

The Scriptural Role of Civil Government in Education

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We continue to face an educational dilemma. To propose more civil government involvement as a solution is increasing a very major cause of the present problem. The Scriptures again show us the way.

Three Significant Educational Principles from the Bible

1. Education is inherently religious (Pro. 1:7; 9:10).
 - a. "All truth is God's truth."
 - b. This is true in all "domains": cognitive, affective, psychomotor; spiritual, social, and any other.
 - c. Education is concerned with knowledge, truth, values, purpose, intentions, priorities and other spiritual realities.
2. Education is primarily the responsibility of the home and the church (Eph. 6:4; Mt. 28:19, 20).
3. Education is not the responsibility of civil government.

The Home and Church Are Teaching Institutions; Civil Government Is Not!

While Scripture does not directly preclude the participation of civil government in the teaching process, scripture does not give the state responsibility for education. (In a theocratic and, then, a king-led Israel, the "church and state" were combined in the priest who did have teaching responsibilities.) The role of civil government is to reward the good and punish the evil, not to educate.

Our federal roots are consistent with this scriptural position. The tenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution reads, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

The Constitution addresses education in the first amendment (if education is understood to be a function of "religion"): "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press: or the right of the people peaceable to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

The Ohio Constitution contains this statement in its Bill of Rights (No. 7), "Religion, morality, and knowledge, however, being essential to good government, it shall be the duty of the general assembly to pass suitable laws to protect every religious denomination in the peaceable enjoyment of its own mode of public worship, and to encourage schools and the means of instruction." Other states contain similar provisions.

Some argue that "an educated citizenry is necessary for the survival of a free society." But that does not address how an "educated citizenry" can best be achieved. Given that proposition, it does not logically follow that government become involved in the education business. The government's primary role in education is to protect the parents' and religious groups' responsibilities to educate,

and, perhaps, to make it as convenient as possible for them to do so. Returning responsibility to parents is the primary solution to the present educational dilemma in our states.