

Revolution Through Routinization
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Let me thank you one and all for this opportunity to join in our annual tribute to the sacrificial labors of Generals Robert E. Lee and Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson. Carl Ford’s invitation to speak came as surprise since others are more versed in the battlefield tactics and biographies of these great leaders of the Confederacy than your speaker.

Nevertheless, let us this evening briefly consider the Unitarian and socialist revolution in education which General Lee resisted as the President of Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) in Lexington, VA after his surrender at Appomattox. Under this public school system, education has now been reduced to a boring bureaucratic routine whose curriculum excludes the Bible. This discussion of routinization in education is perforce incomplete. But, it is hoped that these remarks will encourage us to seek out the old paths of education that Generals Lee and Jackson followed. Their vision of truly Christian education is even more needed in our day of impersonal, electronic media.

Government-sponsored education in America is clearly in big trouble within and without. Parents, teachers, students and tax payers are all frustrated as they grapple with the faceless bureaucracy public schools have become. Government funding of education has soared to astronomical half-a-trillion dollar heights. Yet, we still produce a horde of English-challenged graduates with poor math skills. Further, schools under bureaucratic routine, but devoid of religion, have mutated into “attendance centers.” Our schools now must cope with dropouts, delinquency, drugs and metal detectors.

Such a disastrous outcome contrasts sharply with Horace Mann’s nineteenth century vision for “common” schools. He viewed common schools as a social institution for the mankind’s betterment. Mann was the Unitarian politician responsible for resurgence of Massachusetts’ public schools at the expense of private schools. He believed them to be man’s greatest invention. “Let the common school be expanded to its capabilities, be worked with the *efficiency* of which it is susceptible, and nine-tenths of the crimes in the penal code would become obsolete: . . . men would walk more safely by day: every pillow would be more inviolable by night: property, life and character held by a stronger tenure: all rational hopes respecting the future brightened” (As quoted in Is Public Education Necessary?)

Mann’s political acumen was critical in rearing up a secular, public school system in New England. His fragile coalition in 1837 was composed of Unitarians, Socialists and conservative Evangelicals. Unitarians supported state-controlled schools to foster human perfectability and eliminate human wickedness. The Socialists saw the public school as their tool to reform American character and establish a socialist society. But religious conservatives were conned into believing public education was a viable means of maintaining Protestant supremacy over a huge influx of Catholic immigrants. But, Catholics established their own parochial schools leaving Protestants mired in secular schools.

Harvard’s Unitarian elite soon moved to adopt the Prussian model of state-controlled education,

and they ultimately included its compulsory school attendance laws. Their progress, however, was hindered by the fact that America was still largely a rural country. Our land was filled with one-room school houses funded and staffed from local communities sharing a common Christian faith. And, antebellum southern states generally resisted adoption of the New England system of “free” common schools.

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Thus, Unitarian educators achieved a major victory with imposition of government schools upon the South after 1865. Indeed, their faith in Darwinian evolution transformed the “climate of opinion” for all Americans. While the fighting still raged in the South, ground work was being laid to popularize *evolutionary science* throughout the nation. At Harvard, Asa Gray favorably reviewed Darwin’s The Origin of Species. This botanist then “with remarkable foresight prepared a series of articles to defend evolution from the forthcoming charges of atheism” as noted by Richard Hofstadter in his Social Darwinism in American Thought, (1955:13).

The *public square* was also effectively purged of ministers. Of 40, 000 men who graduated from American colleges prior to 1856, it is reported that “fully one-fourth had entered the ministry” (Shaffer, 1958:55). Further, Sydney Ahlstrom (1972) estimates that up to ninety percent of pre-War college presidents were clergymen. Church historian, Martin Marty, also reports that by the 1870s, “Ministerial training became at most a minor speciality as universities sequestered religion in . . . divinity schools, dropped compulsory chapel, and often omitted religious concerns entirely. Boards of trustees, administrations and faculties were rapidly declericalized” (1969:140).

A number of conservatives, however, remained adamantly opposed to state-controlled schools which formally excluded teaching of the Bible. R. L. Dabney, “Stonewall” Jackson’s chief of staff, warned regarding public schools that “their complete secularization is logically inevitable. Christians must prepare themselves then, for the following results: All prayers, catechisms, and Bibles will ultimately be driven out of the schools” (p-242). Similarly, A. A. Hodge at Princeton argued that, if adopted, the “United States system of national popular education will be the most efficient and wide spread instrument for the propagation of Atheism which the world has ever seen” (p-335).

Zachary Montgomery, who served as Assistant Attorney General under Grover Cleveland also denounced the loss of parental authority and neglect of religious education in government schools. He challenged Horace Mann’s utopian dreams with hard facts revealed by the 1860 U.S. Census. Montgomery’s analysis reveals that in New England, “where the political state controlled the education and training of children, the ratio of suicides ranged from 250 percent to 800 percent higher than [in Southern Seaboard States under] . . . parental control” (p-30). He also decries California’s “tyrannical legislation, to strip every parent of the guardianship of his children and to transfer their control to an irresponsible Board of School Trustees” (p-20).

Moreover, it is Montgomery’s state-by-state investigation of educational funding that most clearly quantifies the systemic poison still being injected by the public school Frankenstein. He scrutinizes the fiscal underpinning of public education over a 30 year period in the New England states, New York, Ohio, Illinois and Louisiana using census data for 1850 and 1880. California is jury-rigged in with statistical data from 1860 and 1880. Not too surprisingly, the data reveals that per-pupil funding generally increased during the 30 years considered, particularly in Ohio and Illinois.

Shockingly, the data also indicate a corresponding increase in crime in state after state during these disastrous decades. Montgomery's findings effectively destroy any notion that state-controlled education actually has or will improve American society. He stresses the irony that "while Ohio was increasing her expenditures upwards of sevenfold in order to check crime, her criminals increased upwards of tenfold". . . [and Illinois likewise] In order to prevent crime and thus protect the property, the lives, the liberties, and reputations of her citizens . . . more than quadrupled her annual expenditures per capita for the anti-parental education of her pupils, and the result was that she more than quadrupled the ratio of her native-born white criminals to prey upon her people" (p-26).

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Opposition to the anti-God, public school colossus has periodically erupted in response to outrages perpetrated in our system of compulsory public education. Sadly, these guerrilla assaults have proven largely ineffectual against the entrenched education establishment. School reform efforts commonly call for increased funding. Further, proposed changes by and large merely tinker with the bureaucratic school routine that currently is ruining education in America.

As a result, formal education in this country is too often still reduced to a mind-numbing routine. Harried teachers in elementary and secondary schools often find themselves "teaching to the test" in compliance with legislative mandate. While in universities, some classes may be humorously dismissed as mere academic exercises in which the professor's notes are duly copied into the students' notes *without passing through the mind of either!*

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued its *wake-up call* for educational reform titled "A Nation at Risk." In this official expose, we learned of international studies, using 19 tests of academic achievement, in which "American students were never first or second and, in comparison with other industrialized nations, were *last seven times*" (Emphasis added p-8). A number of educational analysts were cited, including Paul Hurd, who concluded that "We are raising a new generation of Americans that is scientifically and technologically illiterate" (p-10).

Even more troubling was the note sounded by Paul Copperman, author of The Literary Hoax. "Each generation of Americans has outstripped its parents in education, in literacy, and in economic attainment. [*But*] For the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach, those of their parents" (p-11).

The report also called attention to a sizeable decline in textbook expenditures and publishers that were *dumbing down* textbooks "to ever-lower reading levels in response to perceived market demands" (p21). And, not the least, this 1983 report noted that teachers then receiving an average annual salary of \$17,000, were generally "required to supplement their income with part-time and summer employment" (p23). This clearly stirred up popular notions that we would get better teachers if we simply paid them more. The reaction to this report was regional conferences whose recommendations included a call for higher teachers' salaries. This call turned out to be very effective.

Our nation (with notable exceptions) heeded this call. "Between 1979 and 1989, average teachers'

salaries (after inflation) rose 20 percent” as reported by economists Michael Podgursky (U. of Missouri) & Dale Ballou (U of Mass). Many Mississippi teachers missed this gravy train. Sadly, pay raises were given across-the-board, *not for merit in teaching*. This, plus difficulties in firing the incompetent, ultimately meant that “higher pay caused the worst teachers to stay longer, because their other job prospects were poor. This reduced openings for better new teachers, who -with good skills- found other work”(From Samuelson’s “The Wastage in Education” Newsweek Aug.10, ‘98).

Robert Samuelson’s article on “Wastage in Education” accordingly concludes that “money can’t buy educational success.” He urges that principals be given authority to fire incompetent teachers (Newsweek 8-10-98). But, some have voiced their concern about *uneducated* administrators. Paul Zoch argues in the Autumn 1999 issue of *Wilson Quarterly* that we should require all “principals and superintendents to pass AP exams or their equivalents in English, calculus, a science, a non-native foreign language and history” (Our Uneducated Educators, *Wilson Quarterly* Autumn 1999).

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Others, understandably, express their frustration with perennial fads in education. These fads have, in fact, plagued education from their beginnings in Horace Mann’s revitalization of Massachusetts’ declining common schools . One of the first fads, now thankfully obsolete, was the promotion of *Phrenology* -the study of the size and shape of the cranium as an indicator of character.

Another fad using Dick, Jane and their ubiquitous mutt Spot to teach reading has been more persistent, despite phonics success to the contrary. Talk about mind-numbing routine! “Look at Spot jump. Jump, Spot, Jump.” Unhappily, the whole-word approach to reading became bureaucratically entrenched. It survived powerful assaults by critics, such as that launched by Rudolf Flesch in his 1955 publication *Why Johnny Can’t Read*. Some twenty-five years later, Flesch fired off a searing follow-up. In it, he complains loudly about *Why Johnny Still Can’t Read* (1981).

More recently, there has been a strong emphasis on self-esteem and enjoyment in learning with little regard for educational achievement. Thomas Sowell, in his 1993 study titled *Inside American Education*, reports on an international study that asked 13 - year olds if they were good at mathematics. Only 23 percent of the Koreans claimed to be good at math with fully 68 percent of the Americans affirming their own competence in math. Nevertheless, in actual achievement, the Koreans ranked first, while their American counterparts came in last in international comparison.

Sowell concludes that “it is not merely that Johnny can’t read, or even that Johnny can’t think. *Johnny doesn’t know what thinking is*, because thinking is often confused with feeling in many public schools. . . . The net result, as in mathematics, is that many students are *confident incompetents*, whether discussing social issues, world events or other subjects” (1993, p-4-5).

Of late, some conservative leaders have been promoting government vouchers as a way both to shore up the shaky financial base of private schools and to foster educational excellence in government schools. Their rationale is that the ensuing competition for student-voucher dollars

will be an effective tool for needed reform. Educational administrators will get the message. It is arguable as we shall see that reliance on the market place to drive educational reform is a strategy intrinsically flawed and, therefore, doomed to fail.

And, voucher programs raise questions about the viability of private schools as *private* schools. Despite envisioned guarantees of institutional independence, the likely outcome of such a program would be a new tier of government schools; *public-private schools*, if you will. Such schools would no longer be truly private. In educational funding, *he who pays the piper ultimately calls the tune*. In fact, many founders of our government school system were former private school educators whose academies had faced killing competition in the educational market place. As Blumenfeld notes, these educators “recognized that the public system not only offered them financial security but the prestige and power of a government position” (NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education, 1984).

Let me suggest that we have reached a theoretical impasse in our approach to educational reform. Business enterprises and ministries such as education operate in fundamentally different arenas of human action. Any business venture requires development of a *cost-efficient routine* designed to make a profit. A business man - say a grocer - must not confuse a ministry - say of feeding disaster victims - with the business of *selling* groceries. Such a mixing of business and ministry will quickly bankrupt grocers. Bureaucratic business routine incorporates a hierarchy of impersonal, secondary relationships that are governed by the rational, profit-loss norms of the market place.

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Education ministries, however, are built on personal, primary relationships and must be ever ready to address ad hoc needs of their students and constituents. Thus, a business model which evokes a cost-efficient routine is always counterproductive in a school setting. The teacher’s primary concern should be with the effectiveness of instruction. *Did the student really learn something? Did the lights go on?* After all, students are not widgets and schools are not widget factories.

Accordingly, a teacher is well-advised to avoid the seduction of routine at all costs. Douglas Wilson, a leader in the Classical School Movement, warns against routine in his monograph titled Recovering The Lost Tools of Learning. Wilson observes that there is hypocrisy in “requiring students to learn what obviously bores the teacher. It is the hypocrisy born of routine. The student reasons to himself ‘Why should I learn this? So I can be bored too?’” (1991, p - 79).

An effective teacher is a *player-coach*, as it were, still personally engaged as a student of his or her academic discipline. But there is more than academics involved in classroom interaction. The teacher is being carefully scrutinized by students as a role model. This is as true at the university level as it is in elementary and secondary classrooms. As G. K. Chesterton reminds us in The Man Who Was Orthodox, “Education is implication. It is not the things you say which children respect; when you say things they very commonly laugh and do the opposite. It is the things you assume that really sink into them. It is the things you forget to teach that they learn” (1963, p - 96).

Educational reform needed to foster critical learning skills must begin with a teacher interacting with a class. This is where the rubber meets the road. Each class is an educational institution in microcosm. It consists basically of two roles, that of student and teacher. Class interaction is

ordered and structured by the norms governing these respective roles. Student sub-cultures limit what can be accomplished in a classroom, and at times are directly opposed to instruction.

High I.Q. students in inner-city schools are negatively sanctioned by their peers *not to excel* in the classroom. Still more telling are the gargantuan demands of TV and the Internet upon family time in America. Norms and folkways that formerly supported instruction in reading, writing and math have been shouldered aside by our society's obsession with electronic media. As a result, many high school graduates are simply unprepared for college. Colleges and Universities have resorted to remedial measures. At William Carey we have a university-wide English proficiency test.

Now, let me encourage you to peruse Jenkin Lloyd-Jones's humorous account of a personal odyssey, which is available today. He asks, rhetorically, "Can seeing drive out thinking?" after five mind-numbing days of surgery-induced TV immersion in greater Los Angeles (L.A. Times, Sept. 1978). *Can seeing drive out thinking?* That is a good question.

Well recently, the media's impact upon thinking has been examined by Ball State professor Bob Papper. But, the results of his Middletown Media Studies II were inconclusive. But, one thing is sure, Lloyd-Jones' solution - pushing the off-button - is not a viable option for those involved in education at all levels. We are rushing pell-mell, post haste up the on-ramp onto the *information highway* into cyberspace. Electronic publishing and digitized class lectures open up rosy vistas of distance learning in a society dominated by routinized education.

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Nevertheless, we would be well-advised to consider carefully the possibility of "pot holes" ahead. Douglas Groothuis in his reader-friendly, Soul in Cyberspace (1997) provides a helpful profile of the potential and the pitfalls of the Internet. He describes how the Internet facilitated his writing. Still, he reminds us that "the most powerful Internet search engine on the planet will not download wisdom into the human soul" (p-87). He further cautions against *virtual classrooms* because "the interpersonal dynamic is either lost or diminished" (p-151).

Many applications of computerized technology to education are rushed to the "cutting edge." We will do well to remember the "cutting edge" is also the "bleeding edge." So, we had better be prepared to underwrite development costs to debug the latest, *state-of-the-art* technology we seek to implement. Meanwhile, we must also avoid the trailing edge of obsolete, unworkable computer operating systems.

Moreover, the problem of data loss through corrupted electronic files still remains not to mention concerns about breaches of privacy and security. Furthermore, we must come to terms with the fluid, "authorless," nature of textual information that inundates the *information highway*. This is very evident in Wikipedia's endlessly edited articles. And, let us not forget a plethora of e-mails with a vivid, *undocumented* story from an *unknown* sender *somewhere* who just swears it is true.

What then is to be done to cope with the routine-plagued juggernaut of secular state schools?

First, we simply *must* reclaim education as a church ministry. Schools should be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness not terms of a profit/loss bottom line. Private schools that seek to compete with the state-schools' secular monopoly in a supposed *marketplace* will always lose. The Unitarian-fomented revolution through routinization of education has succeeded. Teachers and texts employed in Christian schools, in general, must now be certified by secular educators in regional accrediting associations.

Thus, Jay Adams in his call Back To The Black-board (1982: 22) charges that the "Christian school movement unintentionally has taken over humanistic goals from its secular counterpart." He goes on to suggest that if you ask 12 educators at any Christian school convention "What are the purposes of Christian education?" you will probably get 12 different answers. Pagan confusion about what we ought to be doing has been imported along with everything else. We are educating, but we don't know why." Adams advises we study the Bible to "discover what God has to say about the matter."

This *why* question is beyond the scope of our discussion today. But the Bible does have something to say about *how* we are to fund the reforms in education we so desperately need. If we are truly serious about our children's education, we must return to Biblical tithing. Tithe-funded ministries to the poor, to unwed mothers and for education have just withered away. In their place, we are taxed to support the government's welfare fiasco, abortion on demand and secular schools where our children are at risk of drugs and bullets every day. Meanwhile churches bereft of God's tithe are all too often stingy, scrappy and small. We should be ashamed this is happening on our watch. Until we repent of our refusal to tithe, we and our children will be denied the blessings of tithe-funded ministries.

Education is expensive. There is research to be done, texts to be written, schools to be organized, and teachers in need of just compensation. Using a market model to direct education is a cop-out for stingy churchmen. Market forces still drive Christian school teachers into the public schools as they did in the 1800s. Many church-sponsored schools, in the name of *good stewardship*, subsidize their fiscally marginal schools by paying starvation wages to their teachers. God will not honor such a perverse avoidance of our duty to pay the tithe in gratitude to our Creator for the use of His earth.

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This message is admittedly a tough sell. Restoration of a faithful tithe-supported education ministry will not happen over night. Until then, Christians must cope with the ruin of education in America. We like ancient Israel are wandering in the wilderness. Some are sacrificing to home school their children. Some parents pay expensive tuition for private school sanctuaries. Some valiant, vulnerable mothers are even teaching in public schools in an ultimately doomed effort to shield their kinfolk from the evil influence of education dominated by the wicked Philistines of our day.

As we pay tribute this evening to Generals Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, let us also remember the high priority Christian education held for these brave soldiers both during and after the war. First, consider General Jackson, who weary from battle, took time to send his minister Dr. W. S. White a letter with a \$50.00 offering to buy books for his colored Sunday school without any mention of his just completed battle. Similarly, General Lee, serving as president of Washington College, informed his pastor that "I shall be disappointed sir - I shall fail in the leading object that brought me here, unless these men become real Christians . . . I dread

the thought of any student going away from college without becoming a sincere Christian” (Wilkins:1997, p- 159).

It is high time, we faced up to the fact that Christian families are in a war for survival. We are losing our children to the World again and again in the secular state schools. Let us now hear the Psalmist, David, who still asks, (11:3) *“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”* The answer is that **THERE IS SOMETHING WE ALL CAN AND MUST DO.** Let us move Heaven with our prayers and earth with our tithes. Let us here and now resolve to rear up schools that will insulate our children from the ravening wolves that control the government’s secular public schools and colleges.

It is high time God’s people reclaimed the vision of General Robert E. Lee and General T. J. Jackson also echoed by R. L. Dabney. Dabney declares that *“The education of children for God is the most important business done on earth. It is the one business for which the earth exists. To it all politics, all war, all literature, all money-making, ought to be subordinated; and every parent especially ought to feel, every hour of the day, that . . . this is the end for which he is kept alive by God - this is his task on earth”* (On Secular Education, R. L. Dabney). This education priority demands that we tithe. God still promises “prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10).

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