

Godless Public Education & Sin

by Reg Barrow

Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. (Luke 17:12)

In this newsletter we will attempt to answer three basic questions.¹

Is the present system of public education Godly or Godless?²

Can a Christian remain faithful to God and His law and still send his children to such a system or does this necessarily involve sin?

And why or why not?

The application (or general equity) of the principles enumerated here can often be applied to other areas of life also. Public schools have been singled out because, as the Earl of Athlone (Governor General of Canada from 1940-1946), said,

"To this day there exists in the world in all classes of society a veritable revolt against Divine Law, the Moral Law, which they strive to eliminate from the education of its youth and government of its nations. Education without religion sooner or later marches to its doom."³

Furthermore, Martin Luther has pointed out the extreme importance of this question, when he stated,

"I am 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 the youth."⁴

Also, there is no doubt that the "public schools have become the established church of secular society."⁵

Moreover, as evidenced by the words of our LORD in Luke 17:12 (above), this is not an issue to be taken lightly. "For a church or for parents," says Rushdoony, "to have no regard for the fact that their children are receiving a godless education is a mark of apostasy."⁶ Or, as Henry Van Til states,

"In the great spiritual warfare the forces of darkness are organized against the Lord and his anointed.

Any organization that claims to be neutral, as do the public schools and some labor organizations, is by that token denying Christ's claims of absolute lordship over all things. As such they are serving the cause of the antichrist. To deny this is either willful blindness or woeful ignorance of the devil's devices and the claims of Christ."⁷

I hope that the words offered herein will be enough to spark a prayerful meditation upon the holiness of God and obedience to His law regarding the education of your children.

What is Sin?

To serve God faithfully we must know the answer to the question: What is Sin?

To answer this question we will turn to what many consider one of the most useful literary documents ever produced, the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. Its simple, yet profound statement of biblical truth, given in answer to our question reads,

"Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God (1 John 3:4)."⁸

For the purpose of placing the public education system under the searchlight of the Word of God, this definition, coupled with another helpful exposition from the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, will prove most illuminating.

Question 105 of the Westminster Larger Catechism asks,

"What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?"

The answer reads in part,

"The sins forbidden in the first commandment, are, Atheism, in denying or not having a God, Idolatry, in having or worshipping more gods than one, or any with or instead of the true God... (Ps. 14:1; Eph. 2:12)."⁹

The first transgression of the first commandment, Atheism or "no Godism," with a capital "G", would be more than enough to bring a guilty verdict against almost all (if not all) public schools.

The public school's own documents, policies, textbooks, teachers and goals clearly attest to this fact.¹⁰ Almost a hundred years ago, Dr. A.A. Hodge of Princeton Seminary wrote,

"I am as sure as I am of the fact 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 antisocial nihilistic ethics, social and political, which this sinrent world has ever seen."¹¹

Most prophetic indeed!¹² The case has also been stated in this way:

"Obviously the schools are not Christian. Just as obviously they are not neutral. The scriptures say that the fear of the Lord is the chief part of knowledge; but the schools, by omitting all reference to God, give the pupils the notion that knowledge can be had apart from God. They teach in effect that God has no control of history, that there is no plan of events that God is working out, that God does not foreordain whatsoever comes to pass... the public schools are not, never were, can never be, neutral. Neutrality is impossible. Let one ask what neutrality can possibly mean when God is involved. How does God judge the school system which says to him, "O God, we neither deny nor assert thy existence; and O God, we neither obey nor disobey thy commands; we are strictly neutral."¹³

"The big lie of the public schools is that the God of the Bible is irrelevant. The textbooks never mention Him. Everyone assumes that children do not need to know anything about God, God's law, and God's Word in order to become educated people. This is Satan's own lie."¹⁴

These testimonies could be multiplied, but the point may be better illustrated by taking a look at your own situation and responsibility before God. To whomever you send your children (assuming you are not already home schooling), you are delegating your God-given authority (*in loco parentis*), as stewards of these precious little souls, to have them trained in accordance with the revealed will of God.

Whom then are you sending your children to?

Is it to those that love, honor, and obey the God of the Bible, recognizing His Word as the final authority over all areas of life?

Is it to those who understand that man's chief end is to glorify God?

Is it to those who worship God out of a clear conscience, sprinkled with the blood of Christ?

If you cannot answer a resounding yes to every one of these questions, it is time to seek the Lord in repentance and begin to rectify this situation.

That is, unless you can produce a Biblical mandate for sending your children to those who are the enemies of Christ and of His gospel.

Can you do this?

Moreover, this is all compounded in the case of those who understand covenant theology, have taken vows regarding membership in the local church, and/or have responded at household baptisms, pledging before God to do all in their power to aid the spiritual progress of the children in the covenant community.

This sin is doubly compounded in the case of ministers (elders) as they will "receive the greater judgement" (James 3:1) should they violate their vows of obedience to Christ and stumble the flock, by sending their own children to be taught by the "Moabites and Amorites" of the 20th century.

Soon to be Sheared Shepherds

Gary North, not known as one who pulls his punches, has summarized the situation beautifully:

"Those parents who care enough to get their children into their , the parents', schools, by financing those schools, will not be so ready to swallow secular humanism... They are paying for the future, and their vision concerns the future. The man who sends his children into the public school system is presentoriented, no matter how much he protests. The war against the enemy of Christ, secular humanism, will not be won through the leadership provided by presentoriented defenders of the government school system. The battle for Christian Reconstruction is manyfaceted, but there is a single "litmus test" to separate the shepherds from the soontobesheared sheep in this battle: their support , financial, familistic, and verbal , of the Christian day school movement. Anyone who fails this test may still be a regenerate sheep, but he should be recognized as one about to be sheared. If you choose to lead men away from humanism's shearing, rather than follow the flock into the shearing room, then start doing something to build up an independent Christian school... And if you can't put up with that, then start your own. But stay out of the camp of the soon to be sheared."¹⁵

Just in case there are those who remain unconvinced, I will leave you with one of the first arguments that helped me see the wisdom of the Christian (and home) school movement.

Suppose a "minister" was asked to teach your children's Sunday school class at the religious meeting house you attend. This "minister" denies the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and the plenary inspiration of the Bible.

Would you allow this man to teach your children or would you protest?

If you would protest, why would you do so?

Obviously, because to give your children over to an antichristian teacher is a violation of God's law.

Now, at what point does it become lawful before God to send your children to sit under the teaching of this same man at the state established "religious" meeting house down the road , called the public school? The only difference in instruction involving a change of location and time and the assumption of a fictitious neutrality.

Covenant Keeping

"I can see little consistency," stated J. Gresham Machen, "in a type of Christian activity which preaches the gospel on the street corners and and at the ends of earth, but neglects the children of the covenant by abandoning them to a cold and unbelieving secularism."¹⁶

The excuses for taking the short term "easy" road of public education are legion among Christians. They range from "I can offset the public school's influence by teaching my children at home between lunch and after school" (which only admits of guilt, while at the same time begging the question), to the always present "I don't have the time" or "I can't afford it" (though large mortgages, new cars, televisions, etc., are easily affordable).

Eternity will witness the damage that such a selfish and ungodly agenda produces.

Are you a covenant (law) keeper or a covenant (law) breaker when it comes to your children's education?

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FOOTNOTES:

1. A short note and some suggested reading on the related issue of the State and education. Though the family has the primary stewardship, in Scripture, of the children in regard to education, it does not automatically follow that the State has no place or interest at all. In fact, the character of the State, the purpose of its interest, and whether the normative or regulative principle apply here are all much more important primary questions that need to be answered. Some of these questions are answered in: *The Church of Christ* by James Bannerman (1869, reprinted by SWRB, 1991); *The Scottish Theory of Ecclesiastical Establishments* by George Smeaton (1875); and *A Free Disputation Against Pretended Liberty of Conscience...* by Samuel Rutherford (1649). Notwithstanding, when the State is against Christ and His law, it is usually best that it have as little as possible to do with education.

2. Without the one true and living God of Scripture they, of course, still have a god; it is not however the triune God of the Bible, but an idol of their own making (and ultimately Satan), there is no neutrality! Cf. Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction* (Crossway Books, 1990).

3. Ed Vanwoudenberg. *A Matter of Choice* (n.p., 1989), p. 93.

4. Cited in Christopher Klicka. *The Right Choice, The Incredible Failure of Public Education and the Rising Hope of Home Schooling, An Academic, Historical, Practical, and Legal Perspective* (Gresham, OR: Noble Publ., 1992), p. 88. This book is must reading for anyone interested in Christian education. The author is Senior Counsel of the Home School Legal Defense Association. Joining the HSLDA is also a very wise choice. Their address and phone number are given at the end of this newsletter.

5. Ivan Illish cited in Klicka, *The Right Choice*, p. 75.

6. R.J. Rushdoony. *God's Plan for Victory: The Meaning of Postmillennialism* (Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1980), p. 30.

7. H. Van Til. *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publ. Co., 1959), p. 209.

8. Answer to question 24 of the *Shorter Catechism in The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Scotland: Free Presbyterian Publications, [1648] reprinted 1994), p. 139.

9. Ibid., p. 187. A careful reading of this whole section of the *Larger Catechism* dealing with the moral law, as it pertains to the duty of man, is a highly profitable exercise of the "spiritual muscles", see questions 91-152.
10. Cf. R.J. Rushdoony. *The Messianic Character of American Education* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1960).
11. Cited in Klicka, *The Right Choice*, p. 45.
12. If you want to see how far some powerful people have literally fulfilled the words of Hodge in our day, see the video *The Guiding Hand: Inside Bill Clinton's Mysterious Outcome Based Education Laboratory* (Cleveland, OH: American Portrait Films, 1992). Marlin Maddoux (USA Radio Network) called this look at political brainwashing, aimed at youth through the education system, "the most frightening thing I have ever seen in my life." It will certainly encourage you not to take your freedom for granted.
13. Thoburn cited in *The Right Choice*, p. 92. Cf. Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen, *The Myth of Neutrality and Christian Education* (cassette or video, 1992).
14. Robert Thoburn. *The Children Trap , Biblical Principles for Education* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1986), p. 34.
15. Gary North. *Backwards Christian Soldiers* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1984), p. 141.
16. J. Gresham Machen, *Forward in Faith* (Chicago: National Union of Christian Schools, 1934).
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Other Reformation Resources:

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