

The State of State Education

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The President gives a "State of the Union" address, the Governor gives a "State of the State" address, and I wish to give you my "State of State Education" address. A pastor should be giving guidance to parents in knowing what is happening in today's schools. But first, here are a few examples of what others are saying.

❖ A number of significant books have been written that scourge contemporary American state education. The credentials of the authors and the titles of the books tell us a good part of their story. *Inside American Education: The Decline, the Deception, the Dogmas* (Thomas Sowell). *Public Education: An Autopsy* (Myron Lieberman). *Dumbing Us Down: the Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling* (John Gatto). The list goes on.

❖ The June 7, 1993, edition of *Forbes* magazine tells quite a story. *Forbes* referred to the National Education Association in its key article titled "The National Extortion Association?" That issue dealt with the fact that the NEA is using legislation to beat money out of the taxpayers for higher wages for teachers.

❖ The Pennsylvania Leadership Council published "The 1993 Report Card on Pennsylvania Public Education" as it graded Pennsylvania's public schools against the public schools of the other 49 states. Pennsylvania received an "A" in *Total Revenue per Pupil, Expenditures, Expenditures per Pupil, Average Teachers' Salaries, Rate of Increase of Teachers' Salaries, and Total Number of Teacher Strikes*. But Pennsylvania received a "D" in *Secondary School Dropout Rate and Attendance as Percentage of Enrollment*, and received an "F" in *Literacy, SAT Scores, and Decline in the Number of High School Graduates*. Nationwide, spending continues to rise and traditional measures of quality show decline.

❖ The education establishment is pouring millions of dollars into its public relations effort to ensure that all citizens view state education "correctly." They have persuaded many that it is unpatriotic to criticize the state education system. Yea, without it our whole society will collapse, is their message!

The state of state education is changing, but God's Word is unchanging. God is not influenced by all of those millions spent on P.R. I call on Christians to sharpen their skills at using God's Word to sniff out the differences between an education that is spiritually wholesome for our children and one that is not. As a guide, let me give this pastor's overview of present state education through an acrostic. This is the way things really are in the 1990's.

E DUCATION IS SEEN AS THE BUSINESS OF THE STATE. Most state education officials adhere to this principle as their policy (but shield it from public knowledge). Both socialism and humanism have an agenda with the state being supreme. State universities inculcate this idea throughout the teacher education courses. Education unions and leftist organizations like the People for the American Way reinforce it. The primary rights and responsibilities of parents are subverted. At the same time, from kindergarten through university, the student is guarded by the state from anything godly or Biblical. "Unenlightened" parents who wish their children to have Biblical teaching are told to do this on Sunday (and then the school through its teaching of relativism undercuts any Biblical philosophy that might have been accomplished).

DISCIPLINE HAS BEEN SEVERELY LIMITED, REDEFINED. The student has the right to balk, sulk, and disrupt; but he must not be inhibited, and he must not be embarrassed by confrontation or spanking. Absolutes of right and wrong are largely a thing of the past, replaced by modern thinking in defense of a child's self-esteem and self-determination. Talk to a retired teacher or one planning to retire soon. Yes, the school boards want them out early so as to save on sky-rocketing costs for salaries and tenure, but there is another reason. At my last high school reunion one of my former teachers gave the answer when she said, "I would not go back to teaching because I'd get kicked out for declaring my right to have order in my classroom."

UNDERMINING OF EXCELLENCE HAS RAVAGED THE SYSTEM. Modern education theories teach that parents and educators should avoid embarrassment to the student with lower achievement -- at all cost; receiving a bad grade would be hard on a student's self-esteem. These points have a significant tie-in with the OBE philosophies (by their different modern education names) that have been sweeping state education with wave after wave of promised reform. Some are even disheartened when a school requires excellence in order to receive honor. Some parents neglect their responsibilities. At the student level, there is a distinct growing dislike among peers for the excellent student. The typical state school peer group considers it cute, groovy, and cool to be mediocre, and to be excellent is to be the Nerd. (Even worse is to be godly.)

CURRICULUM IS AN INCREASING DANGER. Modern curriculum sneaks in socialistic orientation and pushes out Christian-American heritage. It is common fare for children to be taught that early American Christians were racists and greedy. It is most doubtful that Wilberforce, Wesley, Livingstone, and Blackstone will ever be given credit for using their minds, voices and energies for great works for mankind, including the defeat of slavery. At the same time, the education establishment with its own agenda has more ways to fool conscientious parents than parents can create defenses. Humanism, foreign to the Scriptures, is interlaced and integrated so as to be subtle.

ASSOCIATIONS ARE OFTEN FORCED UPON STUDENTS. Far from the community schools of past decades where families knew each other, today's system brings students from diverse and unknown families into a united school environment. At the same time, the percentage of society that conscientiously follows God's Word has diminished. No longer can it be said that children and youth need only avoid company with those "bad kids," for the world's system (spiritual) has long since taken over even the nicest cities, suburbs, and rural communities -- and the state education system. With "political correctness" being the norm, students are expected to be part of the common community wherein all are equal and all are respected. Far from exposing students to the things that are "pure..., just..., of good report...", elementary students face exposure to this world's relativism and humanism. Most exposure is subtle, but the stench of the world's system is more obvious with secondary students as they get exposed to the advice of secular guidance counselors, teachers, and the social peer group. "Parental taboos" are easily skirted as students are assigned to classroom and school activities and projects. There is one exception, for one does not hear much of students being rebuked if they speak disparagingly of (or act against) deeply religious students. That form of bigotry is socially accepted.

TEACHERS ARE A DIRECT REFLECTION OF THE SYSTEM. Teachers are major shapers of the student's inner life. Those who taught my generation have long ago left the system. Now the next generation, still rather conservative as a lot, have had their fill of the system and are getting out. They had an inclination toward a conservative education with good academics, high behavior and character expectations, and respect for parental wishes. The new breed of teachers is noted for being a different lot. The state today looks only for a person carrying a piece of paper from the state that says "teacher." The state cannot concern itself if the teacher is a role model for spiritual evil. Today, it is the teacher's right to be anything he wishes to be, so who would suspicion his intent to influence or hurt the children? But if you want excitement, watch what a typical state school board does with an application

from a professional who lives a dedicated Christian life on and off the job!

I**NDOCTRINATION INCLUDES THE NEW WORLD ORDER.** One time, not long ago, we learned geography, problems of democracy, and world history. If the surveys are true, these are not things modern state school students understand well. Today the students are well taught in pluralism, world peace, and a United Nations agenda. Communists are made to look like men interested in world peace. ("They've changed!") National pride is passé and national constitutions must be replaced with world order and global unity, no matter what personal liberty is sacrificed.

O**UTCOME-BASED EDUCATION (BY ONE NAME OR ANOTHER) IS "IN."** It is the latest of many "reforms" that have been promised. Many citizens are unaware that traditional OBE has been in their neighborhood state schools for several years, just disguised by the use of traditional-looking texts and procedures. Federal and state governments press forward with transitional OBE. Now we are going to have more money poured into education until students get their lessons "right." If they do not agree with the state curriculum, they are not going to get their diploma. Some of the less advanced local districts are having their submissions returned by state officials who demand that revisions be made to fit into the state requirements -- or else. And if you have been appalled by the affective goals listed in the current OBE Regulations, just wait until full-blown OBE, the transformational model, is implemented in the state schools! (Do not be surprised when "OBE" and other modern "reforms" that are not centered in God and true basic education with parental control are "killed" by the politicians. They keep developing another "reform" about every four to six years. But they keep avoiding the real solutions.)

N**EUTRALISM (SO CALLED) IS HAVING ITS EFFECTS.** Look at education, religion, crime, professional ethics, and many other aspects of society. To effectively undermine a Biblical philosophy of life, a teacher does not have to directly challenge a Biblical assertion. He only needs to say, "Well, it is o.k. for you to choose that option." He only needs to undermine the student's idea that there are absolutes, that there is truth, that there is right and wrong. To be "neutral" is to embrace relativism (situation ethics included). Is it any wonder that many parents describe their teenager as a "good kid" because he has "chosen" to stay away from symptoms of worldly living such as drugs, sex, booze, etc., while staying within home and church rules? But being steeped in neutralism/relativism, they do not personally hold to a thoroughly Biblical system of values and philosophies. They fit into a situation ethics society perfectly. They have been taught well.

As to the state of state education, it is astounding to me that many Christians are among the most adamant supporters of the current system. If even secular conservatives can see problems clearly, why should not a student of the Scriptures be able to see the principles that are being violated? Are we out of touch with what is happening today in the state education system of the land? Have we missed the fact that present day state schools are not bastions of Biblical evangelism as local public schools once were? Have we lost track of time, thinking that we are still living in the 1950's when academics were high, texts were wholesome, teachers were good examples as church-going souls, and good parents and good local school boards were really in charge?

We are now living in the 1990's. We must look at the world as it really is. As to enrolling a Christian student in the state schools of the 1990's, I must ask some questions to any father or mother under my spiritual watchcare. I will start with these. Would you send your child to a tavern for his lunch? Would you send him to a San Francisco bathhouse for his personal hygiene? Would you send him to Vegas for instruction in budgeting? Would you house him in a co-ed college dorm to prepare for married life? We would all say, "No, this is not the way to raise a child to develop convictions for God."

For what reason would a Christian parent, a 1990's Christian parent, send his child to this system? For

academics? (*The elite are not doing badly in the honors classes, but is that the norm?*) For sports? (*How important is that in eternity?*) To be a missionary? (*Do spiritual battle, even against adults, without preparation?*) To "fit in?" (*For whose approval?*) For saving money? (*At what price?*) Because "my school" isn't as bad as others? (*By whose calculations?*)

No, as a pastor, considering the state of state education, I cannot recommend that any Christian parent enroll his child in the state schools of the 1990's. Use Christian education.

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