

What Our Nation's Founding Fathers Can Teach Us About the Shocking State of Today's Educational System

In his excellent 1 and 2 Kings commentary, Peter J. Leithart refers to *The Wisdom Paradox*, Elkhonon Goldberg's fascinating book on aging and the brain:

"We humans are spared the hardship of discovering the world from scratch. Instead, we benefit from the incremental effect of knowledge accumulated gradually by society through millennia. This knowledge is stored and communicated through various cultural devices in symbolic form and is transmitted from generation to generation. Access to this knowledge automatically empowers the cognition of every individual member of human society by making it privy to society's cumulative, collective wisdom. If wisdom is defined as the availability of a rich repertoire of patterns enabling us to recognize new situations and new problems as familiar, then we truly are a wise species."

Imagine, asserts nonagenarian Dr. Bruce K. Waltke, America's foremost living authority on Old Testament wisdom literature, in *Proverbs*: "If the Lord with wisdom as his tool accomplished the wonders of the various phases of creation—the immeasurable weights of wind and of the sea, the trackless ways of lightning, and the complexities of the ecology—[that is] setting the earth on its foundations by splitting the primeval waters and setting the heavens in their appointed place and watering the earth with dew from its clouds—think what his revealed wisdom will do for those who find it."

Hence, the tragedy of the forfeiture of America's Judeo-

Christian heritage and biblically based culture as framed and devised by the founders through the 17th and 18th centuries, a dramatic event resulting in great loss and misfortune.

You may recall American Founder Fisher Ames' (1758-1808) evaluation of public schools in 1789: "We have a dangerous trend beginning to take place in our education. We're starting to put more and more textbooks into our schools. We've become accustomed to putting little books into the hands of children, containing fables and moral lessons. We're spending less time in the classroom on the Bible, which should be the principal text in our schools." It's worth noting that the Honorable Fisher Ames was co-author of the First Amendment to the Constitution.

The reason America's founders took such an unequivocal position on biblically based education was so "that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God" (Deut. 12:28).

Jewish Hebrew scholar Dr. Michael V. Fox prefaces his comments on Proverbs 4 with biblical instruction: "The essence of paternal education, oral and written, lies in the son's 'incorporating the character of the father'. This must happen from generation to generation. The concept of transmission of wisdom from father to son ..."

Proverbs 4:1-9:

- 1. Listen, sons, to a father's instruction, and pay attention [and be willing to learn] knowledge that gives insight.*
- 2. Because I give to you a good education, do not leave my teaching.*
- 3. When I was a son to my father [King David], still tender, and cherished by my mother [Bathsheba],*

4. *then he taught me and said to me: Let your heart take hold of my words, keep my commands and live.*

5. *Get [Heb. 'buy', 'purchase' – regardless of the price] wisdom! Get insight [Heb. 'masterful skill', 'understanding', 'expertise']! Do not forget and do not turn aside from the words of my mouth! [British Old Testament Biblical scholar Derek Kidner (1913-2008) speaks to wisdom's easy access for the true seeker, "What wisdom takes is not brains or opportunity, but a decision. Do you want it? Come and get it."]*

6. *Do not forsake her [Wisdom], and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. ["God's protection," writes Dr. Fox, "is not a reward extraneous to the knowledge, but rather a consequence intrinsic to it."]*

7. *The beginning [Heb. "starting point," "first principle," "chief thing"] of wisdom is, get wisdom! In exchange for all your acquisitions, get insight.*

8. *Cherish her, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. [The byproduct of exalting wisdom is that she promotes one to high station, societal status and authority.]*

9. *She will bestow a garland to grace your head; a splendid crown she will give to you.*

The essence of early American education was its emphasis on the inner man; that is, the development of virtue in the life of the nation's youth. Since true knowledge emanates from "fear of the Lord" (Prov. 1:7), the early founders' main priority comprised the shaping of adolescent biblical character.

With the deplorable condition of public education and the profane coarseness of contemporary culture, America is very

close to the point where the most extensive reform in political history becomes imperative. If ignored or disregarded, sacrilegious secularism will extinguish “the light set on a hill,” before long to be followed by the stamping out of freedom. As it says in Proverbs 15:29: “The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.”

It is foolish to take liberty for granted. If the hundred-centuries clock of civilization is compressed to a single hour, America’s freedom and republic appear only in the last minute or so before midnight, “so to take it as the norm is folly” (Os Guinness, *A Free People’s Suicide*).

With politics taking place downstream from culture and with the founders’ notion in mind that good government and morality are intrinsically connected, it is of critical importance to thwart and impede “the sons of this world [who are] wiser in their own generation than the sons of light” (Luke 16:8). What today is called “education” is the woeful opposite of the founders’ model and acts as a vile stench in God’s nostrils.

When was the last time America’s youth were educated in God’s priorities? “There are six [abominations] the Lord hates [and brings consequences], no, seven things he detests: haughty eyes [a proud look, pompous, arrogant] a lying tongue [everyday lies about other people], hands that kill the innocent [intentional killing, abortion], a heart that plots evil [Heb. calculate, conceive, invent], feet that race to do wrong, a false witness who pours out lies, a person who sows discord in a family” (Prov. 6:16-19, NLT).

“No vice stands in sharper opposition to wisdom and fear of God than pride” (Waltke, *Proverbs*).

Spiritual wisdom belongs to a different category of value and cannot be acquired in present-day education, with its emphasis on perversity and profanity. Preteen girls are taught that the

most perverse sexual activities are like saying, "I like you." Boys are kept ignorant of the two temptations awaiting them: easy sex and easy money.

Contemporary secular education imbues today's youth with a "shoddy moral character, prone to wickedness and simple nastiness, and devoid of good sense and moral compunctions" (Fox, *Proverbs*).

If both reform of the culture and spiritual resurrection are to occur in America, idolatrous public education will have to be purged of religious secularists. Secularism's liturgical experiment over the last century and the establishment of the National Education Association—and its rampant secularization of America—must be reversed and control of education returned to the states. Reform will follow the type of King Josiah's cultural reform found in 2 Kings 23, which "marked a transition from temple-based Judaism to a Torah-based Judaism" (Leithart, *1 and 2 Kings Commentary*).

Gideons and Rahabs are beginning to stand. {eoa}

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