriculum is thus a practical answer to the question, *What is liberty?* And, *How does a man prepare himself to be a free man?*”<sup>6</sup> Fourth, where Christian education is true to its mission, we ought to observe its good qualities in curricular materials.

A word regarding the nature of influence and change is in order. Change comes hard to human beings. God made us so. Too rapid change may be equated to revolution, destroying the old ostensibly to establish the better and new. However, revolution typically replaces the old evil with a new one. Thus, Biblical change is never revolutionary. Christians ought not despise the day of small things. Christians are to husband the soil, plant the seed, and let the Lord bring the increase in due season. To the degree that Christian education moves toward establishing its Biblical distinctives, Christian education is doing right. Therefore, with any positive sign of the Lord’s work and its concomitant blessings, we ought to rejoice.

## The Biblical Christian Educational Landscape

In order to answer the question *What’s right about Christian education today?* we have sought opinions of a sampling of Christian worldview leaders and educators.

Without exception, our interviewees claim a rigorous adherence to Scripture as the sole foundation for their work. For example, longtime Christian pastor Dr. Kenneth Gentry, now Dean of Faculty and Professor of Systematic Theology of the soon-to-open Westminster Classical College in Elkton, Maryland, says that the school “is founded for the purpose of promoting life-long learning on the unshakable foundation of God’s revelation in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.” Again he says, “we will endeavor to interpret political, economic, social, and civil issues from within a biblical grid, giving due prominence to the Law of God.”

James B. Rose is founder and president of the American Christian History Institute and superinten-

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dent of the American Christian Academy Extension Campus, a home school support organization serving over 500 families in Northern California. Mr. Rose is representative of our interviewees' belief in the application of Scripture to all human endeavors:

*My philosophy of education, methodology and curriculum is predicated upon the capacity of the individual to search the Scriptures for the Biblical principles of a subject, deduce inferences justly from Bible doctrine, expound these truths to the student through the subject, and record how these principles were applied to daily life and living.*

Furthermore, Mr. Rose aptly observes, "There is a cause-effect relationship between Christ, Biblical Christianity and American liberty, self-government and private property." These principles have served as the basis of Mr. Rose's local and national educational ministry efforts for over thirty years.

The very existence of Reformed Christian worldview foundations is encouraging. Chalcedon itself is a pioneering work designed to claim the crown rights of Jesus Christ in every sphere of life and to educate toward temporal and eternal citizenship in His Kingdom. Furthermore, though numbers of adherents remain small, anecdotal evidence is encouraging. Ralph Barker of American Vision says he recently spoke to a lady who heard him speak over 15 years ago. His sermon on God and government prompted her now life-long active involvement in politics and Christian education. Douglas Wilson, pastor of Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho and founder of Logos School and New Saint Andrew's College, says:

*The central thing that Christian education has done right is to recover the concept of distinctively Christian education. The abandonment (on a large scale) of government education by Christians is one of the most heartening developments in centuries. We have moved from debating whether Christian education is necessary to debates over which form of Christian education best fits the biblical requirements. This is enormous progress, in my view.*

Pastor Wilson has watched his Association of Classical and Christian Schools experience "remarkable growth over the last ten years."

The Nehemiah Institute founded by Christian manufacturer Dan Smithwick represents a fascinating development in Christian education. Mr. Smithwick, concerned over the lack among Christians of a Biblical understanding of the major spheres of life, formulated the PEERS test of Christian worldview applied to politics, education,

economics, religion, and social issues. Although Mr. Smithwick has published his concern over the trend toward lower (more humanistic) scores from the PEERS test among public and mainstream Christian school students, the small but strong minority of high scorers (representing a more Biblical world view) is a good reason for hope. Indeed, the fact that the PEERS test itself finds increasing acceptance among Christians and Christian educators, in particular, is encouraging. Over the last three years annual sales of the Nehemiah Institute have doubled. Moreover, the Institute now receives requests for their worldview workshops from people who ten to fifteen years ago rebuffed Institute initiatives.

Other anecdotal evidence seems to reveal increasing good fruit. For example, a renewed interest in preserving the holiness of marriage has led to the active self-restraint of courtship replacing casual dating among increasing number of Christian young people. Several books encourage and instruct in courtship. Another area of Biblical Christianity invading the secular mainstream is the renewed recognition of the family as the primary and best socializing institution. Home school educators in particular are making a stand for training proper social skills — the practical loving of one's neighbor as oneself.

In my own work as an educator, I recall that in 1980 the Christian worldview education market was small, and little methodology or curriculum existed. Instead, utilizing examples from early America's Christian era and contemporary applied Biblical scholarship, we first forged a basic curriculum and a covenantal basis for serving families. We also forged a small market for our educational offerings through teaching Biblical worldview concepts. Upon the obvious results we saw early on, more and more families desired those results and were willing to grow with us. We found very young children learning to read and write and speak with skill, without duress, and loving the work we asked them to do. We found they loved the liberty born of doing what is right. Scholastic Achievement Test scores indicated these students were on average one to two years ahead of the national norm, and often four years or more ahead. In 1994, the PEERS test showed our ninth through twelfth grade students scoring among the top scoring *seniors* nationwide. More importantly, we have seen our adult graduates make quiet but strong contributions to the communities in which they live. Most went to college. Almost all found excellence of achievement in their areas of calling. These former students are now rearing families of their own, ready to pass their Biblical character and accomplishment on to the next generation. Now, wherever we take our message, we find a growing, strong, healthy minority



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of folks, providentially prepared to receive it with joy and appreciation.

Where Christian education appears increasingly *right* is the founding of major Christian worldview colleges. Just as the colonists of the Bay Colony founded Harvard College to prevent an ignorant clergy, Christians today are founding new campuses. We already mentioned Westminster Classic College and New Saint Andrews College, both examples of self-consciously “classical” and Biblical institutions. Christ College in Lynchburg, Virginia has promoted a self-consciously Biblical curriculum for students for several years. Similarly, Patrick Henry College declares its purpose is “to train Christian men and women who will lead our nation and shape our culture with timeless biblical values and fidelity to the spirit of the American founding.” This they intend to accomplish through “a commitment to a high priority on biblical Truth, Christian character, and the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every aspect of instruction and college life.”

The ideas of Biblical worldview education are spreading to other seminal and visionary organizations. Professor Walter Lewke, Associate Professor of education at the influential and venerable institution, Hillsdale College, says:

*When I am able to effect a bridge between class work and Scripture, I do most heartily. Scripture knowledge causes me to be very careful in selecting class materials for my students. Being an academic psychologist I am most concerned that I don't pass on, uncritically, the skepticism, relativism, and secular humanism that run rampant through the American Psychological Association and through college and university departments of psychology.*

The Association of Christian Schools International clearly represents mainstream evangelical Christian education with its 5,148 member schools with enrollments of over one million students internationally. ACSI's mission statement declares “Christian school students worldwide will acquire wisdom, knowledge, and a biblical world view as evidenced by a lifestyle of character, leadership, service, stewardship, and worship.” Recent issues of ACSI's *Christian School Education* journal show encouraging expressions of this mission. For example, while still referring to the humanistic discipline of “social studies,” one may find refreshing Dale Walden Johnson's exhortation that Christian educators “must obey the biblical imperatives in both word and deed”.<sup>7</sup> He cites the American Puritans as a positive example in taking the dominion mandate of Genesis 1:26 seriously and dedicating “themselves to dominating the entire culture under God.” Similarly, another author cites the dominion

mandate with respect to the necessity to learn mathematics as its instrument.<sup>8</sup> In an article for an issue dedicated to language arts, the author informs the reader that “Human language is a unique gift from God to be used in the service of God.” Moreover, he identifies the learner of language in Biblical terms.<sup>9</sup> While yet somewhat sporadic, one may increasingly find such true Biblical orientation in the literature.

As to curriculum content, much work remains. We see the very healthy move toward original source materials and classics very much in evidence. These works are increasingly available. However, Christian education publishers have yet to produce a broad range of easily accessible materials.

## Conclusion

A great army is growing: Christian educators acting out of deep conviction of the centrality of Christ and His Word, as against the vain imagination of man. While these men and women of God are yet few, their influence grows. These vocational warriors and their home education counterparts continue both to fill the devout home and to flow evermore into the mainstream. As the work ultimately belongs to the Lord and His Providence, we observe much that is right about Christian education and therefore maintain a good hope, for “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (*Phil. 1:6*).

As a parting thought, consider James Rose's exhortation:

*It is no accident that greater expressions of American Christian scholarship are emerging in this century to meet the need of Christian parents and teachers to think deeply and practically about educating their children. The need of the hour is for Christians to renew their mind and displace a servile fear of Satan and socialism with the proper fear of God and His immediate, ever present Providence.*

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<sup>1</sup> Rousas Rushdoony, *The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1981), v.

<sup>2</sup> Rushdoony, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Rushdoony, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Rushdoony, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Rushdoony, 27.

<sup>6</sup> Rushdoony, 4, emphasis in the original.

<sup>7</sup> Dale Walden Johnson, “The Bible, Christian Theism, and the Integration of Social Studies—Confessions of a Christian Educator,” *Christian School Education* 5:1 (2001-2002), 18.

<sup>8</sup> James Schwartz, “Designing a Math Curriculum for Christian Schools,” *Christian School Education* 5:4 (2001-2002), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Bruinsma, “Instructional Design Principles for a Language Arts Curriculum,” *Christian School Education* 5:3 (2001-2002), 5.



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# The Victims of Dick and Jane

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld



**W**ho are the victims of Dick and Jane? They are the millions of American adults who, as children, were taught to read by that insipid whole-word, or sight-reading, method which, since 1930, has caused widespread reading disability and dyslexia. Dr. Samuel T. Orton, a neuropathologist who had studied reading disabilities in Iowa in the 1920s, warned the educators in 1929 that the sight method would cause reading disability among a very large number of children and that the educators should think twice before putting this new teaching method into all the schools of America. His article, "The 'Sight Reading' Method of Teaching Reading, as a Source of Reading Disability" was published in the February 1929 issue of the *Journal of Educational Psychology*. He wrote, almost apologetically:

*I wish to emphasize at the beginning that the strictures which I have to offer here do not apply to the use of the sight method of teaching reading as a whole but only to its effect on a restricted group of children for whom, as I think we can show, this technique is not only not adapted but often proves an actual obstacle to reading progress, and moreover I believe that this group is one of considerable educational importance both because of its size and because here faulty teaching methods may not only prevent the acquisition of academic education by children of average capacity but may also give rise to far reaching damage to their emotional life.*

Orton could not have spoken more honestly and plainly. But his words fell on deaf ears. The progressive editorial board of the *Journal* included behavioral psychologist Edward L. Thorndike and his protégé Arthur I. Gates, both of whom were instigators of the new teaching method. They argued with Orton, dismissed his findings, and proceeded to produce the new whole-word reading programs.

The Dick and Jane program, edited by William Scott Gray of the University of Chicago, was published in 1930 by Scott Foresman, and Arthur Gates' program was published by Macmillan. Gates taught

at Teachers College, Columbia University. By 1940 these whole-word programs were in virtually every primary classroom in America. And thus began the dumbing down of the nation.

## Creating an Illiterate Citizenry

In September 1993, the U. S. Department of Education revealed the shocking findings of its survey of adult literacy in America: 90 million U.S. adults were barely literate. In other words, nearly half the adults in America had been so severely dumbed down by their schooling that they could hardly qualify for a decent job. These were the true victims of Dick and Jane. But nobody in Congress was willing to hold the education establishment responsible for this literacy disaster. It was all blamed on the children who had grown up to become handicapped semi-literate adults.

How and why was this whole-word method chosen by the educators to replace the time-proven, traditional alphabetic phonics method? It was John Dewey, philosophical leader of the progressives, who, in an influential essay published in 1898, proposed the complete reforming of primary education by de-emphasizing high literacy in favor of socialization. He wrote:

*My proposition is, that conditions — social, industrial, and intellectual — have undergone such a radical change, that the time has come for a thoroughgoing examination of the emphasis put upon linguistic work in elementary instruction. . . . The plea for the predominance of learning to read in early school-life because of the great importance attaching to literature seems to me a perversion.*

He then outlined a plan whereby primary education would be completely revamped to advance the agenda of the progressives: the creation of a socialist America. He wrote:

*Change must come gradually. To force it unduly would compromise its final success by favoring a violent reaction.*

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The question one might ask is: if what they were hoping to achieve for America was so wonderful, why would Americans react violently against it?

No sooner were the Dick and Jane books in the schools than children began to experience all sorts of reading problems. A whole new lexicon of exotic terms was invented by the psychologists to deal with these new problems: congenital word blindness, word deafness, developmental alexia, congenital alexia, congenital aphasia, dyslexia, strephosymbolia, binocular imbalance, ocular blocks, dyslexaphoria, and more.

In 1944, *Life* magazine published a major article on dyslexia. It described the cure recommended by the Dyslexia Institute at Northwestern University for one little girl with an IQ of 118: thyroid treatments, removal of tonsils and adenoids, exercises to strengthen her eye muscles. Nobody suggested teaching her phonics.

In 1955, Rudolf Flesch's famous book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*, was published. For the first time the general public was told why Johnny couldn't read: he was not being taught in the proper phonetic way. Flesch wrote:

*The teaching of reading all over the United States, in all the schools, and in all the textbooks is totally wrong and flies in the face of all logic and common sense.*

He then explained how the educators had gotten rid of the alphabetic phonics method and replaced it with look-say, an ideographic method, in which children are taught to look at each word as a whole configuration, like a Chinese character. He said that when you impose an ideographic teaching method on an alphabetic writing system, you get reading disability and dyslexia. Again, the reaction of the educators was to blast Flesch, discredit him, and reassure parents that Flesch was a charlatan and ought not to be listened to.

But Flesch's book did wake up a lot of parents who began to teach their children phonics at home. As for the professors of reading, they circled the wagons and created the International Reading Association, which then became the citadel of the whole-word method.

## **The Ox You Slaughter**

Another important component of the progressive curriculum was behavioral psychology. It was Edward L. Thorndike, a strong believer in evolution and eugenics, who stressed the notion that children were animals and could be trained like animals. He wrote in 1928:

*Our experiments on learning in the lower animals have probably contributed more to knowledge of education, per hour or per unit of intellect spent, than experiments on children. . . . The best way with children may often be, in the pompous words of an animal trainer, "to arrange everything in connection with the trick so that the animal will be compelled by the laws of his own nature to perform it."*

But it was John B. Watson, the most arrogant behaviorist of them all, who revealed the true contempt that he and his fellow behaviorists had toward their fellow human beings when he wrote in his book, *Behaviorism*:

*Human beings do not want to class themselves with other animals. They are willing to admit that they are animals but "something else in addition." It is this "something else" that causes the trouble. In this "something else" is bound up everything that is classed as religion, the life hereafter, morals, love of children, parents, country, and the like. The raw fact that you, as a psychologist, if you are to remain scientific, must describe the behavior of man in no other terms than those you would use in describing the behavior of the ox you slaughter.*

He meant to be shocking, because he had to convince his students that they had to treat human beings as animals. He wrote further:

*The interest of the behaviorist in man's doings is more than the interest of the spectator — he wants to control man's reactions, as physical scientists want to control and manipulate other natural phenomena. It is the business of behavioristic psychology to be able to predict and control human activity.*

Eventually Dick and Jane were phased out and replaced by Whole Language, a deconstructionist reading program that has caused a literacy catastrophe in California and elsewhere. Its proponents insisted that Whole Language was an improvement over Dick and Jane because the latter were insipid, boring little stories. The Whole Word advocates would give the children real literature to read — stories about witchcraft, the occult, murder and mutilation. Dick and Jane may have been boring, but they didn't give the children nightmares. Whole Language "literature" does.

And because Whole Language rejects phonics, its proponents had to offer a new definition of reading in keeping with their methodology. Here it is, in their own words, written by three Whole Language professors of education:

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*From a whole language perspective, reading (and language use in general) is a process of generating hypotheses in a meaning-making transaction in a sociohistorical context. As a transactional process, reading is not a matter of “getting the meaning” from the text, as if that meaning were in the text waiting to be decoded by the reader. Rather, reading is a matter of readers using the cues print provides and the knowledge they bring with them... to construct a unique interpretation. Moreover, that interpretation is situated: readers’ creations (not retrievals) of meaning with the text vary, depending on their purposes for reading and the expectations of others in the reading event. This view of reading implies that there is no single “correct” meaning for a given text, only plausible meanings.*

That gem of professorial wisdom comes from a book entitled *Whole Language: What’s the Difference*, page 19.

Can you imagine the frustration experienced by millions of American school children trying to learn to read according to the above philosophy? The victims of whole language are by now in the millions and nothing will be done by the public educators to repair the damage that has been inflicted on these children.

## **Crippling the Children**

What the educators have done is devise a curriculum that purports to teach children to read, but which actually cripples them. And they do this at great expense to the taxpayer for whom the educators have nothing but contempt. After all, they are managing to extract from the public billions of dollars for not doing what the public expects them to do: teach children to read. That’s the substance of the whole-language fraud.

Perhaps the best expression of contempt that the educators have for parents was given by Professor Anthony G. Oettinger in 1982 at a conference of communications executives in Canada. The professor is chairman of the Center for Information Policy Research at Harvard University. He is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, where the elite decide the future for the rest of us. So we can be sure that the professor’s thinking is a reflection of the thinking of the ruling cognitive elite. He said:

*The present “traditional” concept of literacy has to do with the ability to read and write. But the real question that confronts us today is: How do we help citizens function well in their society? How can they acquire the skills necessary to solve their problems?*

*Do we, for example, really want to teach people to do a lot of sums or write in “a fine round hand”*

*when they have a five-dollar hand-held calculator or a word processor to work with? Or, do we really have to have everybody literate — writing and reading in the traditional sense — when we have the means through our technology to achieve a new flowering of oral communication?*

*What is speech recognition and speech synthesis all about if it does not lead to ways of reducing the burden on the individual of the imposed notions of literacy that were a product of nineteenth century economics and technology? ...*

*It is the traditional idea that says certain forms of communication, such as comic books, are “bad.” But in the modern context of functionalism they may not be all that bad.*

Now, I doubt that there are any parents in America who send their children to school to learn to read comic books. If anything, they want their children to be taught to read and write in the traditional manner. They don’t consider learning to read as a burden imposed on the individual. Rather, if taught in the proper way, learning to read can be a joyful experience for children eager to explore the wonderful world of the written word.

Literacy, by the way, is not the product of nineteenth century forces. It is the product of the sixteenth century Reformation in which the need to be able to read the Bible was the imperative for universal literacy. In a Christian civilization everybody has to be literate. But of course Professor Oettinger is of a different persuasion. He believes that literacy is only necessary for the ruling elite. “Do we really have to have everybody literate?” he asks. Well, if not, then who chooses who is to be literate and who is not? Wasn’t the idea of universal literacy behind the creation of our public school system? Wasn’t compulsory school attendance enacted because it was believed that everyone should be literate in America?

I don’t think Professor Oettinger would want to do away with government schools and compulsory attendance. The cognitive elite needs those instruments of control in order to brainwash all of the illiterates the system will produce.

The solution for parents who want to get their children out of Professor Oettinger’s clutches is to get them out of the public schools and into home schools or decent private or religious schools. There the educators must surely believe that everybody not only ought to be literate but can indeed do sums and write in a fine round hand.



# How to Pick a “Good” Government School

By John E. Stoos

*“In the state of California, if I had a child there, I wouldn’t put the youngster in a public school... I think it’s time to get our kids out.”*

*Dr. James Dobson on Focus on the Family Radio, March 2002*

With that comment, Dr. Dobson started quite a stir among thousands of people who are now joining the campaign to “separate school and state.” The government schools have added a lot of fuel to the fire by having Planned Parenthood sponsor skits in class that single out and embarrass Christian students. Disturbing too is the new policy in Hayward, California schools that encourages homosexual teachers to “come out” in the classroom and asks them to invite their partners to join them for the follow-up discussion.

Is there any hope for the government schools? More importantly, how can you decide as a Christian whether they might be a good place to send the child that God has entrusted to your care? First and foremost, I believe that parents must understand the nature of the battle that has been waged in the government schools during the past one hundred years.

During a recent Dialog on KFIA radio, the discussion revolved around some of these recent troubles in the government schools. It did not take long for a very “concerned” caller to say that if there was any place where he thought the so-called separation of church and state should be maintained, it was certainly in the schools!

Now if this caller meant that the schools were not intended to be churches I would agree, but sadly this is not the case. What the modern intends is to continue the expulsion of all things Christian from our schools: not just the morning prayers or Christmas songs, but all references to God and certainly all traces of the Christian worldview upon which our great nation was founded and most of Western Civilization was built.

Not long ago, these Christian foundations impacted all areas of American life including the government schools, a fact which I remind my listeners about as often as possible. My lovely bride Linda discovered one of the best examples of this influence as she worked to home school our children. While searching for good resource materials, she discovered an 1847 training manual authored by David P. Page used to instruct government school-

teachers. *Page’s Theory and Practice of Teaching* was for many decades the standard textbook for training government schoolteachers. In the introduction to the 1899 reprint that my wife obtained, E.C. Branson said, “Although more than half a century old, there is hardly a judgment in this book that needs to be revised. It is a wise book — a book for all time. ‘It comes nearer being a classic than any other book on teaching ever written in America.’ (Hinsdale) A teacher who has not mastered his *Page* will some day be as ridiculous as a lawyer who has not thoroughly thumbed his *Blackstone*.”

Now we all know that Mr. Blackstone has been long forgotten in most legal circles, but I will have to leave that discussion for another article. Today let me suggest that if you wanted to find a “good” government school, you would have to look for one that has teachers who have “mastered” what Mr. Page had to say. Here is just a small sample of the wisdom that Mr. Page wanted to impart to the *government* schoolteachers of his day:

## Page on Education

*Education of the heart is confessedly too much neglected in all our schools [Mr. Page wrote this in 1847!]. It has often been remarked that “knowledge is power” and as truly that “knowledge without principle to regulate it may make a man a powerful villain.” It is all-important that our youth should early receive such moral training as shall make it safe to give them knowledge. (51)*

## Page on America’s Christian History

*We live in a Christian land. It is our glory, if not our boast, that we have descended from an ancestry that feared God and revered His word. Very justly we attribute our superiority as a people over those who dwell in the darker portions of the world, to our purer faith derived from that precious fountain of truth — the Bible. Very justly, too, does the true patriot and philanthropist rely upon our faith and practice as Christian*

people for the permanence of our free institutions and our unequalled social privileges. If we are so much indebted, then, to the Christian religion for what we are, and so much dependent upon its life-giving truths for what we may hope to be, — how important is it that all our youth should be nurtured under its influences! (55)

## The Separation of Church and State

When I say religious training, I do not mean sectarianism. In our public schools, supported at the public expense, and in which the children of all denominations meet for instruction, I do not think that any man has a right to crowd his own peculiar notions of theology upon all, whether they are acceptable or not. Yet there is common ground which he can occupy and to which no reasonable man can object. He can teach a reverence for the Supreme Being, a reverence of His Holy Word, for the influences of His Spirit, for the Character and teachings of the Savior, and for the evil of sin in the sight of God, and the awful consequences of it upon the individual. He can teach the duty of repentance and the privilege of forgiveness. He can teach our duty to worship God, to obey His laws, to seek the guidance of His Spirit and the salvation by His Son. He can illustrate the blessedness of the divine life, the beauty of holiness, and the joyful hope of heaven, — and to all this no reasonable man will be found to object, so long as it is done in a truly Christian spirit. (55)

## David Page on the “Responsibility of the Teacher”

The school is no place for a man without principle; I repeat, **THE SCHOOL IS NO PLACE FOR A MAN WITHOUT PRINCIPLE.** Let such a man seek a livelihood anywhere else; or, failing to gain it by other means, let starvation seize the body and send the soul back to its Maker as it is, rather than he should incur the fearful guilt of poisoning youthful minds and dragging them down to his own

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pitiabile level. If there can be one sin greater than another, on which Heaven frowns with more awful displeasure, it is that of leading the young into principles of error and the debasing practices of vice. (53, 54, emphasis in the original)

Perhaps somewhere in the United States, there may yet be some rural school districts that still use *Page’s Theory and Practice of Teaching*. Perhaps not. Perhaps somewhere there are groups of parents willing to do the hard work of winning school board elections and fighting unions and bureaucrats to establish local schools that will apply Page’s principles and provide a good education for the children attending there. Perhaps. But until such battles are fought and won, may I suggest a good private school or home schooling as the better, if not Biblically obligatory, alternative?

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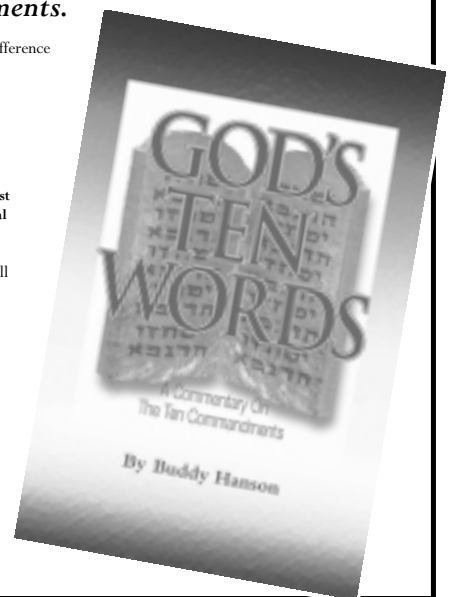
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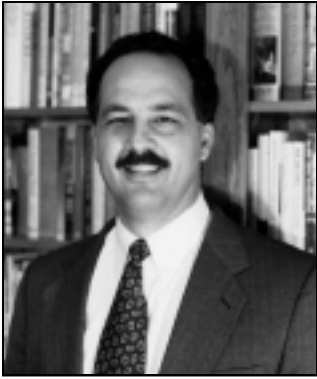


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# The First Step in College Preparedness

By Gary DeMar

**T**he college campus is a dangerous place. Statistics show that many unprepared Christian students get eaten alive by professors who attack the Biblical worldview root and branch. The barrage of assaults is unrelenting, everything from atheistic philosophy classes to a religious-based evolutionism that permeates the entire curriculum. We shouldn't be surprised at the casualty figures among Christian students since most churches rarely engage young people intellectually. The fact of the matter is, most churches rarely engage anyone intellectually. Sermons generally appeal more to the emotions than the mind. Youth groups are little more than social gatherings "with touchy-feely exercises taking the place of academic content."<sup>1</sup> Gene Edward Veith, an astute observer of cultural trends, concludes that the "church needs to focus above all on what their children need in order to survive in an increasingly caustic spiritual environment. They need Biblical literacy. They need moral and spiritual formation. And they need to be trained in discernment."<sup>2</sup> Most churches are ill-equipped to deliver the necessary ammunition to fight the inevitable battles. By the time students reach the university level, it's almost too late.

## Discernment 101

Where to begin in the discernment process? What's the first principle every student should have in hand as he or she crosses the threshold of university indoctrination? Students need to understand that all argumentation will inevitably be taken back to a single starting point from which the person arguing will appeal for ultimate authority to support his worldview. Numerous starting-points are put forward as the foundational basis for unbelieving thought. Here's a sample:

- Rationalism: reason rules
- Mysticism: unknown forces rule
- Hedonism: pleasure rules
- Relativism: we get to make up our own rules

- Post-modernism: there are no rules
- Pragmatism: it's a rule only if it works
- Materialism: only matter matters
- Monism: all is one so there is nothing to argue about

And if specific philosophical systems like the above are not enough to establish an authoritative starting point, then there is the appeal to any number of self-proclaimed or institutionally sanctioned experts: a brilliant college professor, the writings of a Zen Master, the directives of a cult leader, the latest scientific studies, the writings or revelations of self-appointed religious leaders, statistical analysis, opinion polls, the Constitution of the United States, psychics, fortune tellers, frequently quoted philosophers, newspaper and magazine editors, judges, television news anchors, Oprah, the high-minded opinions of Hollywood actors, or even alien life forms. Even some atheists hope against hope that someone (other than a personal God) is "out there" to give meaning to the cosmos. Abandoning a pure materialism, some are proposing that "an invisible force is at work" in the ever-evolving universe.<sup>3</sup> The materialists have become mystics. Maybe it's from watching too much *Star Wars*. Of course, when the ever-changing worldviews of a splintered secularism fail to live up to their claims of ultimacy, the university is quick to shut out competitive debate. Speech codes abound. Contrary opinions are suppressed. Outside speakers are hooted off the stage, if they ever make it on campus in the first place. The entrenched university worldview — no matter how discredited — must be protected at all cost, even though it's a philosophical house of cards.

## The Truth about "Experts"

Christian students need to realize that college professors are not gods or godlike. So-called experts, no matter what their field of study or how much information they gather, are finite in knowledge and fallible in practice. Put simply, they don't know

everything, and they make mistakes. For every group of experts who claim to know something authoritatively, there are always other groups of experts who claim they can dispute the findings of the first group of experts. The Bible describes it this way: “The first to plead his case seems just, until another comes and examines him” (*Pr. 18:17*).

Christopher Cerf and Victor Navasky, after compiling thousands of expert opinions and declarations about innumerable subjects over thousands of years, summarize their findings:

*Our research has yielded (and we have systematically catalogued and footnoted for the first time) thousands of examples of expert misinformation, disinformation, misunderstanding, miscalculation, egregious prognostication, boo-boos, and occasional just plain lies. And based on our preliminary findings we can say with some confidence that the experts are wrong without regard to race, creed, color, sex discipline, specialty, country, culture, or century. They are wrong about facts, and they are wrong about theories, they are wrong about dates, they are wrong about geography, they are wrong about the future, they are wrong about the past, and at best they are misleading about the present, not to mention next week.<sup>4</sup>*

In brief, “Just because most of the authorities in a field are shouting in unison that they know the truth, it ain’t necessarily so.”<sup>5</sup> An expert’s opinion is only as good as the starting point being used to evaluate the facts under study. This is certainly true at the university level.

Every decision that man has made and will make is determined by the place he decides to take his stand. Where does finite man stand when he makes a decision about the rightness or wrongness of certain behavior? Prior to the Fall, Adam “gladly acknowledged the fact of God’s sovereignty over him and the fact of his own creaturehood. God was his *pou sto* for knowledge, his final reference point for every human predication. It was God who determined for him right and wrong, and he willingly thought God’s thoughts after Him.”<sup>6</sup> It was Adam’s decision to shift his place to stand that made the Fall a fall. He no longer stood on the solid foundation of God’s Word, but instead chose to view his own opinion as a reliable source of authority. After the Fall, it became man’s nature “to suppress God’s revelation to him, both general and special. He found the most successful means of doing this to be a preoccupation with his own ideals and purposes on the one hand, and increasing sin and immorality on the other.”<sup>7</sup> Christians will never win

*Christian students must be ready to challenge the starting point of unbelieving thought.*

the war against triumphalistic man-centered worldviews until they challenge the place where the critics stand and force them to live consistently with the foundation they laid for themselves.

## Worldview Warriors

Christian students must be ready to challenge the starting point of unbelieving thought. To do this they must be equipped for the task. This means a thorough study of Biblical apologetics and all the attendant disciplines. Students who recognize that they might be inadequately equipped to handle the task are taking a necessary first step in becoming equipped always to be ready “to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you” (*1 Pet. 3:15*). Such ability does not come through osmosis, watching “Veggie Tales,” or attending church lock-ins. The senses must go through the rigors of “practice,” similar to the way an athlete prepares for competition on the athletic field against other well-trained athletes, so they will be “trained to discern good and evil” (*Heb. 5:14*).

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<sup>1</sup> Gene Edward Veith, “Stealth Sunday Schools,” *World* (January 30, 1999), 24.

<sup>2</sup> Veith, 25.

<sup>3</sup> Charles W. Petit, “From big bang to big bounce,” *U.S. News & World Report* (May 6, 2002), 59.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Cerf and Victor Navasky, “Introduction to the Original (1984) Version,” *The Experts Speak: The Definitive Compendium of Authoritative Misinformation*, rev. ed. (New York: Villard, [1984] 1998), xxvii.

<sup>5</sup> William R. Fix, *The Bone Peddlers: Selling Evolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1984), xix.

<sup>6</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 85.

<sup>7</sup> Reymond, *Justification of Knowledge*, 86.





# The Gospel According to Proverbs

By Greg Uttinger

*Every man is like the company he is wont to keep. — Euripides*  
*Sooner or later everyone has to decide which gang they belong to. — Pepper<sup>1</sup>*

**I**t is strange that more Christian educators have not tried to work out an educational theology from the Book of Proverbs. The book professes to be instruction for the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge, and yet few books on Christian education make any use of its material and themes, except perhaps in the area of character training. It may be because Proverbs does not directly address what we generally consider academic topics: mathematics, natural science, literature, and such. Or it may be that Christian scholars don't quite know how to fit the book into the framework of the New Covenant.

One commentator, for example, sees Proverbs as law for the Jewish Millennium — practical rules, but lacking in grace; another sees the book as an inspired transcript of natural law, good advice for everyone, as it were. Both recognize the relevance of Proverbs to the practical issues of life; but neither can find in it any connection to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who find in Proverbs more of Ben Franklin than of the Spirit of God have also missed the point.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge," Solomon tells us (1:7). The fear of the Lord is basic to the gospel. In fact, in Revelation an angel preaches the "everlasting gospel" to the whole world with the words, "Fear God, and give him glory" (14:7).

The fear of God cannot be taught by the precepts of men (Is. 29:13); it is the work of God's Holy Spirit (Is. 11:2-3). True wisdom and knowledge, then, begin in a right relationship with God, in regeneration, justification, and adoption. If we do not know God — that is, if we do not have a proper relationship with Him — we cannot know His world or ourselves properly.

Good Calvinists should, of course, say amen to this. But then Solomon turns away from traditional Reformed philosophy. He says nothing about worldviews, antithesis, or the Creator/creature distinction. Instead, Solomon tells his son that he needs to listen to his parents' law and stay away from gangs [editor: see the above quote from Pepper].

Why his parents' law? Why not God's law? Because the young man is young. He has not mastered all of God's law yet. He does not know how to apply it to the

more complex problems of life. He needs direction from those who do. At this point he is (apparently) still under his parents' authority. And even when he passes beyond that relationship, he will still need to honor his parents and their wisdom. Godly tradition has its uses. *Sola Scriptura* does not mean our fathers have nothing to say to us or that we have nothing to learn from them.

Now, this assumes that the young man's parents are godly and that their law is a valid interpretation and application of God's law. Since the father speaking in these verses is King Solomon before his fall, he can speak with an assurance that we do not have. He was the wisest of men and a prophet, and we are neither. Worse, we are often ignorant of the most basic principles of God's law. Nonetheless, Solomon tells us how young people *should* be able to begin their search for wisdom: they should learn wisdom at their parents' feet.

## "Gangs"

Then Solomon turns to the lure of "gangs." In some other era, this might seem odd, but God often uses extreme examples to make His point. We need to know that there is more to wisdom than postulates and systems. What we believe and how we think will be shaped by the companions we choose. This is fundamental. "He that walketh with wise men will be wise: but a companion of fools will be destroyed" (Pr. 13:20). God plants believers in churches for many reasons, but this is one of them. Young people who value ungodly friends above godly parents place themselves on the road to folly. Slowly — or suddenly — they will find their parents' beliefs outdated, narrow, and even oppressive. Our worldview is shaped in good measure by our choice of companions. We pick our identity by the company we keep.

## Wisdom

Leaving "gangs" behind, Solomon shows us at last that most excellent lady, Wisdom. Everywhere men gather, she calls out to them, offering them her words and Spirit. The young man must listen to her, seek her, and love her (2:1-4; 4:6). For she is "the principal

thing” (4:7); she is the Tree of Life restored (3:18). We should begin to suspect who she really is.

The visible effects of embracing Wisdom are first of all ethical and social. Wisdom keeps the young man from bad companions, from the forward man and the strange woman (2:10-20). Doubtless, wisdom has its academic consequences, but Solomon ignores these. Of first consequence for Solomon is his son’s choice of companions, especially his choice of a bride. For every prince needs a princess. Proverbs shows us two potential brides: Wisdom, who puts on flesh in chapter 31 as the Excellent Wife, and Folly, who is incarnate throughout the book as the strange woman.

“Strange” here means foreign or alien to God’s covenant. Though the strange woman is apparently an Israelite, she has forgotten “the covenant of her God” (2:17). She is not necessarily a prostitute, though she dresses like one (7:10), but she is a seductress and her paths lead to hell (7:27). She is the chief stumbling block the young man is likely to find in his walk with God. But as the young man embraces Wisdom, he will avoid any connection with the strange woman.

Wisdom in Proverbs is a Person, not an abstraction. Wisdom hates, loves, promises, leads, and commands (8:1-21). Wisdom has wisdom (8:14), an odd thing if she were merely a divine attribute personified. Wisdom is eternally begotten. “The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old,” she says (8:22).<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew verb is the same used by Eve when she said, “I have gotten a man from the LORD” (*Gen. 4:1*); gotten, that is, by generation. Indeed, Wisdom tells us twice that she was “brought forth” before creation (*vv. 24, 25*) — from eternity. Yet Wisdom was “by” God and “before him” (*v. 30*).

Wisdom is the divine Logos (*Jn. 1:1-18*); Wisdom is Jesus Christ (cf. *Lk. 7:35; 1 Cor. 1:24, 30; Col. 2:2-3*).<sup>3</sup> The man who would be wise must listen to Christ, seek Christ, and love Christ.

## Christ

Now we can step back and look at the book of Proverbs as a whole. There is nothing of Ben Franklin or Aesop here. The words of this book are the words of divine Wisdom: they are the mind of Christ and a transcription of His character.<sup>4</sup> He is the wise Son, the Wise in heart, the just and righteous Man, the One who walks uprightly, whose mouth is a well of life. He is the merciful Man, the true and faithful Witness (cf. *Rev. 1:5*). He, above all others, has found “favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man” (3:4; cf. *Lk. 2:52*). As we hear Him, as we take His words into our hearts (2:10; 3:1, 3; 4:4, 21; 7:3), we become like Him. Communion produces conformity (cf. *Rom. 6*). The disciple becomes as his master (*Lk. 6:40*). There is no legalism or moralism here: this is true, spiritual religion.

And so the young man must seek Wisdom on two levels or in two ways. First, he must seek to know Jesus Christ so that he may be wise, so that Christ may be formed within him (*Gal. 4:19*). Second, he must seek Christ in his bride. Moreover, he must do the first so that he *can* do the second.<sup>5</sup> This is, perhaps, why Wisdom is feminine in Proverbs: it is in their wives that godly men find or should find the clearest and dearest personal representation of Jesus Christ. In chapter 31, the prince finds his bride: and they will live happily ever after.

What, then, are the means of seeking Wisdom? Wisdom is everywhere (8:1-3), and general revelation has much to tell us about our Creator. But the words of Wisdom are more important still. Wisdom cries by her maidens, her appointed officers (9:3). We must submit ourselves to the pastors and teachers Christ has established in His churches. Wisdom calls us to a banquet of bread and wine (9:5). This feast and the Lord’s Supper point to the same reality, and we must seek Christ at His table as surely as the young man must seek Wisdom at hers.<sup>6</sup>

What we are talking about is communion, and for the creature, communion with the Creator must mean worship (3:9). More than a rational creature, man is a worshipping creature. Any educational philosophy that calls itself Christian must reckon with this. Moreover, man is a covenantal creature, one whose perception of truth is shaped by his relationships with God and other men. And so, if we would be wise, we must decide what “gang” we belong to. We must know whom we serve and whom we trust. Any approach to education that does not mention all of this up front still has one foot in the Enlightenment.

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<sup>1</sup> Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman, *Good Omen* (London: Corgi Books, 1990), 343.

<sup>2</sup> The Latin Vulgate renders the verb as *created*, and the Arians, recognizing Wisdom as the Logos of John 1, used this mistranslation to argue for the creaturehood of the Son.

<sup>3</sup> See Charles Bridges’s arguments on this point, especially in his footnotes on 1:20, 28 and 8:1.

<sup>4</sup> As the Psalms give us Jesus singing God’s law-word, the Proverbs give us Jesus meditating on God’s law-word.

<sup>5</sup> The Excellent Wife in Proverbs 31 often intimidates young women. But let’s put things in perspective. Women are given their example in twenty-two verses; young men get the rest of the book to tell them how to be worthy of the young woman.

<sup>6</sup> Note the two women, the two banquets in ch. 9, and the revelation of the bride at the end of the book. We should not miss the parallels to the Book of Revelation.



# Educating Missionary Kids: It's Not Just About Boarding School Anymore

*By Sandra Lovelace*

**T**he world of education is large and diverse. It includes a variety of formats, styles, and purposes. One might say it's a reflection of the world in which we live with its various nationalities, languages, and cultures. A rarely-considered corner of this world is the education of English-speaking children living overseas with their missionary families. Often overlooked, it is important to note that concerns over the education of their children is the main reason most missionary families return from their field of service.

Mike and Joan with their children Johnny and Jane are a typical missionary family. They were accepted as full-time candidates and raised their support fairly quickly. It was during their final round of information sessions that Mike and Joan came face to face with the issue of where Johnny and Jane would go to school. If they admitted it, Mike and Joan would have told you they had been assuming that the children would be sent to boarding school. Wasn't that what missionaries always did?

Once they began to realize the options beyond boarding school — day school, national school, or home school — Mike and Joan began to feel a bit overwhelmed. On top of the plethora of decisions and preparations they had made for their household over the past year or so, there was a whole new set of questions that needed to be answered. Would the national schools in their new country be safe, welcoming, or appropriate? What other day schools might be available and what would they be like? If nothing else worked, would home schooling be possible? Will we be able to provide an education with a Christian world-view?

For many missionary families, confronting the decisions about education can be daunting. The children, the family, and the mission are each part of the dynamic. The strengths, weaknesses, and educational goals for each child and of the family unit need to be discussed. Family finances, ministry goals, and time commitment also need to be considered. Making decisions about such a weighty topic can be almost overwhelming.

The educational choices Mike and Joan make will be undertaken while the family adjusts to a new language, money, food, social mores, and even new modes of transportation. Schooling will have to take place while the family learns where and how to shop, do the laundry, mail a letter, get a haircut, see a doctor or dentist, make friends, and so many other everyday tasks. Lessons will go on as they build a life in an environment of separation from anything familiar and/or isolation or deprivation. What's a family to do?

## Support

Encouragement is an invaluable source of support that can be offered to Mike and Joan by fellow heirs with Christ. They can remind them of God's promises to never leave us nor forsake us (*Dt. 31:6*) and to meet all of our needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus (*Phil. 4:19*). Although God gives Christian parents serious responsibilities, He balances them with tremendous privileges. In general, experience seems to teach that the greater the assignment, the richer the blessings of the Christian walk.

Mike and Joan also need to be made aware of the tremendous advantages for children educated overseas these days. Johnny and Jane will be faced with challenges in their new setting, but they will avoid untold pressures and temptations found in today's U.S. culture. Their horizons will be broadened in immeasurable ways as they gain first-hand knowledge of the unity and diversity of God's creation. They will also grow in independence and a deeper reliance on their Heavenly Father as they face opportunities and difficulties with His help.

Specific information concerning the educational options will also encourage and empower Mike and Joan. The advantages and drawbacks to each type of schooling available in their new home need to be weighed. Testing can be done to determine Johnny's and Jane's level of achievement and discover if there are any learning style issues to manage. A consultation with an experienced educator involving these

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key topics will be of great assistance in Mike's and Joan's quest to provide the best possible educational environment for their children.

Once they make their decision and begin their course, many missionary families find another set of questions arise. Is Johnny learning math adequately in his second language? Does Jane really understand what she's reading in English any more? Will our children fit in with their peers if or when they return to the States? Will they be prepared for college?

Often missionary families choose to send their children to national schools in the primary grades. This allows them to acquire the new language more quickly as well as make friends and settle into the neighborhood. Parents then become part-time home schoolers as they pursue lessons with their children in the afternoons to maintain their fluency and facility in English. However, by the third or fourth grade, most of these schools move to a longer day of intense instruction and become very demanding.

The national school setting contains another reason for missionary parents to be especially alert. Although much is written about bi-lingual education in the U.S., little can be found about the English-speaking child being educated abroad and, most often, little is done to support children in this situation. A child may be struggling excessively with non-academic issues and, as a result, his achievement suffers. Or, a learning difference may exist that is not being diagnosed or addressed and his academic achievement suffers. In either situation, Johnny or Jane may not be reaching his full, God-ordained potential.

Any of these situations, and a host of others, can bring out the need to take another serious look at the educational options available. All along the journey, missionary parents need support for the education of their children. Mike and Joan are as deeply concerned about the achievement levels, emotional health, and spiritual development of each of their children as are their U.S.-based fellow believers.

## Hands-on Assistance

The main way to bring support to Mike and Joan, Johnny and Jane, and hundreds of other missionary families like them is to send servants to be at their side. There are people qualified, able, and willing to provide this kind of field-side support. These "servants to the servants" can make individual family visits and arrange retreats, conferences, and workshops for gatherings of missionary families. Testing sessions and consultations can be scheduled in both settings. They can also maintain ongoing contact,

encouragement, and practical support via the internet and international mail once they come back to the U.S..

Others, sympathetic to the needs of these families but unable to travel extensively, can provide support from their homes. They can give funds to support those who go to the field. They can send specific educational and enrichment resources needed by many of these families. They can share this opportunity for service with others by telling them about the educational issues faced by these missionary families.

Everyone can pray. In fact, God calls us strongly to support each other in prayer (*Eph. 6:18*). Ultimately everyone's lives are richer when we join together in prayer for our brothers and sisters. The next best thing to going to the field is the sense of participation we receive by enabling another servant to do so.

The hurdles of cross acculturation, limited resources, and *lack of educational information* are real, but they are not insurmountable. They could cause Mike and Joan with Johnny and Jane, or any other missionary family, to leave their field of service, but they don't need to. With the practical, emotional and spiritual help of their U.S. brothers and sisters they can continue to spread the gospel of Christ to the farthest corners of the earth. We U.S.-based co-laborers ought to mimic the efforts of the Thessalonians in their care for the Macedonians as we share out of our riches that the gospel might flourish all to the glory of God.

*Lifework Forum* is a ministry presenting patterns for living to both religious and secular audiences. This twelve-year-old ministry is dedicated to the application of Biblical truths to all areas of life. We place an emphasis on the practical outworkings of our discoveries. It is our desire to bring fresh insights to traditional thought as we confront age-old questions and current issues.

*Project Prisca*, a ministry project of Lifework Forum, offers educational assistance to Christian expatriate families in Europe and Central Asia. Named after a co-worker of the Apostle Paul with Aquila, this ministry seeks to provide educational information, emotional support and spiritual encouragement to families serving God in foreign lands.

In the past three years, Sandra Lovelace has been privileged to minister to families serving in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bosnia, Germany, Russia, Romania, Hungary, and Poland. She administers and scores achievement tests, then immediately consults with families to discuss the results and make recommenda-

— Continued on page 22 —



# “The Big Picture in Christian Education”

*By William Blankschaen*

**T**he young man yawned as he leaned against the pole supporting the awning that shaded his sun-bleached hair from the torrid sun. As if slowly strumming a guitar, he absentmindedly brushed his well-traveled leather jacket and once again lifted the rag to polish the drab bronze urn on the crate before him. His gaze floated lazily out of his own tent of trinkets and into the bustling bazaar street where the haze of desert dust seemed to hover like an early morning fog. Suddenly, the dusty salesman blinked and came to life as he spotted an older gentleman, stooped and bearded, shuffling toward his collection of scattered trinkets.

Pausing only long enough to make sure the weathered man looked remotely interested in his wares, the young hawk began his spiel. “Good day, sir.” He received only a curt nod from the faded fedora but was not deterred. He decided to cut right to the point as the silent shopper seemed attracted to a basket of jumbled bits of rock and tile. “Now that’s a steal there, I tell you. Just got that from one of the digs yesterday. If you’re looking for a genuine piece of history for just a bit of an investment, why that’s the way to go.”

Still only silence as the wrinkled hands rifled through the basket. The wrinkled face betrayed no hints to the young eyes striving to casually size up their latest quarry. “Tell ‘ya what,” the lad made the first move. “I’ll give you the whole basket for five bucks. Five bucks for the whole bunch. Kind of a mixed bag. Maybe ‘ya can make a candle holder or fix a picture frame up or somethin’.” He paused, then turned toward the bronze urn again, fearing he had wasted even those few seconds of precious lounging time.

From the corner of his eye, he caught a glimpse of the faded and crumpled five dollar bill as it dropped beside the basket on the bench. He spun and pounced on the money before the mirage could vanish. The young man couldn’t help but chuckle as he stuffed the faded bill into the pocket of his equally faded jeans. Nor could he resist sneering, “That’s quite a purchase you made there,” as the grizzled man swooped up the basket, still peering into its contents.

“Yes, it is.” The tired lips finally moved as if animated by the find. The gnarled hands steadily lowered the basket to the sandy street. With a slight groan, the rest of the purchaser followed until he kneeled before the bench as if paying homage to the basket. While the dusty clerk leaned forward, curiously peering over his wares, the old man continued sifting through the broken bits before hurriedly pouring them onto the crackling stone street.

“What are you doing?” the younger man inquired, leaning even further to see the strange occurrence. “Are you all right?” No reply. Instead the hands moved swiftly like cheetahs bounding from rest to pursue their prey. Before the inexperienced eyes, the veteran hands flipped, shuffled, and configured the bits like pieces of a jigsaw, all in a whirl of motion.

Finally, the well-worn gentleman grunted satisfactorily and rocked back, exposing his work to the once-bored gaze. The smooth-shaven jaw fell; the eyes widened. There upon the dusty street, before his own booth, with the jumbled bits he had just proudly sold for five bucks, lay the most magnificent tile mosaic the young man had ever seen.

He simply gawked for a moment before tilting his blank face toward the kneeling figure. “H-how did you know?” he stammered inanely.

The old man merely sighed and began collecting the ancient and colorful stones. “Sir, I’ve devoted my life to studying the culture that created this art. I’ve learned not to see a jumbled mess. I’ve come to expect all the pieces to fit together.”

Like the brash, young salesman above, Christian parents and educators often fail to get the big picture. When educating our sacred trusts, we see only bits and pieces of Creation, stale facts to be tossed in a musty basket and sold to the first gullible taker. In doing so, we shortchange not only our own children but also the Artist who designs and sustains the masterpiece.

## **How Do We Fail?**

First, we fail to see the intrinsic value of the cohesiveness of Creation. Like the precocious lad in

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the earlier tale, we see only bits and pieces of realities, curiosities to be sure, but nothing of eternal value. For example, we may be momentarily awed by the design of an otter's fur to withstand Canadian winters, but we cannot readily connect that marvel with Euclidean mathematics or Romantic literature. Perhaps we recognize the beauty of a Rembrandt but cannot explain the theological or historical significance of such a work.<sup>1</sup> More importantly, we often don't have a clue what any of it has to do with Christ's work of redemption, the axis of history.

Second, we often fail to value adequately what little we do see of the cohesiveness of reality. We all too readily slap a five dollar price tag on priceless realities. For example, much work has been done in recent decades to disprove the lie of Darwinian evolution and to proclaim the masterful design in nature by the Master Designer. But is that enough? Have we finished our work when we see that some of the debris in the basket is actually worth something? What are the implications now for the arts, media, literature, history, politics, mathematics, philosophy, and theology based on these discoveries? Can we correctly identify the treacherous thought patterns that led us to such abysmal errors as evolution? More importantly, can we use our current information to predict and counter the next atheistic salvo?<sup>2</sup>

Third, we tend to compound our original error of devaluating the cohesiveness of reality by ridiculing those who claim to see something grander than a pile of rubble. All too quickly, we chuckle under our breath at those who seem so eager to connect the dots in a divine network of truth. A shake of the head, a patronizing roll of the eyes, and it's back to polishing something of real worth. Or so we think. Meanwhile, a masterpiece is being uncovered in the dusty street. True, in the process of seeking an interconnectedness of all reality, some explorers may err in their exuberance. Should we then stop seeking a shorter route to the Indies? Should we then fail to discover a New World? Perhaps we should ask, do we protest because we are afraid to fail or, worse yet, because we fear we may find that there is no masterpiece?

## How Do We Succeed?

First, we should learn from the grizzled veteran in the earlier tale. The distinct advantage he had over the rookie was that he had thoroughly studied the culture that created the masterpiece. Likewise, we should not expect to get the big picture until we too have thoroughly studied the Creator's culture. We do so by moving beyond what commonly passes for spirituality these days (having an existential relationship with Christ) and acquiring a knowledge of God through

fervent study of both Scripture and the writings of holy men used by God throughout history to expose the cohesiveness of His Creation. When we do so, we ready ourselves to see the unity that we should expect to see from the harmonious Trinity.

Second, once we grow in our knowledge of the One who is both diverse and unified, we will then expect to see a divine network of truth wherever we look. The astute purchaser recognized his dusty find as something precious because he had "come to expect all the pieces to fit together." And so they did. Not because he simply perceived them to be fitting, but because "all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (*Col. 1:16-18 NKJV*).<sup>3</sup>

The reality of the universe is that all things do fit together in perfect harmony and are integrated because the Creator and Sustainer of the universe is perfectly harmonized and integrated.<sup>4</sup> The reason we should expect to see cohesiveness in reality is that we see cohesiveness in the One who defines reality. The reason we can connect physics to history is that they both came from the same divine source. The reason we can justly seek a connection between Aristotle and the CBS Evening News is that the same unified God created both Aristotle and Dan Rather for the same unified purpose. Could it be that the reason we fail to acquire such wisdom is that we have failed to fear God for who He is, choosing rather to substitute a god more fit to our curriculum? Such efforts are vain, for "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (*Ps. 111:10 NKJV*).

Consequently, the reason we often fail to connect the dots for our children at home and in the classroom is that either we don't think the dots are connected, or, if they are, we've grown comfortable with our present, though deficient, understanding of things. After all, educators and parents would have to admit that all these years they've fallen short of presenting, or even attempting to present, a cohesive curriculum based on a Creator who is both unified and diverse, unique yet integrated.<sup>5</sup> Think of the chaotic school board meetings that could result from such a shift, not to mention the textbook publishing chaos that could ensue. As Shakespeare said, "better to bear those ills we have than fly to others we know not of. Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all."<sup>6</sup>

Thus we can expect to be ridiculed just as was the gentleman in the parable.<sup>7</sup> What an absurd price to pay for a basket of rocks! Indeed, if that were all it was, then we must concede the man to have been touched with too much sun. Think of the risk he took in dumping the jagged pieces in the street. What if he had been wrong? Imagine the laughter

filling the marketplace. But he knew the designers. He expected the design. He did not hesitate to pay the price deemed too high by the arrogant clerk. But for those who see the big picture, what price could be too high?

“For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen” (*Rom. 11:36* NKJV).

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<sup>1</sup> For a good introduction to the significance of art to theology, other disciplines, and culture in general see Gene Edward Veith, *State of the Arts: From Bezalel to Mapplethorpe*, (Wheaton, 1991), especially the chapter entitled “A Walk through the Museum.”

<sup>2</sup> Christians have become quite adept at educating students to counteract the cultural shifts that occurred two generations ago. That is not good enough. Anticipating and preparing for future paradigm shifts must be part of any Christian education effort. For a good synopsis of cultural history from a Christian perspective see Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, (Wheaton, 1994). The entire sixteen-book TURNING POINT

Christian Worldview Series, edited by Marvin Olasky, is a must-read for all educators in a post-modern world.

<sup>3</sup> For a thorough and convicting treatment of this text and similar ones, especially regarding redemption and man’s place in it, see the sermon “God Glorified in Man’s Dependence” by Jonathan Edwards.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the best treatment I have seen on the relationship of the Triune God to reality is the classic R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many: Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy* (Fairfax, VA, 1978).

<sup>5</sup> “Basic to a sound educational enterprise is a changing curriculum. Precisely because a sound curriculum has as its foundation an unchanging faith in the sovereign and triune God and His infallible Word, it will therefore recognize that man and his problems will change and develop. The area of unchanging is in God and eternity, not in time and man.” Rushdoony, R.J., *The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum*, Ross House Books (Vallecito, CA, 1981), 13.

<sup>6</sup> *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene 1.

<sup>7</sup> “We must become serious about Christian educational theory and practice; serious enough to reexamine everything that is currently being done in our schools. And by everything, I mean everything, down to the practice of eating lunch at school! We must go back to scratch, indeed, even further back — to itch!” Adams, Jay, *Back to the Blackboard: Design for a Biblical Christian School*, Timeless Texts (Woodruff, SC, 1982, 1998), 15.

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*tions. She is currently working on a new outreach to families serving in France.*

*Specific needs for Project Prisca include:*

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# Nine Reasons for Not Using Public Schools

*Dan Smithwick*



**P**ublic schools (or as some like to say, government schools) have come upon hard times in the past several years. One would be hard-pressed to find a community where the public school system is not having serious problems. While gun-shootings get the most coverage (understandably), there are many, many other problems plaguing the 150-year-old experiment of government-run education. Budget crises, teacher shortages, facility problems, undisciplined youth, and now, more frequently, problem parents plague most school districts. In addition to these is the fundamental problem — poor education. Standardized test scores have fallen dramatically over the past few decades. Both college and business leaders lament how poorly high school students are educated.

For the first two centuries of our nation, civil government had no role in education. In the last century, it has wanted to be the only player with a role. We spend more money on education per pupil than any other industrialized nation, yet rank near or at the bottom in academic performance, especially in math, physics, and sciences. Why? The answer is theological in every sense.

I want to give nine reasons why the church today should cease using state-run schools. I also want to acknowledge up front that there are oftentimes circumstances why Christians believe they have to use the public schools. It is neither my place, nor anyone else's, I believe, to judge all situations from afar. I will say more on this later. But first, some background on the theological basis for arguing why the church should abandon public schooling.

Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (*Mt. 4:4*). For the past several decades it appears that leaders of our nation, particularly in the field of education, have systematically set out to demonstrate that Jesus didn't know what He was talking about. From the removal of the Ten Commandments in the classroom to denying prayer in school to forbidding any display of religious objects

in public places (including a closed Bible on a teacher's desk), our nation has determined to become officially secular. No Word, just bread; no supernatural, just natural.

The fruit of this removal of Christianity from the public square is apparent to anyone who wants to see — a decrease in good things (honesty, morality, literacy, family coherence, etc.) and an increase in bad things (crime, sexual immorality, bankruptcies, business and government corruption, family breakdown, etc.). Within a few short generations, our nation has been exchanging liberty for bondage (government dependency), free enterprise for socialism, creditor status for debtor status, community spirit for isolationism, honoring God for ignoring Him.

The seedbed for this change, I believe, more than any other place, has been the public school classroom. When the public/government school system began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was absorbed in an environment of Christian ethics held publicly and privately since the days of the Pilgrims. Prayer, Bible reading, and fear of the Lord were the foundations of learning. Not anymore. The spiritual capital inherited by the public school system has been spent and will not be replenished.

But America didn't enter this experiment of non-religious secular education without warning. Theologian and educator Dr. A.A. Hodge, Princeton Theological Seminary, said, "I am as sure as I am of Christ's reign that a comprehensive and centralized system of national education, separated from religion, as is now commonly proposed, will prove the most appalling enginery for the propagation of anti-Christian and atheistic unbelief, and of anti-social nihilistic ethics, individual, social and political, which this sin-rent world has ever seen."<sup>1</sup>

Scholar J. Gresham Machen said "An education that trains the mind without training the moral sense is a menace to civilization rather than a help."<sup>2</sup> On January 12, 1926, Machen testified

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before a Congressional committee on the dangers of creating a federal Department of Education. He stated, “Do we want a federal Department of Education, or do we not? I think we do not. And I am asking your permission to tell you very briefly why. We do not, I think, want a federal Department of Education because such a Department is in the interests of a principle of *uniformity or standardization* in education which would be the very worst calamity into which this country could fall.”<sup>3</sup>

Martin Luther said, “I’m afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures and engraving them in the heart of youth.” America’s government-run education system has proven Luther right.

These men, and many others, gave us clear warnings about government-run, secular, no-Bible education. But the church pressed on. She bought the concept of “free” education and surrendered her posterity to be raised by the state. Would that God had shown all parents the error of this as clearly as one parent from Iowa who said, “I don’t want my children fed by the state. I don’t want my children clothed by the state. But I would prefer either to their being educated by the state.”<sup>4</sup>

“Insider” John Taylor Gatto, 1991 New York State Teacher of the Year, speaker, and author of *Dumbing Us Down* and *The Exhausted School*, stated, “We live in a time of great school crisis. Our children rank at the bottom of nineteen industrial nations in reading, writing and arithmetic. At the very bottom. Our teenage suicide rate is the highest in the world and suicidal kids are rich kids for the most part, not the poor. In Manhattan fifty percent of all new marriages last less than five years. So something is wrong for sure.”<sup>5</sup>

Education expert Samuel L. Blumenfeld stated, “The plain, unvarnished truth is that public education is a shoddy, fraudulent piece of goods sold to the public at an astronomical price. It’s time the American consumer knew the extent of the fraud which is victimizing millions of children each year.”<sup>6</sup>

Pastor and author Douglas Wilson captured the situation well when he noted that “For over one hundred years, Americans have been running a gigantic experiment in government schools, trying to find out what a society looks like without God. Now we know.”<sup>7</sup>

Here are my nine reasons why Christians should no longer use public schools (and really never should have) from least to most important:

## 9. Unsafe environment

Surely, every parent in America has heard about the gun-shootings in more than a dozen public schools over the past several years. What Mom hasn’t worried as she watched her child go off to school wondering if today the tragedy might strike her family? But there are tens of thousands of students who go to their public school daily without ever being confronted with such violence. There are lesser-degree acts of violence (fights, sexual abuse, name calling, teasing, etc.) but these problems show up in private schools as well. Even drug and alcohol problems occur in Christian schools, but to a much lesser degree. Public schools are unsafe in many ways, but I believe this is last on the list of “top nine” reasons for Christians not to enroll their children in them.

## 8. Negative role models

The Bible says, “Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals” (*1 Cor. 15:33*). An environment where the majority of people are not Christian is unquestionably going to produce a different ethic than will occur when nearly all are Christian (faculty and students). The value system, or worldview, of non-Christian teachers and students will produce a “normal” environment that is hostile to Christianity. If we believe the Bible to be true, it simply cannot be any different.

Most students like to model their teachers, especially when they are viewed as “cool.” However, the morals of Christian-family youth are being corrupted when the lifestyle of their teachers reflects such anti-Christian views as gay rights, abortion rights, and sex before marriage. Believing otherwise is already proof that the warning of this Scripture was ignored — you have been deceived.

## 7. Reverse “evangelism”

Many Christian families state that a key reason for staying with the public school system is to be “salt and light” to a pagan culture. I think this may be an excellent reason for an adult who is called to teach and to evangelism of the lost. There are many Christian teachers in public schools who choose their work for this reason and my hat goes off to them. They are undoubtedly facing in-your-face hostility to Christian principles and yet remain there to pray for the lost, be a witness for Christ, and give the best education they can to students. But the “salt and light” concept ends there. I think it is unwise (dangerous?) to send little-trained or untrained youth to perhaps the key battleground of Humanists (the public school classroom) and expect them to be

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effective in winning over unbelievers, adult or student. That evangelism is working in reverse far too often as is evidenced by Christian-family youths adopting morals of their unbelieving friends.

## 6. Godless curriculum

School is about learning and learning is about knowing truth. Fundamental to the Christian faith is the axiom that God *is* truth. God chose to reveal Himself in Word-form (the outworking of truth) in four primary ways: 1) by His spoken Word “Let there be...,” creation came into existence, with order and purpose; 2) by inspiration, His written Word was given to us in the Scriptures for right living; 3) by incarnation, His Word was given to us in flesh (Jesus Christ) for our redemption; and 4) by His final Word, all will be judged, “For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law” (*Rom. 5:12*).

When schools use a curriculum that is completely devoid of God’s Word, how can we possibly expect students to be educated? How can we expect our children to be blessed? To be successful? Peter Marshall said, “Let us not fool ourselves — without Christianity, without Christian education, without the principles of Christ inculcated into young life, we are simply rearing pagans.”<sup>8</sup> A godless curriculum will produce a godless people.

## 5. Public schooling is not thorough

Pick any subject taught in K-12 education, and if it has been taught apart from the knowledge revealed in Scripture, it is incomplete (and likely inaccurate). History, biology, mathematics, sociology, science, language, arts, economics, government — each are openly addressed in Scripture. In other words, the God who made all creation has also told us how to understand creation. Why would we want to go to the effort and expense of having our children educated for 12-16 years ignoring what the original Author has to say about the subjects we are teaching? It makes no sense, except for the fallen mind who wants no part of God. As Christians we understand this dilemma for the unbeliever, but why should we give our children to them for the primary instruction of their lives?

Take history for example. Schools teach world history. But do students in public schools learn the factual history of mankind: formations of people groups, nations, or why certain civilizations came and went? Or the origins of different languages? Do they learn of the individuals who were greatly used of God in shaping civilization: Noah? Abraham?

Moses? David? Paul? Are they taught about some of the world’s greatest events such as Creation, the Flood, the birth, death and resurrection of the Son of God, by whom the school’s calendar is dated? Not likely.

What about U.S. History? It is beyond the scope of this article to make the case for America’s foundation being squarely laid upon Christianity. I will only quote Dr. D. James Kennedy, “Today there are those who gnash their teeth at the very mention of the fact that America was founded as a Christian nation. But the facts of history are not easily dismissed, though they are certainly ignored in our schools and in many of our modern, revisionist history books.”<sup>9</sup> Yet public schools have dismissed this part of U.S. History. Students can receive an “A” in history and never have to know what the original Author had to say or to know of His hand on our history. This is not being educated.

## 4. Poor academic results

It is secret to none: Public school students, to a large degree, are simply not well-educated. Much has been written about the “dumbing down” of our public schools. There are exceptions of course. Some youth, because of their gifting and good homes, are excelling in public schools in spite of the overall deterioration of the system. But for the great majority, even average to above average in intelligence, they are being badly educated. What a travesty this is.

My friend, Rev. E. Ray Moore, Jr. recently wrote, “Abundant evidence, assembled from test scores and elsewhere, assures us that today’s public school graduates do not have the mastery of basic subjects that earlier generations had. Students are leaving public high schools in record numbers without having acquired basic writing skills, reading comprehension or mathematical ability. They know little to nothing of this country’s founding or its history. They cannot place major historical figures or events in the right century. They cannot walk up to wall maps and point out significant foreign countries. This intellectual deterioration has spread into public colleges and universities that have admitted more and more unprepared students into college level work.”<sup>10</sup>

## 3. Public schooling breeds the view that success can come apart from God

If we throw out all the bad stuff found in public schools (shootings, rapes, stealing, fighting, cheating, etc.) and have a “nice” school where no student is afraid, we are still left with an education system that is robbing youth of the most important aspect of

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being educated — to trust God. The supreme value being touted today for education is to be successful and have a good life. Students are told, “You need a good education so you can get a good job so you can give your kids a good education so they can get a good job,” ad infinitum. Not only is this a horrible philosophy of life, it is grossly unbiblical. The Bible says, “But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth” (*Dt. 8:18*). But this wealth is not simply for the sake of our being rich, for this verse continues, “that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.”

Here is the purpose of being properly educated and successful — to establish God’s covenant on earth. Public schools do not go this direction but rather promote materialism as a way of being successful. This is a formula for failure, the exact opposite of the stated purpose of public education.

## 2. Public schooling produces no fear of God

Now we are getting close to the heart of the problem with secular, government-run education. “Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children’” (*Dt. 4:10*).

Fear of God is almost a lost concept in our culture. The meaning of the word “fear” as used in the above Scripture is 1) morally to *revere*; and 2) causatively to *frighten*. Five times in the Book of Deuteronomy the phrase “learn and fear” is found in context of knowing God’s Word. The reason there is little shame anymore (have you seen any lately?) is because there is no fear of God anymore.

Horace Mann and John Dewey, founders of our public school system, openly expressed their hatred for Christianity. They literally feared an educational system that would teach youth to fear God, which is just what America had for the first two hundred years of existence. Jesus had a very different view about fear — “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (*Mt. 10:28*). It would now be considered illegal to quote this statement of Jesus in public schools.

Education, in any subject, should create fear (reverence) of God for how His majesty is revealed in that area of life. Teaching should also instill a proper fear (fright) of going against God’s order and purpose in each discipline of

life. Sadly, our public schools teach subjects simply as if God does not exist.

## 1. Public schooling (secular education) is disobedience to God

Herein lies the primary reason why Christians should not use public schools any longer. Having been educated myself in public schooling through college, having become a Christian at age 33, and having put our five children through combinations of public and private Christian schools, I can only look back and confess that I was not always obedient in education. I wish every day I could relive some of those years and do it “by the Book.”

But those days are gone. It is only the present in which we can decide to be obedient in this all-important field we call education. The Bible says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it” (*Prov. 22:6*). There is simply no easy way around the fact that putting our children in an anti-Christian educational system is not training them up in the way they should go. Many parents want to say, “But we are giving our children Bible training at home.” Really? Are you going back to all subject matter your children are taking and giving them a Scripture-based education to correct wrong teaching? If so, you are in essence home schooling them, so why continue to have them enrolled in the public school? If you mean that you are giving your children moral training, and letting the public school give them academic training, you are simply denying them a Christian worldview. Your children *are* being given an anti-Christian worldview in all subjects at the local public school.

At the beginning of this article I acknowledged that there are Christians who sincerely believe that, for their situation, public schooling is what they need to use. In response I would say that if you have sought pastoral counsel, prayed, and are trusting Christ for this decision, and have peace that you are doing the right thing for your children, then walk in it. If you have not done these things, but are simply “doing what everybody else in church is doing,” then I would like to challenge you to seek the Lord and get His mind on the matter of public schooling for *your* children.

I recommend two books to help with this decision. First is a new book by Rev. E. Ray Moore, Jr., *Let My Children Go* (quoted from above). Rev. Moore has done the Christian community an excellent service in providing the historical basis of government-run education and the proper theological response to it.

Rev. Moore says, "We therefore advocate, with solid scriptural foundation, that Christians abandon rather than attempt to reform public schools. We believe our call to Christians to leave public schooling is based on Scripture, the historical American constitutional model, sound, Bible-based educational philosophy, and also free-market principles. We will not convince Congress with this argument, or even local school boards. But we will make progress with Christians, helping them to rebuild their worldview and find their way back to Biblical and constitutional thinking which calls for them to remove their children from public schools and begin home schooling or placing them in private Christian schools."<sup>11</sup>

The second recommendation is *Advancing the Kingdom* by Don Schanzenbach. This is a very good personal or group study on learning the Biblical worldview of sixteen different subject matters. The study will give you a rich appreciation of the importance of using Scripture as the basis for learning truth. All typical high school subjects are covered in this book. Both of these books can be obtained from our web site: [www.nehemiahinstitute.com](http://www.nehemiahinstitute.com). I also recommend my study, "Teachers, Curriculum, Control" (available on my web site). This study gives documented evidence of the negative fruit being produced by secular education.

Another excellent resource is [www.sepschool.org](http://www.sepschool.org) of the Alliance for the Separation of School and State. President Marshall Fritz is doing a significant work in helping Americans to see why civil government should not be in the business of education. I encourage you to join his alliance, as I have done.

Public, government-run schooling has been a bad experiment. It will not survive much longer. I strongly encourage Christians to use home schooling or private Christian schools for good education and to avoid having your children become victims of an impending crash. On March 28, 2002, Christian family leader, Dr. James Dobson, on his Focus on the Family radio

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broadcast, stated, "In the State of California, if I had a child there, I wouldn't put the youngster in a public school.... I think it is time to get our kids out... ." The case really could be made in the 49 other states.

We used to educate our own children, and did it much better than the state does now. Let's do it again.

*Dan Smithwick is President of Nehemiah Institute. The institute is a research and educational private foundation providing worldview testing and training materials to Christian educators. He has been guest speaker on several Christian radio shows. He is married and has five children. He can be contacted at [nehemiah1@home.com](mailto:nehemiah1@home.com).*

<sup>1</sup> A.A. Hodge, *Popular Lectures on Theological Themes* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1887), 283, as quoted in R. J. Rushdoony, *The Messianic Character of American Education*, 335.

<sup>2</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *Education, Christianity and the State* (The Trinity Foundation, 1987), 60.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 85, 86, (emphasis added).

<sup>4</sup> Quote contained in *Let My Children Go*, (Gilead Media, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> See article by Gatto, *Why Schools Don't Educate*, [http://www.naturalchild.com/guest/john\\_gatto.html](http://www.naturalchild.com/guest/john_gatto.html).

<sup>6</sup> Samuel L. Blumenfeld, *NEA- Trojan Horse in American Education* (The Paradigm Company, 1984), xiv.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas Wilson, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* (1991), Quote contained in *Let My Children Go* (Gilead Media, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Quote from *Bible Illustrator*, Parsons Technology.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. D. James Kennedy, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born* (Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994), 59.

<sup>10</sup> Rev. E. Ray Moore, Jr., *Let My Children Go* (Gilead Media, 2002), 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

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