

We Are Losing Our Children

by T. C. Pinckney

*Remarks to the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee
by T. C. Pinckney
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The events of a week ago today were a terrible tragedy. The nation is rightly aroused, and we need to take effective action. We mourn for the slain and we pray for their families. Yet having said that, evaluated as a long-term threat and in numbers of lives destroyed, the tragedy I want to discuss with you dwarfs, literally dwarfs, the attacks on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon.

We are losing our children. Research indicates that 70% of teens who are involved in a church youth group will stop attending church within two years of their high school graduation. Think about that statement. It addresses only teenagers who attend church and participate in the youth group. What does that suggest about those teens who may attend church but do not take part in the youth group, or who do not go to church at all?

In a talk at Southwestern Seminary, Josh McDowell noted that less than 1/3 of today's youth attend church. If he is right and 67% do not go to church and then we lose 70% of those who do, that means that within two years of finishing high school only 10% of young Americans will attend church.

We are losing our youth.

Why is this happening? Many strands go into weaving a tapestry, and surely there are many reasons this tragic departure of our youth from Christ is taking place. However, I believe the evidence clearly indicates that the primary reasons are, first, our failure as Christian parents and churches and, second, the intentional, persistent, and highly effective effort by anti-theists to use public schools to lead children away from their parents and from the church.

A bit of history

About 1830 a group of wealthy Unitarians in Boston became unhappy with the locally controlled, parent-run, church-influenced schools then prevalent. They decided to try to establish a system of state-run, secular schools. They sent two young scholars abroad to study the main European school systems in order to decide which system to use as a model. After a two-year study the team recommended and their sponsors adopted the Prussian system as their model. Why? Because in that system the state had complete control, parents had no influence, and children were entered at the earliest age.

With that decision made, the group designed a three part plan: (1) compulsory attendance, (2) a state teacher's college degree prerequisite to certification as a teacher, and (3) state owned and operated schools. This was the plan they proposed to the Massachusetts' legislature.

Among themselves they agreed that if they could not at first get all three elements approved, the most important part was the required teacher's college. This was their priority because they agreed that "If we teach them what to teach, they will teach what they have been taught."

The first year's cost to establish the teacher's college was \$50,000. The Massachusetts legislature balked, saying the cost was too high. So the wealthy Unitarians made them an offer they could not refuse; they put up \$25,000 if the state would match it. They did, and in 1837 the first state public school system in the United States was established. Soon other states followed suit.

The philosophical foundation of governmental schools

Just 14 years after the Massachusetts state school system was established, Auguste Comte wrote the following in his *System of Positive Polity*, vol. I, 1851, pp. 35-6.

The object of our philosophy is to direct the spiritual reorganization of the civilized world.... [W]e may begin at once to construct that system of morality under which the final regeneration of Humanity will proceed.

His "spiritual reorganization" was a long-term plan, and it has been steadily progressing right up till today.

And you will recall that Darwin's great mythology, *Origin of Species*, was published in 1859.

Of course Comte was not alone in this vision of a future without God, of humanity without individuality, of rule by the self-defined most capable over the less capable. In 1918 Benjamin Kidd published in London a book, *The Science of Power*. On p. 309 he wrote:

Oh you blind leaders who seek to convert the world by labored disputations. Step out of the way or the world must fling you aside. GIVE US THE YOUNG. GIVE US THE YOUNG and we will create a new mind and a new earth in a single generation.

Ten years later in 1928 Ross L. Finney, Ph. D., published in the United States: *A Sociological Philosophy of Education*. On p. 118 Finney wrote, "Everything depends on passing out the expert opinions of the social scientists to the masses of the people; and the schools, particularly the high schools, are the only adequate agency available for this function."

And on p. 117 he had just said, "It is the business of teachers to run not merely the school, but the world; and the world will never be truly civilized until they assume that responsibility."

Another interesting quote comes from *The Reconstruction of Religion* by Charles A. Ellwood, Ph. D., Professor of Sociology, U. Of Missouri, 1923, p. 177: "Human institutions, sociology shows, are in every case learned adjustments. As such, they can be modified provided we can obtain control of the learning process."

And the American Humanist Association understands the importance of capturing the children for they have written: "In order to capture this nation, one has to totally remove moral and spiritual values and absolutes

from the thinking of the child. The child has to think that there is no standard of right and wrong, that truth is relative, and that diversity is the only absolute to be gained."

Everyone has a worldview, a perspective of the world around him. Bob Reccord referred to this as a "reference point." He may not think of it in these terms. Indeed, he may not think of it consciously at all, but you cannot exist without a framework within which you place events and individuals, which determines your values, which values in turn guide your actions and reactions to events and people.

Although there are many worldviews designated by many exotic or not so exotic terms, they all boil down to just two types: Your worldview will be man-centered or God-centered.

We are all familiar with Deuteronomy 6:7-9: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

Yet we seem to have forgotten or ignored God's commands about education:

- Luke 6:40 (NASB) "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher." Do we want our children to adopt the anti-Christian, socialistic, pro-homosexual, no absolute right and wrong beliefs promulgated in government schools?
- Colossians 2:8 "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." This is exactly what is happening to our children. They are being spoiled by philosophies and deceits "after the tradition of men."
- II Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" But this is exactly what we do when we send our children to government schools.

Most Southern Baptists and most Southern Baptist churches are failing to obey God's commands regarding our children. Yes, we take them to Sunday worship and Sunday School. Yes, they may also attend AWANAs or another church-centered youth program. They may even have Bible study at home.

But two or three hours on Sunday and 20 minutes or so of Bible study at home are overpowered by 30 or more hours a week in anti-Christian government schools and the constant pagan media bombardment which may add up to another 10, 20, 30, or more hours per week.

Now of course many schoolteachers are Christians. And may God bless them as they do what they can. But they are strictly limited by school policy, humanist textbooks, programs teaching the validity of homosexuality, "make up your own minds" approaches to morality, "safe sex" instruction, and on and on.

Why have we failed our God in this critically important responsibility?

We have failed because we have been willfully, blissfully ignorant...and satisfied in our ignorance.

We have failed because the great majority of us have not made the effort to inform ourselves of the facts...even though there are books and articles galore readily available.

We have failed because — even when we have known the facts — we have not had the courage to point them out to our people.

We have failed because we have been afraid to offend people. So we have chosen to offend God rather than men.

What should we do?

The ideal, most biblical solution is for parents to teach their children, to be homeschoolers. All our churches should welcome and openly encourage home-schoolers. But clearly many parents cannot or will not home-school. For their children we need to start large numbers of Christian schools. And these schools need to be truly Christian:

- Christian in the sincere faith of the teachers and all other staff,
- Christian in textbooks carefully chosen,
- Christian in their entire worldview.

Note that they should also teach about evolution, about humanism, about post-modernism...but in a balanced way, giving the evolutionists' arguments fully and fairly, but also demonstrating their weaknesses, the mythological presuppositions upon which these lies are based, and the disastrous consequences for those who choose to live without God. Our children must be prepared to live among, confront when necessary, and triumph in debate with secularists. This is one area where ignorance is NOT bliss.

You may ask, "Haven't we done anything about this problem?" Yes, we have done a little:

- A relatively few Southern Baptist churches do actively encourage homeschooling.
- Some of our churches have fine Christian schools (although some church schools are Christian in name and prayer only, using the same texts as secular schools).
- Bob Reccord gave us some impressive results of summer youth ministries.
- Under the Covenant for a New Century Jimmy Draper at LifeWay has established the Church Resources Division specifically charged with helping home-schooling and Christian schools. The man to contact for help is Glen Schultz. Just call LifeWay and ask for Glen.
- And Article XII of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message notes that, "...the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is coordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system

of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people." While it is good that we have acknowledged the need, we must now do much more to establish this "adequate system of Christian education."

So that you can further inform yourselves, I have three handouts for you: an excellent, brief book by Glen Schultz, *Kingdom Education*, courtesy of LifeWay; a booklet, *Teachers, Curriculum, Control*, by Daniel Smithwick of the Nehemiah Institute; and a summary of Josh McDowell's points when he spoke at Southwestern.

Together these handouts make a strong case for the urgency of the need.

It has been a privilege to be with you today. As Executive Committee members you fill a critically important role in Southern Baptist life, and indeed in Christian life throughout the United States and the entire world. I pray the Lord will lay a burden on your hearts for our children and their Christian education. And I pray that He will lead you to encourage home-schooling and the establishment of more and more truly Christian schools.

Oh God! We are losing our children!

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