

Thomas Jefferson's Foundation for Citizenship

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Introduction

In his book *The American Cause*, conservative scholar Russell Kirk wrote:

Many Americans are badly prepared for their task of defending their own convictions and interests and institutions against the grim threat of armed ideology. The propaganda of radical ideologues sometimes confuses and weakens the will of well-intentioned Americans who lack any clear understanding of their own nation's first principles. And in our age, good-natured ignorance is a luxury none of us can afford.¹

Referring to Communism, Kirk wrote this passage during the Cold War. According to Gleaves Whitney, who wrote the introduction for the most recent edition of the *The American Cause*, the book was conceived in the aftermath of the Korean War.² At the time, there was a widespread perception that the public schools and other social institutions had “failed to inculcate the knowledge and values needed for U.S. citizens to defend their nation adequately.”³ Kirk’s book was written to address a problem that Thomas Jefferson identified at the founding of the nation. While most of the founders were educated men who believed in education, Jefferson, more than the others articulated the need for education as a political issue. He believed that liberal education was necessary for the preservation of the republic. Kirk’s response to the needs of the 1950s was a thoroughly Jeffersonian one: Educate young citizens in the principles of republicanism and do so in a book.

In keeping with the conference theme, I propose to briefly explore Thomas Jefferson’s views of citizenship and education. Inasmuch as we hope to explore the American cause in this

¹ Russell Kirk, *The American Cause*, Intercollegiate Studies Institute Web site, 1, <http://www.isi.org/books/content/330chap1.pdf>.

² Gleaves Whitney, “Introduction,” *The American Cause*, Russell Kirk, Intercollegiate Studies Institute Web Site, <http://www.isi.org/books/content/330intro.pdf>.

³ Whitney, *Cause*, 1.

conference, it seems fitting to examine the views of Jefferson, who made education one of his central themes as a politician and citizen.

Jefferson wanted three accomplishments listed on his tombstone: The Declaration of Independence, the Virginia Statute for Religious Liberty and the founding of the University of Virginia. The last accomplishment stands for so much more than one institution of higher learning. The University of Virginia was one component of a much broader and more comprehensive plan for public education in Virginia. Jefferson believed the state should take the lead in providing access to education for citizens. In turn, Jefferson believed citizens were responsible to become informed enough about their government in order to participate intelligently in their own governance. Public education was a key component of Jefferson's view of government.

Jefferson's education

How did Jefferson arrive at his ideas of education and citizenship? One might look to his own education, but there one would find little that presaged his later views on the subject. As a consequence of his father's wishes, Jefferson received a thorough education in science, math and the classics. There was no public education and Jefferson was first taught on the family plantation at Tuckahoe and then by ministers in their homes. Only families of means could afford a respected education for their children. Some "free schools" existed, but these schools were not regarded highly, and in fact, were sometimes viewed as the breeding ground for heresies and public disturbances.⁴ Jefferson's own views evolved in sharp contrast to the prevailing opinion and one may attribute to Jefferson much credit for changing the general consensus in Virginia toward public education.

⁴ J.L. Wagoner, *Jefferson and Education: Monticello Monograph Series* (Charlottesville, VA: Thomas Jefferson Foundation, 2004), 18.

At age 17, Jefferson enrolled at the College of William and Mary, a school affiliated with the Episcopal church. His favorite professor was William Small, who was the only professor who was not a minister. Later as a legislator, Jefferson suggested sweeping reforms for his alma mater which, if fully implemented, would have made the school a more secular institution. Eventually, Jefferson came to believe that an entirely new college—the University of Virginia—was necessary in order to enact his educational vision. While we cannot read too much into this, it is important to note that Jefferson did not advocate what he himself received.

The Duty of Citizens

Although Jefferson loved learning, his interest in education as a matter of public policy grew from his political beliefs. In Jefferson's view, one could not maintain a republic without an educated and engaged citizenry. Jefferson expected citizens to be involved in their governance and believed the personal blessings of liberty required sacrifices for the good of nation. On citizenship, Jefferson wrote in 1797 to Elbridge Gerry that

the man who loves his country on its own account, and not merely for its trappings of interest or power, can never be divorced from it, can never refuse to come forward when he finds that she is engaged in dangers which he has the means of warding off. Make, then, an effort, my friend, to renounce your domestic comforts for a few months and reflect that to be a good husband and a good father at this moment you must also be a good citizen.⁵

Although Jefferson valued personal freedom, he also believed that citizenship came with duties.

To be a good citizen, one must at times put the common good in front of personal benefit. In an 1810 letter to J. B. Colvin, Jefferson addressed Colvin's question about sacrifice for the common good:

The question you propose, whether circumstances do not sometimes occur, which make it a duty in officers of high trust, to assume authorities beyond the law is easy of solution in principle, but sometimes embarrassing in practice. A strict observance of the written laws

⁵ H.A. Washington, ed., *Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 9 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Maury, 1854), 4:188.

is doubtless one of the high duties of a good citizen, but it is not the highest. The laws of necessity of self-preservation of saving our country when in danger are of higher obligation. To lose our country by a scrupulous adherence to written law would be to lose the law itself with life, liberty, property and all those who are enjoying them with us, thus absurdly sacrificing the end to the means. When in the battle of Germantown, General Washington's army was annoyed from Chew's house, he did not hesitate to plant his cannon against it although the property of a citizen. When he besieged Yorktown, he leveled the suburbs feeling that the laws of property must be postponed to the safety of the nation.⁶

According to Jefferson, the preservation of the nation could, at times, trump personal interests.

The blessings of liberty required placing national interests ahead of personal ones. Jefferson's high view of citizenship informed his policies regarding public education.

Education and Citizenship

The importance of citizenship to the future of a republic is captured in Jefferson's views of education. At one point, Jefferson proposed a requirement of literacy in order to vote. He told Dupont de Nemours in 1816:

In the constitution of Spain, as proposed by the late Cortes, there was a principle entirely new to me, and not noticed in yours, that no person born after that day should ever acquire the rights of citizenship until he could read and write. It is impossible sufficiently to estimate the wisdom of this provision. Of all those which have been thought of for securing fidelity in the administration of the government, constant reliance to the principles of the constitution and progressive amendments with the progressive advances of the human mind or changes in human affairs, it is the most effectual. Enlighten the people generally and tyranny and oppression of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day. Although I do not with some enthusiasts believe that the human condition will ever advance to such a state of perfection as that there shall no longer be pain or vice in the world, yet, I believe it susceptible of much improvement and most of all in matters of government and religion and that the diffusion of knowledge among the people is to be the instrument by which it is to be effected.⁷

Although the literacy requirement was never enacted into law, it demonstrates Jefferson's linkage between an educated citizenry and good government. Jefferson believed that good laws

⁶ A.E. Bergh, ed., *Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 20 vols. (Charlottesville, VA: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1907), 11:418-420.

⁷ Washington, *Writings*, 6:592.

derived from educated lawmakers. In his Bill for the Diffusion of Knowledge, Jefferson laid out the relationship:

It is generally true that people will be happiest where laws are best administered, and that laws will be wisely formed and honestly administered in proportion as those who form and administer them are wise and honest, whence it becomes expedient for promoting public happiness that those persons whom nature hath endowed with genius and virtue should be rendered by liberal education worthy to receive and able to guard the sacred deposit of the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens, and that they should be called to that charge without regard to wealth, birth, or other accidental circumstance, but the indigence of the greater number disabling them from so educating at their own expense those of their children whom nature hath fitly formed and disposed to become useful instruments for the public. It is better that such should be sought for and educated at the common expense of all than that the happiness of all should be confined to the weak or wicked.⁸

Note that Jefferson's characterization of able students—"useful instruments for the public"—places education in a political context. Education was an instrument, a means to a better society and a better government, and thus, deserved public support.

Jefferson believed that the citizens of a republic needed to act according with the best judgment possible, finely tuned via exposure to the wisdom of the ages. Less government required enlightened citizens who would choose well in absence of governmental coercion. How can a citizen become enlightened? Education was key. He told James Madison in 1787 that above all things, I hope the education of the common people will be attended to, convinced that on their good sense, we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty.⁹

Bills calling for improvements in public education

Jefferson's interest in education as a support to republican government spanned his adult life. In 1776, as a legislator, Jefferson offered a bill to revise the laws of Virginia to make them

⁸ S. Forman, *Life and Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1900), 195.

⁹ Forman, *Life, Writings*, 480.

more compatible with the new United States. In this collection of 126 separate pieces of legislation, Bills 79, 80 and 81 called for the creation of a public education system, changes at the College of William and Mary, and the creation of a public library of science and knowledge. These three bills reflected Jefferson's efforts to make education more available to citizens as a support to free self-government. In his autobiography, Jefferson described the three-tiered system:

We thought, that on this subject a systematical plan of general education should be proposed, and I was requested to undertake it. I accordingly prepared three bills for the Revisal, proposing three distinct grades of education, reaching all classes. 1. Elementary schools for all children generally, rich and poor. 2. Colleges for a middle degree of instruction, calculated for the common purposes of life, and such as would be desirable for all who were in easy circumstances. And 3d, an ultimate grade for teaching the sciences generally, and in their highest degree. The first bill proposed to lay off every county into Hundreds, or Wards, of a proper size and population for a school, in which reading, writing, and common arithmetic should be taught; and that the whole state should be divided into 24 districts, in each of which should be a school for classical learning, grammar, geography, and the higher branches of numerical arithmetic. The second bill proposed to amend the constitution of William and Mary College, to enlarge its sphere of science, and to make it in fact a University. The third was for the establishment of a library. These bills were not acted on until the same year '96 [1796], and then only so much of the first as provided for elementary schools. The College of William and Mary was an establishment purely of the Church of England, the Visitors were required to be all of that Church; the Professors to subscribe its thirty-nine Articles, its Students to learn its Catechism, and one of its fundamental objects was declared to be to raise up Ministers for that church. The religious jealousies, therefore, of all the dissenters took alarm lest this might give an ascendancy to the Anglican sect and refused acting on that bill. Its local eccentricity too and unhealthy autumnal climate lessened the general inclination towards it. And in the Elementary bill they inserted a provision which completely defeated it, for they left it to the court of each county to determine for itself when this act should be carried into execution, within their county.¹⁰

As Jefferson noted, the proposals were considered but ultimately not passed in the form first offered. The bills, however, offer some insight into Jefferson's thinking about education and the state.

¹⁰ Thomas Jefferson, and T.J. Randolph, *The Memoirs, Correspondence and Private Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1829), 40.

In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson spoke of these bills and his thoughts on the best means of teaching reading in public schools:

Another object of the revisal [set of bills to revise the laws of Virginia] is to diffuse knowledge more generally through the mass of the people.... The first stage of this education being the schools of the hundreds, wherein the great mass of the people will receive their instruction, the principal foundations of future order will be laid here. Instead, therefore, of putting the Bible and Testament into the hands of the children at an age when their judgments are not sufficiently matured for religious enquiries, their memories may here be stored with the most useful facts from Grecian, Roman, European, and American history.

The first elements of morality too may be instilled into their minds such as when further developed as their judgments advance in strength may teach them how to work out their own greatest happiness by showing them that it does not depend on the condition of life in which chance has placed them, but is always the result of a good conscience, good health, occupation and freedom in all just pursuits.¹¹

Jefferson's proposed revisions pertained to his alma mater, the College of William and Mary. Bill 80 would have eliminated the professors of divinity there. Furthermore, the college had attached to it a school for educating Indians with a missionary as the teacher. Jefferson's proposed changes to the college would have made the missionary into a linguist/anthropologist. Bill 80 specified the duties of the Indian "missionary":

The said Professors shall likewise appoint, from time to time, a missionary of approved veracity, to the several tribes of Indians, whose business shall be to investigate their laws, customs, religions, traditions, and more particularly their languages, constructing grammars thereof, as well as may be, and copious vocabularies, and, on oath to communicate from time to time to the said President and Professors, the materials he collects to be by them laid up and preserved in their library; for which trouble the said missionary shall be allowed a salary at the discretion of the visitors out of the revenues of the College.¹²

Although the Virginia legislature did not enact this bill, Jefferson eventually brought many of these changes into effect when he became Governor and was appointed to the Board of

¹¹ Bergh, *Writings*, 2:203.

¹² G.P. Putnam, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (1893), 293.

Visitors of William and Mary. As he noted, however, the charter of the college did not allow Jefferson to convert it to a public university.

Improving educational opportunities for all white male citizens remained a preoccupation throughout Jefferson's life. To Benjamin Austin, Jefferson wrote in 1816 of his support for "the improvements of roads, canals, and schools."¹³ Jefferson hoped for a system of public education in Virginia from elementary age to college. Lamenting the exodus of Virginia youth to the universities of New England, Jefferson told Austin:

If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be. The functionaries of every government have propensities to command at will the liberty and property of their constituents. There is no safe deposit for these but with the people themselves, nor can they be safe with them without information. Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe.¹⁴

As noted above, Jefferson was so convinced that safety and literacy were linked, that he proposed requiring literacy as a condition of citizenship. This provision was later struck from the bill proposing public education by Jefferson's chief advocate in the Virginia legislature, Joseph Cabell. The proposal, however, makes clear, that, in Jefferson's mind, citizens had a responsibility to participate in self-governance. As Jefferson pointed out to Austin, those with political power lean toward exercising the power inherent in being government officials. Citizens who do not understand their rights or who cannot choose leaders well are at a disadvantage. Without education and information, there is no safety from what Jefferson perceived to be the propensity of those in charge to erode liberty. Education then is an indispensable component of a safe and free citizenry.

¹³ Bergh, *Writings*, 13:383.

¹⁴ Bergh, *Writings*, 13:384.

University of Virginia

Jefferson's vision was to promote public education for all ages, although only the most able would advance to the university level. The rationale for the University of Virginia was laid out in the Rockfish Gap Report. Jefferson believed that the university should endeavor:

To form the statesmen, legislators and judges, on whom public prosperity and individual happiness are so much to depend;

To expound the principles and structure of government, the laws which regulate the intercourse of nations, those formed municipally for our own government, and a sound spirit of legislation, which, banishing all arbitrary and unnecessary restraint on individual action, shall leave us free to do whatever does not violate the equal rights of another;

To harmonize and promote the interests of agriculture, manufactures and commerce, and by well informed views of political economy to give a free scope to the public industry;

To develop the reasoning faculties of our youth, enlarge their minds, cultivate their morals, and instill into them the precepts of virtue and order;

To enlighten them with mathematical and physical sciences, which advance the arts, and administer to the health, the subsistence, and comforts of human life; And, generally, to form them to habits of reflection and correct action, rendering them examples of virtue to others, and of happiness within themselves.

These are the objects of that higher grade of education, the benefits and blessings of which the Legislature now propose to provide for the good and ornament of their country, the gratification and happiness of their fellow-citizens, of the parent especially, and his progeny, on which all his affections are concentrated.

Successful accomplishment of these objectives would enable citizens to govern themselves within a republican system. That is, properly educated citizens could transact business in the emerging commercial society and representative government of the United States. They could also be effective office holders in local, state and federal government. This university was also to be seriously dedicated to the spread of scientific knowledge.

Jefferson and Public Funding for Education

To become educated was for Jefferson a duty that a good and responsible citizen supported by means of personal learning and involvement. Furthermore, citizens and their representatives had a duty to support education with their taxes. Recall Jefferson's words in his "for Diffusion of Knowledge":

It is generally true that people will be happiest where laws are best administered, and that laws will be wisely formed and honestly administered in proportion as those who form and administer them are wise and honest, whence it becomes expedient for promoting public happiness that those persons whom nature hath endowed with genius and virtue should be rendered by liberal education worthy to receive and able to guard the sacred deposit of the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens, and that they should be called to that charge without regard to wealth, birth, or other accidental circumstance, but the indigence of the greater number disabling them from so educating at their own expense those of their children whom nature hath fitly formed and disposed to become useful instruments for the public. It is better that such should be sought for and educated at the common expense of all than that the happiness of all should be confined to the weak or wicked.¹⁵

Public funding for general education completes Jefferson's policy logic. First, he asserts that the happiness of the public is dependent on good laws, and good laws are dependent on wise and honest men. Wise and honest men are only able to exercise their ability via the refinement of a good education. Since some of those wise and honest men won't be able to afford an education unless the state pays for it, the happiness of the people relies on public funding for the preparation of "useful instruments for the public." Without that funding some of those useful instruments would never reach their full potential.

Furthermore, public funding was necessary to overcome objections of parents to the education of their children. On one occasion, Jefferson remarked that some fathers might not want their children to have much education, but the gratis nature of it might overwhelm their objections:

¹⁵ Forman, *Life, Writings*, 195.

A question of some doubt might be raised on the latter part of this section as to the rights and duties of society toward its members, infant and adult. Is it a right or a duty in society to take care of their infant members in opposition to the will of the parent? How far does this right and duty extend? To guard the life of the infant, his property, his instruction, his morals? The Roman father was supreme in all these; we draw a line, but where? Public sentiment does not seem to have traced it precisely. Nor is it necessary in the present case. It is better to tolerate the rare instance of a parent refusing to let his child be educated, than to shock the common feelings and ideas by the forcible asportation and education of the infant against the will of the father. What is proposed here is to remove the objection of expense, by offering education gratis and to strengthen parental excitement by the enfranchisement of his child while uneducated. Society has certainly a right to disavow him whom they offer and are not permitted to qualify for the duties of a citizen. If we do not force instruction, let us at least strengthen the motives to receive it when offered.¹⁶

In 1818, the board of visitors for the University of Virginia met to discuss the future of the new school. As an aspect of their conversation, they discussed what subjects to offer and what to teach. Just as college educators often do today, the visitors reflected on what students coming to the school would know when they arrived. In the report written by Jefferson, the visitors declared that elementary education should contain certain components. According to the visitors, education should strive:

To give every citizen the information he needs for the transaction of his own business;

To enable him to calculate for himself, and to express and preserve his ideas, his contracts, and accounts, in writing;

To improve, by reading, his morals and faculties;

To understand his duties to his neighbors and country, and to discharge with competence the functions confided to him by either;

To know his rights; to exercise with order and justice those he retains; to choose with discretion the fiduciary of those he delegates; and to notice their conduct with diligence, with candor, and judgment;

And, in general, to observe with intelligence and faithfulness all the social relations under which he shall be placed;

¹⁶ Bergh, *Writings*, 17:423.

To instruct the mass of our citizens in these, their rights, interests and duties, as men and citizens, being then the objects of education in the primary schools, whether private or public, in them should be taught reading, writing and numerical arithmetic, the elements of mensuration [measurements] (useful in so many callings), and the outlines of geography and history. And this brings us to the point at which are to commence the higher branches of education, of which the Legislature requires the development; those, for example, which are....¹⁷

Jefferson explained:

By that part of our plan which prescribes the selection of the youths of genius from among the classes of the poor, we hope to avail the State of those talents which nature has sown as liberally among the poor as the rich, but which perish without use if not sought for and cultivated. But of the views of this law, none is more important, none more legitimate than that of rendering the people the safe as they are the ultimate guardians of their own liberty. For this purpose, the reading in the first stage where they will receive their whole education, is proposed, as has been said, to be chiefly historical. History, by apprizing them of the past, will enable them to judge of the future; it will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations, it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men, it will enable them to know ambition under every disguise it may assume; and knowing it to defeat its views. In every government on earth is some trace of human weakness, some germ of corruption and degeneracy which cunning will discover and wickedness insensibly open, cultivate, and improve. Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves therefore are its only safe depositories. And to render even them safe their minds must be improved to a certain degree. This indeed is not all that is necessary, though it be essentially necessary. An amendment of our constitution must here come in aid of the public education. The influence over government must be shared among all the people. If every individual which composes their mass participates of the ultimate authority, the government will be safe because the corrupting the whole mass will exceed any private resources of wealth and public ones cannot be provided but by levies on the people. In this case, every man would have to pay his own price.¹⁸

Although Jefferson's support for public funding is clear, his advocacy of public funding for education was a notable exception to his minimalist view of government. Historian Peter Onuf said about Jefferson's view of public support:

¹⁷ Thomas Jefferson, Virginia Library Web Site, *Rockfish Gap Report*, <http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/exhibits/rotunda/prefire/rockfish1.html>.

¹⁸ Forman, *Life, Writings*, 196

“Spending on education constituted the grand and significant exception to Jefferson’s minimal state, for this was precisely the kind of public investment that would foster the welfare of the rising generation without wasting its future prospects.”¹⁹

To his friend and mentor, George Wythe, Jefferson wrote from Paris that a crusade was necessary to prevent the disparities that he saw in French society:

“Preach, my dear sir, a crusade against ignorance; establish and improve the law for educating the common people. Let countrymen know that the people alone can protect us against those evils, and that the tax which will be paid for this is not more than the thousandth part of what will be paid kings, priests, and nobles who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance.”²⁰

Public Funding, Local Control

Even though Jefferson favored public funding for education, this did not mean he thought a centralized educational bureaucracy was necessary to administrate schools. Jefferson told Virginia legislator Joseph Cabell that local officials should manage local schools:

“But if it is believed that these elementary schools will be better managed by the Governor and Council of the Commissioners of the Literary Fund, or any other general authority of the Government, than by the parents within each ward, it is a belief against all experience.”²¹

There are vestiges of local control in today’s schools. Current policy-makers, however, might do well to consider Jefferson’s logic. Where one’s treasure is, one’s heart, time and talents will go. Despite the good intentions of Bush era education policy, local parents, teachers and

¹⁹ P. Onuf, cited in Wagoner, *Jefferson, Education*, 129.

²⁰ Onuf, *Jefferson, Education*, 5:397.

²¹ Bergh, *Writings*, 13:420.

students often feel that the school day is taken up with slavish dedication to teaching what is necessary to pass the state test.

Should Christians Support Jefferson's Vision?

In recent decades, some evangelicals have called for an exodus from the public schools. In 2005, prominent Southern Baptist, Al Mohler, documented the movement within the Convention to exit the public schools. Mohler wrote:

Last year, retired Air Force General T. C. Pinckney and Houston attorney Bruce N. Shortt submitted a resolution calling for Southern Baptists to remove their children from 'government schools.' In explaining the proposed resolution, Pinckney said that public schools 'now must be in the United States officially godless,' adding: 'This amounts to an artificial compartmentalization of life.' An influential conservative leader and former SBC second vice president, Pinckney had urged the Convention to pass the resolution. 'We believe it is time for the SBC to take a biblical stand on this issue,' he said.²²

Christian critics point out the increasing secularism of the public schools and tend to highlight incidents where religious liberties appear to be under attack. Christians who believe the public schools are hostile to a Christian world view often promote the exit strategy.

Differences in world views surely do exist. I stipulate that, in general, public schools do not privilege a Christian mindset and are at times hostile to faith traditions. And I cannot deny that some public schools are of low educational quality. I want to suggest, however, that Christians can ground support for public education in a Jeffersonian perspective as informed by Christ's teaching on loving one's neighbor and the Golden Rule. Rather than join the monastery, we may engage the public schools for the glory of God and the common good.

In his paper for this conference, Dr. T. David Gordon provides an excellent summary of how Christians have addressed citizenship and involvement in politics. Without restating Dr. Gordon's paper, allow me to note that he invokes the teachings of Christ to love our neighbors as

²² A. Mohler, "Needed: An Exit Strategy," Albert Mohler Weblog, entry posted June 17, 2005, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/06/17/needed-an-exit-strategy/> (accessed January 2, 2013).

ourselves and to treat others as we would want to be treated. When it comes to educational policy, I submit that Christ's teaching requires Christians to reflect on our responsibilities to our neighbor's children. I certainly want them to be educated as I want my own children to be. In my consideration of educational policy I must consider that a free public education will allow my neighbors to participate in the political process. If public schools are defunded or compromised, then my neighbors of lesser means will suffer. While I might be able to afford a Christian education or be able to teach my children at a higher level at home, my neighbors may not be able to do so. From the perspective, then, of the moral teaching of Jesus—for which Jefferson had great respect—I can support public education, and indeed, believe I should support it.

Conclusion

In contrast to Jefferson's calls for as little government as possible, he did advocate consistently for state funding of public education. For him there was no contradiction. Government investment in education was a means of limiting government in other areas of society.

Even though Jefferson favored funding by the legislature, he also believed that local administration of the schools would foster accountability and involvement. While this belief was no doubt influenced by the lack of rapid transportation, Jefferson's view of local accountability seems worth keeping. In our day, *local* might mean state or regional involvement in addition to local towns and school boards.

Although some Christians have called for the exodus of Christians from the public schools, such proposals find little support in a Jeffersonian approach to the republic. For Jefferson, public education is a means to enlighten citizens regarding the principles and information which foster responsible participation in republican government. Tyranny is offset

by knowledge, and it is to the advantage of all, Christians included, to have quality education available for the entire population.

Jefferson's proposals for public education did not find fruit during his life. The linkage between education and citizenship, however, persisted and remains a key justification for public education. Jefferson might not approve of all done in the name of government support of public education, but he most likely would not have supported dismantling or abandoning public schools as some evangelicals have suggested. Indeed, Christians may consider appeals to loving one's neighbor and the Golden Rule in addition to Jeffersonian policy as a basis for vigorous involvement in making public schools a proper support for the American cause.