

CHAPTER 3
HISTORY OF
STATE EDUCATION
Foundation of Sand

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

The roots of modern American culture can be traced to two historic influences: the recorded experiences of the Greco-Roman civilization and philosophies on one side, and the Hebrew-Christian ideals set forth in the Bible on the other. The last 2,500 years of Western history record the intense struggle between people influenced by these two basic cultural forces. (Tom Eldredge, *Safely Home*).

In this chapter we will trace the history of education and identify the problems with Greco-Roman ways. We will see that biblical wisdom does not depend on Greek intellectual knowledge or nationality. Wisdom ultimately rests in our relationship with Jesus Christ, having the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 1 and 2). Biblical wisdom embodies a love for the author of wisdom and for what He enables us to know, and therefore applies knowledge with compassion and justice.

The American educational system is based on Greek philosophy. The word philosophy is from the Greek word *philosophia*, which means “love of wisdom” (from *phileo*, “to love,” and *sophia*, “wisdom”). As used originally by the ancient Greeks, the term philosophy meant “the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.” Every Christian should know the differences between the pagan Greek philosophies and the education of the Bible. The Greek philosophies are not only prevalent in the public school system but are also creeping into our churches.

ANCIENT GREECE: THE ROOTS OF MODERN EDUCATION

The roots of modern America’s educational system and traditions come from the ancient Greeks. They were the first to separate education from religious control.

Two contrasting types of education appeared early in ancient Greece: that of Sparta, wholly controlled by the state, and that of Athens, left almost entirely to the home or to private schools. Up to the age of seven, the education of both boys and girls was left to the home; at the age of seven, boys were gathered in barracks, where emphasis was placed upon physical development through games, exercises, and the pentathlon (running, jumping, throwing the discus, casting the javelin, and wrestling), and upon memorizing both the laws of Lycurgus (the Spartan lawgiver) and selections from Homer. The whole process was designed to develop endurance, resourcefulness, and discipline. At eighteen, definite training in the use of arms and warfare began; from twenty to thirty, service in the army and guarding the borders of the state were required, and

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

(1 CORINTHIANS 3:12-15)

“Classical Christian education has borrowed from the Greek classroom model, as opposed to the Hebrew discipleship model of education, we must object. Both our theory of knowledge and our methodology for training must be presuppositionally biblical. The age-segregated, peer driven, non-familistic classroom approach to training children finds its origin in evolutionary humanism, and should not be borrowed by Christians. The architects of this methodology are men like Hall, Mann and Dewey, enemies of the Cross who knew full well the implications of treating children as if their education paralleled the stages of animal evolution.”

—Douglas W. Phillips,
Vision Forum

“The leading force behind that state school system was Horace Mann, who was one of the leading humanists of the 19th century. A humanist can be defined as one who wants to place man above everything, including God. Mann once said that he wanted to establish ‘a new religion, with the state as its true church, and education.”

—Kevin J. Price,

even after thirty, men were required to live in barracks and assist in the training of the boys. Physical training was also emphasized in the education of girls and women, so that they might bear sturdy children. The whole purpose of education was to subordinate the individual to the needs of the state. (Kandel 1996)

The ancient Greeks’ interest in learning was evident in their art, politics, and philosophy. Teachers lived in their households; these teachers were often slaves from conquered states. Later, when the Roman Empire was at its height, its citizens also followed the practice of having teacher-slaves, usually Greeks, in their households. Several Greek writers served as the models for the educational systems of ancient Greece, which stressed gymnastics as well as mathematics and music.

Have you ever wondered about the origins of the subject divisions used in modern education: literature, history, language? The Greeks divided God’s creation into topics. When you divide life into topics, you can separate the topic from the Creator.

The basic divisions of knowledge were grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. These were meant to help students communicate effectively, and included a study of literature and language, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. These subjects later became known as the liberal arts. They survive in one form or another in many universities today. Anatomy, biology, and botany were also regarded as valid fields of study.

Education, in general, was considered a leisure pursuit only available to the privileged few. The majority of the population that were Greek or Roman received no education. The pursuit of literature was considered the ultimate goal—an idle life of leisure void of manual labor. This pagan goal of the idle rich is pervasive in America today.

The Greeks were history’s first humanists, believing that man was the measure of all things. The Greek aim was to prepare intellectually well-rounded young people to take leading roles in the activities of the state and society. Greek concepts served as the basis for the liberal arts, the teaching of the various branches of philosophy, the cultivation of the aesthetic ideal, and the promotion of gymnastic training. There is a problem with the educational system based on the philosophies of these non-believers!

According to *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia*, the intuitive hypotheses of the ancient Greeks foreshadowed many theories of modern science, and many of the moral ideas of pagan

Greek philosophers have been incorporated into Christian moral doctrine...With their emphasis on the importance of human perception, Greek philosophers doubted that humanity would ever be able to reach objective truth through reason, and taught that material success rather than truth should be the purpose of life.

GREEK PHILOSOPHERS

The ideas of the Greeks have had a profound effect on the modern educational system. The way the Greeks interpreted life is how life is studied in the modern educational system. We must understand this thought and compare it to what the Bible says about understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. To the Greek, knowledge was the primary way to goodness.

Greek philosophy formed the basis of all later philosophical speculation in the Western world. Greek philosophy is divided among those philosophers who sought an explanation of the world in physical terms and those who stressed the importance of non-material forms or ideas. Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates have the prestige of being the most famous of ancient philosophers.

The Ionian School

The first important school of Greek philosophy, the Ionian or Milesian, was largely materialistic. Thales of Miletus in the sixth century B.C. was considered one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece. Thales became renowned for his knowledge of astronomy after predicting the eclipse of the sun that occurred on May 28, 585 B.C. He is also said to have introduced geometry in Greece. Thales believed that water was the basic substance out of which all matter was created.

Pythagoras

The doctrines held by Pythagoras (sixth century B.C.) strongly influenced Plato. The Pythagoreans adhered to several mysteries. They prescribed obedience and silence, frequent fasting, simplicity in dress, limited possessions, and the habit of frequent self-examination. They believed in immortality and in the transmigration of souls—reincarnation.

Socrates

Socrates (470?-399? B.C.) profoundly affected Western philosophy through his influence on Plato. Socrates believed in the superiority of argument over writing and, therefore, spent the greater part of his mature life in the

“Philosophers preach ‘The Age of Reason’ and say we no longer need God. Western universities worship at the feet of Godless teachers such as Plato and Socrates. They have purchased these doctrines of men with all their wealth. Yet, their graduates are as bankrupt as their philosophies. They cannot answer the true needs of mankind. Western universities and seminaries dispense knowledge without establishing either its need or revealing its source. What has it gotten us? It has resulted in lawlessness, immorality, alternative lifestyles and disease. Have they forgotten that society is held together by Godly families? It appears so as they oppose “traditional family values” by more openly teaching “sexual freedom.” “To your own self be true” is their creed. Their Bible is situational ethics, and psychologists are their “accredited” pastors. “Enough,” I say. Let us return at once to God’s learning procedure of wisdom !

—Karl D. Coke, Ph.D.,
Restore! Magazine

“After the philosophies of Plato and Socrates were popularized, the Greeks moved from a non-familistic culture to an anti-familistic culture, represented by the individual and the state alone. It could be said that the Greek civilization committed suicide.”

—Tom Eldredge,
Safely Home

“We believe that our nation’s public schools should not be doing things like handing out condoms to our children. Educators should not be allowed to usurp the authority from parents in this and other sensitive areas. Remember, the child is not a ward given to the state for its nurture. The child is a gift of God, given in trust to his parents. And our schools should treat our young people as gifts of God, not as subjects of social experimentation or as young animals in heat.”

—William Bennett,
Former Secretary of
Education, 1992

*And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming—
...And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.
(2 THESSALONIANS 2:8,10,11)*

“I never went to school with Plato or Aristotle...”

—Paul Bunyan,
Grace Abounding

public places of Athens, engaging in dialogue and argument with anyone who would listen. He believed in a purely objective understanding of such concepts as justice, love, virtue, and self-knowledge as the basis of his teachings. He believed that all wickedness is the result of ignorance, and that no person was willingly bad; accordingly, virtue is knowledge, and those who know what is right will act correctly.

Plato

Plato (428?-347 B.C.) is considered one of the most creative and influential thinkers in Western philosophy. His view of knowledge, his psychology, his concept of the state, and his perspective of art must be understood in terms of his theories. Influenced by Socrates, Plato was convinced that knowledge was attainable. He insisted that knowledge must be certain and infallible. He regarded the objects of the real world as mere shadows of eternal forms or ideas. Only these changeless, eternal forms could be the objects of true knowledge; all observations made with our senses are changeable and, therefore, not necessarily valid. He believed that reason, properly used, resulted in intellectual insights that were certain.

Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) was a philosopher and scientist. Aristotle believed that the world was made up of individuals (substances) occurring in fixed natural kinds (species). Each individual had its built-in, specific pattern of development and grew toward proper self-realization as a specimen of its type; thus, growth, purpose, and direction were built into nature.

Aristotle insisted that something could be better understood when its causes were stated in specific terms rather than in general terms. Thus, it would be more informative to know that a sculptor made the statue than to know that an artist made it; and even more informative to know that Polycleitus chiseled it rather than that a sculptor had done so (Encarta 1997).

The influence of Aristotle’s philosophy has been pervasive; it has even helped to shape modern language and rational thought. His doctrine of the Prime Mover as final cause played an important role in theology. Until the twentieth century, “logic” meant Aristotle’s logic. Until the Renaissance, and even later, astronomers and poets alike admired his concept of the universe. Zoology is based on Aristotle’s work.

GREEK PHILOSOPHY IN A NUTSHELL

The Greeks sought answers in two different realms, first of all in the areas of *polis* [meaning “city,” but referring to the whole society]. The Greeks found that society as society could not give ample meaning [to life]. ...Second, they tried to place particulars in relation to their gods. The difficulty with the Greek gods is they were never big enough to be an infinite reference point...Thus neither society or the gods gave the Greeks a sufficient universal understanding. (Schaffer)

THE BIBLE SPEAKS TO THE DANGERS OF GREEK EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES

True knowledge cannot be gained by unaided human reason. *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? (Job 11:7). O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33).*

Teachers of philosophy give their lives to examining convictions by which people can live in order to develop a consistent world view and way of life based on reliable evidence. The Bible warns against philosophies whose highest realities and concerns are atoms, energy, cosmic laws, or humanity—those founded on the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

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 (Colossians 2:8).

Christians ought to beware that their minds not be taken captive by such philosophies as secular humanism, communism, and capitalistic materialism. These philosophies are best fought with spiritual weapons.

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are

...some proponents of “classical Christian education” seek to revive the writings of ancient pagans, Roman, Greek or otherwise, and present them to our children as possible sources of wisdom and true knowledge, we must strongly object. In the case of the Greeks, many of the “great teachers” were not only idolaters, but sodomites and pedophiles with minds which were deeply affected by their perversions. This is precisely the type of reasoning and thinking from which God has redeemed us. We are to build our worldview exclusively on Holy Scripture, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ. To the extent that our mature children should study classical culture and writings, it is to identify the many false philosophies and intellectual strongholds which have infected Western civilization, and against which the Christian soldier is to wage war.”

—Doug Phillips,
The Vision Forum, Inc., 2000

...“for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid (Isaiah 29:14). All the valued learning of this world was confounded, baffled, and eclipsed by the Christian revelations and the glorious triumphs of the Cross. The heathen politicians and philosophers, the Jewish rabbis and doctors, the curious searchers into the secrets of nature, were all posed and put to a nonplus. This scheme lay out of the reach of the deepest statesmen and philosophers, and the greatest pretenders to learning both among the Jews and Greeks.”

—Matthew Henry's
Commentary

"The whole goal of the new Marxist, anti-Western curriculum is to remove today's student from the values of our forefathers. They want to uproot an entire generation of young people from their entrenchment in the 'narrow-minded' Western ideas of morality, property, and individual freedom under God. Then, when the operation is complete, they can interject their new, revolutionary ideas. When you eliminate moral values and absolute principles of right and wrong, then you are left with lots of questions and no answers. There is no more room for great books, great ideas, or great men, because there is no longer a means to measure greatness. In terms of the college literature course, that means that the Bible, the U.S. Constitution, and Paradise Lost have no meaning or value for us today."

—Lee Grady,
*The Marxist Assault
on the Curriculum*

"The Christian belief system, which the Christian knows to be grounded in divine revelation, is relevant to all of life."

—Carl F. H. Henry

"As man thinketh, so is he,' is really most profound. An individual is not just the product of the forces around him. He has a mind, an inner world. Then, having thought, a person can bring forth actions into the external world and thus influence it. People are apt to look at the outer theater of action, forgetting the actor who 'lives in the mind' and who therefore is the true actor in the external world. The inner thought world determines the outward action."

—Francis Schaeffer

mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are (1 Corinthians 1:26-28).

PAUL SPEAKS TO THE STUDENTS OF PHILOSOPHY

The chief biblical example of how to help students of philosophy who do not accept biblical authority is found in Paul's ministry to the Epicureans and philosophers at Athens. Paul commended their zeal, quoted them favorably on a point of agreement, declared the truth about the living Lord of all, announced their accountability to Christ (not to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, or Zeno), and called on them to repent and trust Jesus Christ.

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have

	Ancient Greek Education	Ancient Hebrew Education
Goal	Prepare individuals to serve the state.	Prepare individuals to serve God.
How Accomplished	(1) Memorize the laws of Lycurgus, the Spartan lawgiver. (2) Memorize selections from Homer. (3) Develop physical excellence through games, exercises, and the pentathlon (running, jumping, casting javelin, wrestling).	(1) Transmit knowledge and skills from generation to generation. (2) Increase knowledge and skills. (3) Concretize cultural values into accepted behavior.
	Teach students to trust the state.	Teach children to trust God in everything.
	Prepare for the state.	Prepare for eternity.
	Examine the world by classifying whole things into parts-removing them from the Creator. Redefine knowledge: Final reality is impersonal matter or energy shaped into its present form by impersonal chance.	Look at God's world as a whole-interconnecting-revealing God in every area. <i>The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmaments sheweth his handywork</i> (Psalms 19:1).
	Immerse students in literature written by Greek philosophers.	Teach children to love learning so they will become self-motivated, lifelong learners.
	Focus on self-esteem, emotional adjustment, and external training of the body. Develop endurance, resourcefulness, and physical prowess.	Discover a child's God-given gifts and talents, and develop them to their fullest potential. Focus on spiritual training.
Result	Self-centered. My will be done. Violence, pornography, racial tensions, promiscuity, abortion, infanticide, etc.	God-centered. "Thy will be done." Authority with responsibility. Literacy, strong family ties, love of learning, security, independent thinking, high morals and values.
Curriculum Subjects	Humanism Evolution Social Studies	Bible Creation Science His Story (true history) Character Self-Government (internal obedience to God).
Curriculum Content	Trivium, the three stages: Grammar Logic (Dialectic) Rhetoric	The three main orders of study in ancient Israel consisted of: Religious education, Occupational skills, Military training with the basis of all knowledge being the fear of the Lord (Psalms 111:10; Proverbs 1:7). The three learning stages are knowledge, understanding and wisdom.
Curriculum Text	Books by Homer, Aristotle, Virgil, Pliny, Cicero.	God's Word. Orthodox schools did not study subjects derived from Classical tradition.
Heroes	Homer, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Epicurus, etc	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joshua, and David.
Philosophy	Lawlessness: To each his own. Look out for #1. There are no absolutes.	Lawfulness: Love one another. The last shall be first. Deny thyself. Obey the Commandments.
	<i>That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord</i> (Isaiah 30:9).	<i>Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well</i> (1 Peter 2:13-14).

The Greek classical education model focuses on literature and logic. The Hebraic education model focuses on God's Word and faith.

But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.

(PSALMS 106:35)

"It may sound appealing to join great men in history in learning the Greek and Roman cultures, cultures which have influenced history but have not proven to be true! We ask ourselves and our readers the questions: "Will God be displeased if a generation grows up who do not know the names of the idols of Greece and Rome? Will God be displeased if a generation grows up knowing the Bible while ignorant of pagan thinkers?" If these cultures of antiquity were destroyed in their idolatry, why do we want to mimic their unbelieving practices? The Roman Coliseum stands as a gruesome testimony to the battle of Christ for men's souls —dash; a sporting event that enthusiastically killed Christians!"

—Earl & Diane Rodd,
"Questioning Secular
Classical Education,"
Homeschool Digest, 1998

said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter (Acts 17:16-32).

Most of us experienced this Greco-Roman education. Modern education tried to change the liberal arts in order to fill the gaps, but ended up destroying the true principles discovered by the Greeks. There were several philosophies in the classical world directed at gaining knowledge about our world. The Greeks wanted to conform to the good and natural things of the world, but without God. This is not possible.

ANCIENT ROME

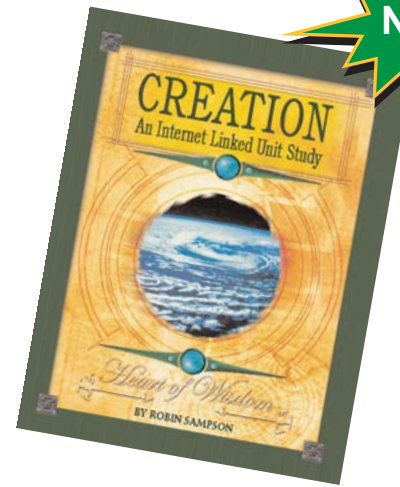
Rome absorbed the Greek culture in the second century and attempted to establish pagan schools throughout the Empire by way of taxes. The public school during this period was primarily literal in curriculum and rhetorical in content.

Remember, during this time the Hebrews continued educating their children with the foundation of the Torah (first five books of the Bible). The majority of the first church was Hebrew. They taught their children as commanded in Deuteronomy 6—teaching them the commands and statutes of God first and foremost.

During the first three centuries of the Christian church, there was little contact between the believers (later called Christians) and the pagan educational system. The denial of original sin always leads to disaster. The classical schools, with their intention to produce perfect citizens through education, produced only an artificial and cruel society. Men still look back on the "golden Days" of Greece for personal and cultural inspiration, but they fail to realize that the true nobility that they aspired to was never obtainable on any humanistic premise. True nobility, which the Greek and Roman ideal correctly identified, to some extent, is only available through the obedience to the Gospel of Christ, with its insistence on our recognition and confession of sin and its promise of containing sanctification. This is never attainable through education, but

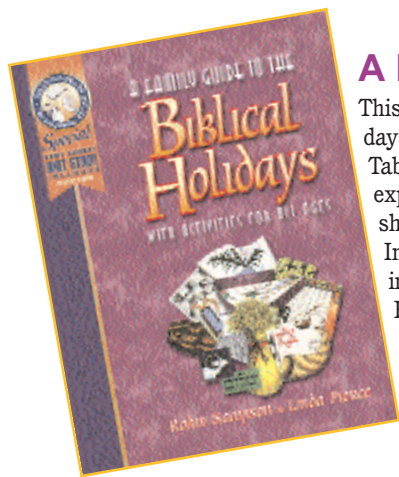
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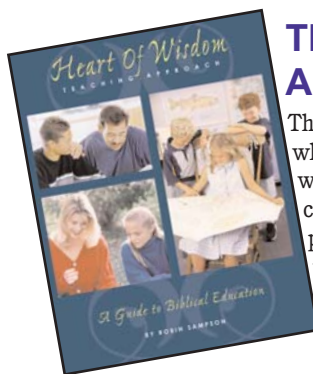
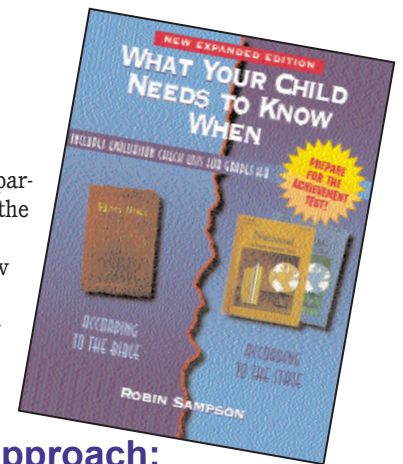


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