



FAITH FOR ALL OF LIFE

## Government Schools: Producing What We Pay For!



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There is hardly a political discussion these days that does not in some way involve education. Most surveys show that voters are concerned about giving America's children a good education, and today's educational-industrial complex insists that money should be no object. Here in California, suffering under record budget deficits, even the most "draconian" budget proposals leave education spending at about \$9,000 per student. A qualified teacher would have significant educational resources for thirty students if the \$270,000 collected from the taxpayers actually made it into his classroom.

### The Important Question

Over the years, I have learned that the most important question is *not*, "How much money is spent on education?", but rather, "What is the goal of the education that is being funded?"

There was quite a shock in America in 1983 when "A Nation at Risk," a special report on education, was released. It concluded, "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people.... If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."

There has been significant public hand-wringing since this report, and many others like it have exposed the failure of our modern schools. We are all embarrassed by or make fun of the fact that over 90% of the students produced in today's government schools cannot find Iraq on a world map. Every year there are calls for new standards, new techniques, new tests, better teachers and, of course, the loudest cries are for more money to help improve our schools. However, with all of this, there have been no significant academic improvements in the government schools in the past twenty years. Could it be that all of this "public outrage" is just so much cover to appease the poor taxpayers who pay for the government schools, allowing this system to produce just the type of students that it intends to produce (see Rom. 1:28-32)? Have we seriously pondered that today's secular humanists are just as dedicated to molding the next secular generation as our Christian forefathers were about passing along their love of God?

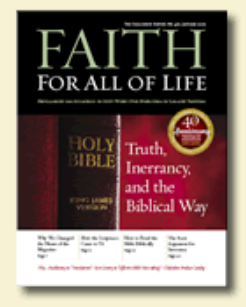
Perhaps we need to look no further than the shift in the definition of education over the years found in the modern Merriam-Webster's Dictionary:

Education is that act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge and of developing the powers of reasoning and judgment. The act or process of imparting or acquiring particular knowledge or skills, as for a profession.

Compare this modern definition with that found in Noah Webster's Dictionary of 1828:

Education is the bringing up, as a child; instruction; formation of manners. Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline, which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations. To give children a good education in manners, arts, and science, is important; to give them a religious education is indispensable, and an immense responsibility rests on parents and guardians who neglect these duties.

Christians have often been wrongly positioned in the important educational battles of



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the past few decades. My lovely bride Linda and I began our homeschool adventures with our six children when I discovered that my oldest daughter's sixth grade social studies textbook went so far in promoting the modern humanist worldview that it even taught that murder was relative in some situations. Certain textbooks selected for schools have outraged some Christian parents, and many Christian parents have strongly opposed the concept of "values clarification." Now to the extent that these educators are indoctrinating our young people with their secular humanist worldview, they need to be opposed, but the question is what are we as Christians suggesting as an alternative. In order to stop the wrong worldview from being taught in the schools have we perhaps suggested or even implied that no worldview should be taught in the schools? Have we implied or even advocated at times that schools should "just stick to the basics like reading, writing, and arithmetic"?

### **Luther's Contributions**

Martin Luther gave all Christians a strong warning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the Reformers struggled to establish the modern Christian culture that has benefited us. Luther said in 1537:

I am much afraid that schools will prove to be the gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place their child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not increasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt.

This proper understanding of education endured into the early years of our nation. Here is how Dr. Benjamin Rush, one of the signers of our Declaration of Independence put it:

In contemplating the political institutions of the United States, I lament that we waste so much time and money in punishing crimes, and take so little pains to prevent them. We profess to be republicans [believers in a republic] and yet we neglect the only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government; that is, the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity by means of the Bible.

Once again Christians must seriously consider what Dr. Rush is saying even though at first blush he might sound like a modern day liberal who wants more money spent on education than prisons and would have the educational establishment "brainwashing" young people with his worldview.

The truth is that Dr. Rush and Martin Luther could not be more on point for our modern situation. How can our government schools be a neutral place where our children only learn the basics when God clearly tells us in Proverbs that, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction"? A word search for "knowledge" has it coming up in at least 38 verses in the Book of Proverbs alone. I would commend these verses and others for study by parents who want to be serious about the education of their children.

### **Whose Responsibility?**

Ultimately it is not the government school teachers, the principals, or all those educational experts we have today (let alone the politicians!) who are responsible for the type of education that a young person receives. That responsibility falls fully and squarely on the shoulders of the parents with whom God has entrusted that child and the overseers in the church where God has placed that family (see Dt. 6:7). Parents must take this stewardship very seriously, asking whether the children God has entrusted to them are being properly instructed in the ways of God or are being cheated "through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men." The warning that Christ gave His disciples about children soberly reminds us just how seriously God takes the care of our children:

Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he

were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Mt. 18:2-6)

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