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by

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EDUCATION

- and -

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

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EDUCATION AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Christians today must awaken to the fact that the foundation faith of American education no longer recognizes the necessity of a Biblical basis. This change in the educational climate in the classrooms of our country is undermining the influence of home and church in a tragic and subtle fashion. The "scientific method" is presented in a manner to destroy faith. Behavioristic psychology teaches that man is not responsible for his actions; and a belief in the inherent goodness of man so pervades both textbook and classroom that mention of the necessity of salvation is regarded as the mystical mouthing of a frenetic fanatic. Christian parents should know that the educational leaders of our land have gone on record as opposed to giving God and religion any place in public school education today.

The Christian Emphasis in American Education

The foundation of education in America was laid in schools that not only read the Bible, but also taught their pupils the supreme importance of its message. For two hundred years American schools were conducted on the assumption that all truth must be rightly related to the Truth as revealed in God's Word.

Ellwood P. Cubberley, our foremost educational historian reports:

The most prominent characteristic of all the early colonial schooling was the predominance of the religious purpose in instruction. One learned to read chiefly to be able to read the Catechism and the Bible and to know the will of the Heavenly Father. There was scarcely any other purpose in the maintenance of elementary schools. In Connecticut Colony the law required that the pupils were to be made in some measure competent to understand the main grounds and principles of Christian Religion necessary to salvation, 'and 'to learn some orthodox catechism.' Although this insistence on the religious element was more prominent in Calvinistic New England than in the Colonies to the South, everywhere during the early colonial period the religious purpose was dominant.¹

¹Ellwood P. Cubberley, Public Education in the United States (Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1947), p. 41

This dominant purpose of our first schools was evidenced in the textbooks that they used. For the first fifty years the Bible was the only textbook. In 1690 The New England Primer was published. Drawing heavily from Scripture texts, it also contained both the Westminster Catechism and John Cotton's Spiritual Milk for American Babes. It has been said that "it taught millions to read, and not one to sin." This remarkable textbook was the chief school and reading book for the next century and a quarter, and was widely used for an additional twenty-five years (to 1840).

When The New England Primer yielded its place as the most widely used textbook it was succeeded by the notable McGuffey's Readers, which were likewise saturated with the direct instruction of Scripture and moral principles drawn from the Bible. It was in 1836 that Wm. Holmes McGuffey began the publication of this remarkable series of readers that exerted a tremendous influence on the mind of the American school boy until the end of the nineteenth century. Every page of McGuffey's Readers reflects the conviction of their editor that, "The Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus are not only basic but plenary."¹ These textbooks, widely used until 1900, maintained the God-centered atmosphere of the classroom and directly and indirectly taught all school children that all truth is of God.

Thus for 280 of the 335 years of our history the Bible was not only sidely read in our schools, but its teaching also dominated the content of our most widely used textbooks.

During this period in American education, the central position of the Bible and its truths established an atmosphere that made it natural to relate all truth to the Truth. The order of mathematics and the sciences was a reflection of Divine order; the very existence of man was the result of the direct creative act of God; the record of history was interpreted in the light of Divine providence in the affairs of men; the highest use of skills and knowledge was in the service of God and one's fellow man; and finally, all of life was a stewardship for which we must finally give account in accordance with certain eternal principles given to us by God. In brief, God has been the unifying, integrating, and permeating fact during the greater part of the history of American education.

Secularizing American Education

Although American education was predominantly God-centered throughout the nineteenth century, we find that a movement against this all-embracing concept of truth began to develop about 1850. It was Horace Mann, Secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education, who pioneered in the movement to secularize American education.

¹Minnick, Harvey C., Wm. H. McGuffey and His Readers (American Book Company, 1936), p. 89

The objective of those who wished to secularize the American school was to remove all spiritual content from classroom instruction. It was held that the schools should limit themselves to secular instruction, i.e., instruction limited to subjects of this present temporal world. This move was not originally directed against the Bible as such, for it contains much which commends itself to many moral men. The special creation of man, his sinful nature, and the necessity of supernatural deliverance from sin are spiritual teachings, which, said the secularists, should not be taught in the public schools to which all parents of all faiths (and none) are required to send their children.

There was much that commended secularized education to Horace Mann. A Unitarian by conviction, Mann whole-heartedly accepted the doctrine of "The Gradual Advancement of the Human Species in Dignity and Happiness," the title of his oration upon his graduation from Brown in 1819. By promoting the idea that these spiritual teachings be removed from the school program, Mann laid the foundation for a wall that now stands so high that many of his unfortunate heirs have never realized that there are supernatural truths in a world of the spirit.

The "New Paganism" - A moment's reflection will establish the realization that if the public schools must avoid all things that any parent regards as spiritual, the spiritual impact of our public schools will be determined by the one who believes the least. (This very warning was sounded by Dr. A. A. Hodge of Princeton Seminary.) The implications of this aspect of secularization did not become frightening until "the new Paganism" (after World War I) "lifted its battle cry against the whole triumvirate of the Christian faith -- its God, its creed and its morality. It repudiates not only the distinctive doctrines of Christianity, but it attacks the very idea of a God of any kind."¹ As we review the development of secular education on this foundation, its threat to Christianity will become crystal clear.

At this point it is in order to clarify the meaning of "secular" as used in current educational discussions. Simply stated, it means "without God." It is important to note that the definition of atheism is "no God." Secular education, that is education without God, will soon produce a generation that ignores or denies God. This is now happening before our eyes.

Textbook Content - This secular trend developed along two lines. First, the use and influence of the Bible in the school room and in textbooks was gradually reduced. A survey that was made several years ago of the readers used in Massachusetts schools in 1800 revealed that spiritual and moral lessons accounted for 99% of the content. By 1875 the spiritual and moral content of the readers had been reduced to 50%, and as of 1946, less than 1% of the material in the readers used in the public schools of Massachusetts had any moral or spiritual content. These figures typify the trend in the content of American textbooks.

¹Dr. Biedorwolf, as quoted by Frederick P. Wood in Thinking Youth (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1937), p. 25.

This textbook trend furthered a companion trend in classroom instruction. Pupils studied the universe and the world we live in with no reference to the Creator; they studied the history of prime ministers and potentates with no mention of the King of Kings; they were taught that honesty is the best policy, implying that human behavior set the standard, with no reference to God's eternal standard.

Teacher Training - The second line of development to propagate secularized education was through the teacher training schools that were originated by Horace Mann. Here the rising young teachers were trained for the classroom with no indication that spiritual values were to be mentioned. As the atheistic philosophy of the new Paganism came to dominate the thinking of professors of education, Biblical faith was sneered at as superstition, and human intellect under the control of the scientific method was enthroned. Thus, in the classroom and in the training school, the erosion of secularism increasingly diminished the relation between the temporal and the eternal. Today the teaching that the natural takes on meaning only through the supernatural is rarely heard in the classroom.

Testimony to the existence of this gap is recorded in the Harvard report, "General Education in a Free Society," when in 1945 it said, "The conviction that Christianity gives meaning and ultimate unity to all parts of the curriculum is not now . . . a practicable source of intellectual unity."¹

Communist Influence in American Education

The secularizing of American education was tremendously accelerated during the nineteen-thirties when many of our leading educators visited Communist Russia. Among these visitors were John Dewey, William Kilpatrick, George Counts, Harold Rugg, and Boyd Bode.

Key Principles of Communism and American Education - These educators saw a society based on three principles:

1. Man's intellect is the supreme force in the world. Science is supreme. In other words, "There is no God."
2. Man is an animal; the product of evolutionary forces. Since there is no God, obviously man is not a special creation.
3. Man is completely the product of his environment. By controlling the surroundings it is possible to create a new man. Economic determinism, as this is called, denies spiritual forces and denies the necessity of supernatural intervention to make man a "new creation."

These educators saw in Russian Communism a society operating on the same principles upon which their own educational philosophy and practice was built. Inspired by what they saw; encouraged by the friendly relations that our government was promoting with Russia; and, emboldened by

¹General Education in a Free Society. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1945), p. 39.

their success in secular indoctrination they poured forth a flood of articles, pamphlets, and books extolling both the educational and governmental operation of the Soviet system.

George S. Counts produced a pamphlet, "Dare the School Build a New Social Order?" Harold Rugg wrote "Social Reconstruction through Education" and "Preface to a Theory for the New Individualism." In addition, Rugg prepared a series of social studies textbooks for elementary and high school use that so belittled the American system and extolled the Communist order that many communities cleaned them out of their schools when concerned citizens became aware of their contents. A third member of this group, William Heard Kilpatrick, wrote on similar themes when he penned, "Education to Help the New Deal" and "How Shall We Think about Religion?"

"Godless Education Is the Root of Communism" - It is interesting to note that when Communism subsequently revealed its utter ruthlessness, these men, their colleagues, and successors denounced Communist techniques, yet never have they denounced the basic philosophy of Communism. American secular education in its philosophy and psychology is in basic agreement with the underlying principles of Communism. Its differences are only in techniques.

Dr. Fred Schwarz, one of the best informed evangelical Christian students of Communism, has stated that Godless education is the root of Communism." No wonder the Communists continue confidently to predict the conquest of the United States. If the present trend continues they will do it without firing a shot.

With John Dewey a philosopher-captain, William Kilpatrick as interpreter-lieutenant, and a corps of loyal associates, the movement to take God out of American education has preceeded at an ever accelerating rate. For almost forty years students of education (many of them now leaders) have been taught a humanist philosophy and a behavioristic psychology based on the three above mentioned principles. With the passing years the position has changed only in that the humanist philosophy has become materialistic, while behavioristic psychology has expended its S - R relationship to a "field" concept, both of which omit God from their reasoning.

Modern Thought Versus Christian Faith

What meaning lies behind the terms "Humanist philosophy" and "behavioristic psychology"? We would state them bluntly and show how they deny the principles of the Christian faith:

Humanist Philosophy

Man is supreme
Man evolved
Man is an animal
Man is the measure
Man is inherently good

There is no God
There was no creation
He has no soul
There is no Eternal Truth
He has no need of a Saviour

Behavioristic Psychology

Common practice sets the standard
Men are just anti-social
Maladjustment explains conduct
Bad environment is to blame

There is no absolute morality
They are not sinners
No such thing as guilt
Man is not responsible

It should be noted that the proponents of these views do not often speak negative terms. They center their teaching on the positive ideas above and the resulting picture is so beguiling that many are deceived thereby. The "Scientific method" is their technique; the supremacy of human intellect is their faith; and democracy is their religion. Christians should know that these ideas permeate our teacher-training institutions and are carried into classrooms and textbooks by an alarmingly high percentage of our public school teachers. Christians should also be aware of the fact that when the training of their children is carried on in an atmosphere saturated with this philosophy, their ability to discern the application of God's Word to their lives is tragically undermined.

Dr. C. C. Morrison, former editor of the Christian Century made this observation more than ten years ago, "The public schools are creating a secular mentality faster than the Church can Christianize it." Current confirmation of this observation is at hand:

the words right, morals, and ethics are almost wholly absent from the working vocabulary of this generation. Their lips would hardly know how to frame and utter these words: they are as foreign a speech as Swahili -- this is not the silence of reaction -- this is the silence of absence. The words and ideas have absolutely no meaning for them.¹

Is There Any Hope?

There are many who will suggest that the situation is not as dark as pictured here. We are told:

1. That America is religion conscious today as never before with church memberships at an all-time high. It is interesting to note that in 1800 when it is estimated less than 10% of our population was church affiliated, instruction in our schools was rich in spiritual content. In 1850, with a church membership estimated at 16% of our population there was less spiritual emphasis though it still strongly permeated American education.² In 1955 with 60% of our population listed on some church roll we must bootleg spiritual instruction into our public schools! If the majority of the people of our land think seriously enough

¹Dr. Henry P. Van Dusen, president of Union Theological Seminary, Newsweek, (January 23, 1956), p. 58.

²William W. Sweet, "The Protestant Churches," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 256, (March, 1948), p. 50.

of God to join a church, why is He denied access to our classrooms? Truly we are seeing scripture fulfilled as men have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof.

2. That the majority of our states have legislation that permits or requires daily Bible reading. While we are thankful for every legislative influence that strengthens the spiritual impact in our public schools, we need to realize the effect of a recent Supreme Court decision. In the McCollum case, the Court raised such a cloud of doubt concerning the place of religious training in connection with public school operation that many local school boards have retreated from the position secured for them by state law lest they be found in conflict with the Supreme Court decision which now stands as the law of the land. Impressed by this fact, one observer stated, "There are only two countries in the world in which it is forbidden by law to teach the Bible in the public schools, the United States and Russia"!!
3. That many fine, faithful Christians teach and work in our public schools. For the presence of Christian men and women on the teaching staffs of our public school systems we are profoundly grateful. They are serving their function as "the salt of the earth" in delaying the deadening effect of the secular trend that will put God completely out of the public schools. The realization of this trend in education will give new point to their Christian service there.

We would point out to Christian educators and laymen alike that the trend in public education is being determined by the professional educators and unbelieving agitators. We use the term, "professional educators," to describe those whose primary responsibilities in education are outside the classroom where children are taught, professors in schools of education, executive secretaries of educational organizations, and various governmental employees concerned with education but not teaching. They might prefer to be called "the advance guard of educational thinkers."

These professional educators determined over twenty years ago that "God must go." The atheistic character of their philosophy has been clearly stated and is matter of record. Now let us turn to the official records of the two most important conferences concerning education in the last five years to see the clear and direct evidence that in the minds of the professional educators the matter is settled. In their thinking American public education is to be completely secularized. The Bible, God, and religious instruction are to be completely barred from the public schools. Our public education is to be Godless.

"Unalterably Opposed." In 1950 the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth was held in Washington, D. C. Its theme was "Furthering Healthy Personality Development."

At this conference considerable mention was made of the part that spiritual values and training have in the developing of healthy personality in our children and youth. In his welcome to the conferees

President Truman spoke of the importance of spiritual values in developing a healthy personality. Practically every speaker made mention of the importance of spiritual values in this endeavor, and one of the speakers, a clergyman, Dr. George A. Buttrick, spoke on the subject "God, Children, and the Present World." The platform adopted by the delegates began with these words, "Believing in the primacy of spiritual values, democratic practice, and the dignity and worth of every human being . . ."¹ (Italics ours) There were three panel-discussion groups dealing directly with spiritual factors in the training of children and youth, and a number of other groups made specific mention of the importance of these values. Certainly, after this recognition of these values one would expect some action to support spiritual training in our schools.

In contrast to these pious pronouncements, note the official action of this 1950 Conference. Sixty-seven recommendations were presented as the conclusions of the Conference. Only two of them dealt with spiritual values whose primacy had been acknowledged in the conference platform! One of these (#24) was a recommendation for new organizational emphases on the part of religious groups, and the other (#23) concerned our public schools. Let Recommendation 23 speak for itself:

That, recognizing that knowledge and understanding of religious and ethical concepts are essential to the development of spiritual values and that nothing is of greater importance to the moral and spiritual life of our nation than the work of organized religion, we nevertheless strongly affirm the principle of separation of church and state which has been the keystone of our American democracy, and declare ourselves unalterably opposed to the use of public schools, directly or indirectly, for the religious educational purposes.²

Christian citizen, remember that this is the official, formal, considered recommendation of two thousand national leaders of all phases of work with, and study of, our children and youth. Remember that this recommendation is made to a public school system largely staffed by educators committed to a secular (life without God) view of instruction. Then add this to the facts that have been brought to our attention and determine for yourself the trend in education.

At least one observer recorded his surprised reaction in the official record. Carlos Luis Mancini was the spokesman for the three hundred foreign observers at this conference. In one of the closing addresses of the Conference he said,

Lastly, (to develop personal security) we have to found our society on the existence and presence of a real God, whose

¹Proceedings of the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, p. 10

²Ibid., p. 32

providence presides over the national and international life. (Incidentally, it seems to me personally, to be inconsistent and contradictory if on the one hand we proclaim God's existence and supremacy and on the other hand we close the schools to God's entrance, thus denying the children the right to relate God to their intellectual activities and their everyday life.)¹

(Italics are ours). This is the message of a foreign observer to a conference in Christian America!

"The Conclusion is Confirmed." However, this is not all. Five years after the Midcentury Conference, the 1955 White House Conference on Education convened. This was the first White House Conference to deal directly with the problem of education. (This, incidently, gives evidence of the trend to centralization in education which should be of interest to every Christian citizen.) One million dollars was allocated by the federal government to finance forty-eight state conferences on education, and over five hundred thousand people participated in some local or preliminary conferences on education. They gathered to discuss six questions concerning education in our land today. There were:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. GOALS | 4. TEACHERS |
| 2. ORGANIZATION | 5. FINANCE |
| 3. SCHOOL PLANT | 6. PUBLIC RELATIONS |

From this listing of the issues confronting the public schools today it is obvious that only one of them even provided the opportunity to discuss the place of religious and spiritual values. The discussions on the question of GOALS were consolidated by Dr. Wm. G. Carr, long-time professional leader (Executive Secretary) of the outstanding organization of professional educators (National Education Association) and Dr. Adam S. Bennion, Utah business executive and educational leader. Their report listed fourteen goals. Not one of these goals refers to spiritual or religious instruction in the public school program! Nor was this added when the final report for the Conference was prepared by Dr. Edgar Fuller and Dr. Pearl Wanamaker, two more professional educators.

As far as the action of the professional educators and interested laymen is concerned it is evident that they conducted the 1955 Conference in complete accordance with the recommendation of the 1950 Conference. When one views the actions of these two key conferences in the light of the trend in education to this time, it does not seem unreasonable to state that our professional educators have committed the educational profession to a secular (no God) view of life and from this to predict that within the next generation the God-denying virus of secularism will spread from our educational leaders through the great body of our classroom teachers.

The Voice of the People is Heard. While the professional educators are the spokesmen for this trend, reports from across the country clearly indicate that this situation reflects the will of the people. The Attorney-

¹Carlos Luis Mancini, Proceedings of the Midcentury Conference on Children and Youth, p. 89

General of California has ruled that the Bible is a sectarian book and as such he advises that it not be used for moral or spiritual instruction in public schools. This is apparently the will of the people, for bills designed to permit Bible reading in the public schools have not even gotten out of committee when submitted to the State Legislature for each of the past three years !!!

On the other side of the continent the New York City Board of Education has encountered opposition to spiritual instruction in the public schools. In the Fall of 1955 attention was directed to a bulletin of the New York City Board of Education, "Curriculum Development in the Elementary Schools." In the introduction it states: "Belief in God and the place of religion in the life of the child are essential factors underlying the public school program." When this statement was made known, a wave of protest spread. Jewish groups; the United Parents Association, representing 350,000 city parents; and the Society for Ethical Culture; all objected to this simple statement. Add these situations to the present attitude of professional educators and the trend in education is even more clearly discernible.

What Can We Do?

The Christian attack on this trend in education must be efficient, persistent, and dramatic. To move in this three-fold attack every Christian must determine which of the following responsibilities God would have him support or assume.

To be efficient the cause requires Christian scholars and teachers. Christian scholars must respond to the challenge to write the textbooks and train teachers in all that harmonizes with the revealed truth of God's Word. Many Christian teachers are needed in the classrooms and administrative positions in our public schools to serve as lights in a critical and needy area of our society. Many other Christian teachers will be called to the sacrificial service, exacting responsibilities, and the high challenge of training soldiers for the Lord in the Christian schools that are springing up on every hand.

A persistent attack requires that Christian parents and pastors be ever alert to the developments within local school systems. Some school systems have not been drastically invaded by the views of the atheistic philosophers of our educational system. As Christians maintain an awareness of textbook content and curriculum changes they will be enabled to resist the efforts of those who oppose God and deny His truth.

The dramatic phase of our attack is launched when Christian parents establish Christian schools to protect the eternal welfare of their children. Our children are not equipped by training or experience to withstand this subtle undermining of the Christian faith. The social pressures of the life of the school which dares not admit God to its program are tremendous forces driving our children away from their Christian heritage. Because of this, parents in increasing numbers are taking direct and drastic action and are starting church-related or parent-supported Christian schools.

The phenomenal increase of such schools over the past five years indicates that a rapidly increasing group of Christians is convinced that this is the most effective phase of the attack. Pastors and parents who recognize the importance of the united impact of home, church, and school have enlisted the aid of the Christian school to capture and hold young people for Christ and the church.

As the United States becomes increasingly pagan in its practices, as the world persistently pounds at the portals of our churches, many who are concerned for purity of faith and practice in both pulpit and pew are convinced that the Christian school is God's answer for such a time as this. Since it has proved its effectiveness in supporting missionary advance, let us turn to the Christian school in this hour of crisis to prepare a militant body of believers who will support the cause of Christ and His Church.

