

V E R I T A S

Gala 2009



REBUILDING THE WALLS

March 14, 2009

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To many in Europe, I am probably the worst kind of American. I am one by choice. You see, y'all can't help it, you were born here. I was born in Ireland, but I got here as quick as I could! I gladly traded the verdant rolling hills of County Down for the land of the free and home of the brave!

And while we still are Green Card 'aliens', we regard America unequivocally as our home. Everyday the little things of life drive this point home. Just yesterday, for example, my dear wife, Catherine, was homeschooling our 5 year old, Benjamin. They were working on the "All" sound in words. The conversation went something like this: "Benjamin, what words do you know rhyme with the "all" sound?" He replied: "Fall, call, mall, ball, hall, wall...." "Are there any other words, Benjamin?" Catherine asked. After a thoughtful pause, Benjamin piped up, "Yes, mummy, Y'ALL!" It's in moments like these that you know you've become an American!

Many in Britain don't understand my choice. To them, America sums up all that's wrong with this world - A Land where cars are too big, wallets are too fat, guns are too easily available, liberties are too free, and God is too central!

They hate Old America for these reasons. And yet, these are the reasons I love her. And I am under no illusions; I cannot imagine a world without this great country.

Without her help - without your sacrifice, without your blood, sweat, and tears, we wouldn't have won the Second World War. We wouldn't have held back the suffocating equality of communism for the past 60 years. And we wouldn't have a pup's chance against the rising tide of Islamic-Fascism that threatens the life, liberty, and happiness of every nation, tribe, and tongue, and of every man, woman, and child on this planet.

But all that is beginning to change. In our country, at the moment, there seems to be a pervading sense that the walls are beginning to come down, and people are frightened. Peggy Noonan sums it up well in her op-ed in today's *Wall Street Journal*:

The heart-pumping drama of last September is gone, replaced by the drip-drip-drip of pink slips, foreclosures and closed stores. We are tired. It doesn't feel like 1929, but 1930. People are in a

kind of suspended alarm, waiting for the future to unspool and not expecting it to unspool happily...the economy isn't the only reason for our unease. There's more to it. People sense something slipping away, a world receding, not only an economic one but a world of old structures, old ways and assumptions... The moment we are living now is a strange one, a disquieting one, a time that seems full of endings.

All this, of course, should not surprise us. For too many years we have allowed the wrecking balls of theological and political liberalism to hammer away at our beloved 'City on a Hill.' In an effort to improve on our greatness, we have allowed well meaning men to give bad answers to the wrong questions - to move us away from the very principles that made us great. This may have been a plan for change, but it is a recipe for disaster.

For too many years, too many men have confused Liberalism with Liberty - and the two never go hand in hand. Think for a second - Jesus said, "By your fruits you shall know them." What fruits of liberty has liberalism brought us?

Liberalism has set us free to learn, think, and speak without reference to God. J. Gresham Machen, the great American theologian of the 1930s, warned our government of the dangers of removing God and prayer from our public school system. Do that, he said, and you had better build our jails beside our schools, for that is exactly what we will be producing. He was right - we have Liberalism without liberty!

Many at this point will cry out - "First Amendment!" But let's be honest - the First Amendment was designed to protect the Church from the State - not the reverse! And it was never intended to liberate the State from its duty to God!

In the abortion mills of America, Liberalism has set us 'free' to choose death over life. The facts are staggering - 3.8 million Americans die every year. Do you know the three leading causes of death? - Every year 560,000 Americans die of cancer; 650,000 of us die of heart disease; and 1.3 million Americans are murdered by abortion. This is staggering - we kill twice as many Americans by abortion than any other leading cause of death? This is Liberalism, but it is not liberty.

Liberalism has set us 'free' to explore our sexuality without reference to the law of God. And the fruit? 38% of American children are born into single-parent homes (In the African American population this number rises to 70%). Pornography is big business in New America - \$13.3 billion/year - that's more than the combined revenue of ABC,

CBS, and NBC. Liberalism, of course, congratulates this enlightened age of sexual liberation. But, I ask you, is this liberty? When a man cannot say no to his own dark desires, this is not liberty, this is the worst form of bondage!

Last, but by no means least, Liberalism has set us 'free' to enshrine mediocrity as the new national ideal. Remember Liberalism is built on a Neo-Marxist model that views the rich as bad and the poor as good; it views the strong as the villains and the weak as the heroic underdogs. It views the 'Haves' as oppressors and the 'Have-nots' as victims. Such a philosophy never lifts a people up; instead, it drives society down into an enforced and suffocating equality, driving us away from the excellent towards the mediocre. With his characteristic wit, Winston Churchill summed it up well: "Socialism is leadership of the duds, by the duds, and for the duds." With such a model ensconced in the heart of America, is it any wonder that in a study of 20 'high income' countries, the US ranked 12th on literacy tests? Illiteracy has become such a serious problem in our country that 44 million adults are now unable to read a simple story to their children.

These are the fruits of Liberalism. And they are very bitter. What can be done? Perhaps you are feeling a little overwhelmed this evening. You look at the fallen walls of our "City on a Hill," and you think to yourself - "What's the point?" "It's already too late!" "What difference can I make to this mess we used to call 'America the Beautiful'?"

I tell you this evening, with God it is never too late. He speaks and it is done. He commands and it holds fast. Who can tear down what He builds up and who can build what He tears down?

In God's name I tell you, there is a solution to America's problems. And it is not going to be easy, and it is not going to be quick. It will take hard work, endurance, sacrifice, and vision. It will take men and women of fiber and integrity and it will require them to stand firm and to hold the line come what may. I am convinced, this evening, as I look about this room, that I am surrounded by just such a people - the kind of people who made this country great in the first place.

From where will this solution come? Let's be honest - the solution will never be found in our government. The answer will never be found in a President. It doesn't matter whether he be an elephant or a donkey - he can't fix what the people of this country are breaking. America cannot be changed from the top down. America can only be redeemed from the bottom up and from the inside out.

The answer to America's problems is found in individuals like you and me - individuals who trust in God and who band together - who are determined to work hard, to live well, and to die free - who are determined to teach our children the TRUTH. And who expect this truth to set them free. In so doing, loved ones, I am convinced that step by step, generation by generation, we will turn this nation around one child at a time. And that is my Vision for Veritas!

Now you might be saying to me: This is a big vision for a small school! And I tell you, remember Nehemiah and the fallen walls of Jerusalem. How overwhelmed the people were at the beginning. But then they went out - family by family - and built the wall, not the whole wall, just the bit in front of their own house. This is the secret. Build the wall in front of your house (Nehemiah 3). Nehemiah didn't call the people to build the whole wall around the whole city; such a task would have demoralized them. He called them to walk out their front door and to build the piece that faced them!

And I put it to you this evening - **Veritas is the wall in front of your house.** And these little people, our students, your children, are the bricks we will use to rebuild America, one child at a time.

If you will allow me, let me take just a couple of minutes to tell you why I think Veritas is uniquely placed to do this work! I say that because of our three emphases:

First of all we are a Christian School. We put God first and foremost in everything. We don't just tack Him on like some four word appendage to our dollar bill. He is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all that we do in this school.

This is where secularism and its liberal ideals part company from the Christian world and life view. The consistent liberal always begins with man. The Christian begins with God. This starting point sounds the death knell of Liberalism - and it ushers in the dawn of Liberty.

The Revisionists can attempt to rewrite the Bill of Rights until the cows come home, but (as Mr. Adams said) facts *are* stubborn things. Our founding fathers wrote that men are endowed *by their Creator* - **not** by the King, **not** the government, **not** the vocal minority, **not** the ACLU, **not** the anti-American judges sitting in San Francisco on the 9th circuit Court of Appeals, but men are endowed *by their Creator* with certain inalienable rights. The right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are given to us directly

from the hand of Almighty God. No man, and no group of men - no matter how vocal - no matter how powerful - have the right to rob us of them. These rights flow from the bottom up - from the people to the government. That's the foundation of liberty - and it is a Christian foundation.

This is where we begin with our children - they are not worthless pawns under the government. They are not mere flotsam caught up in the meaningless and merciless career of history. No, in Christ, they are children of the living God, part of His plan and purpose for this world! He has saved them to showcase His glory!

Furthermore, we teach them that the biggest problem they face is not adversity in their lives (this is the great lie of Liberalism - we can make the world a better place if we can only improve a man's circumstances) but perversity in their hearts. Their greatest need is not a better job, or a better credit card, or a better house; their greatest need is a completely new heart. Unless a man is born again, Jesus said, he can neither see nor enter the Kingdom of God.

As free born Americans we are free not to live for ourselves - we are free to live for God. Through His gospel we are not free to sin, we are set free from sin. Christ has freed us from the pollution of sin, the penalty of sin, and He will soon save us from the presence of sin. *Our board and our faculty live to rub this healing balm into the souls of our students, your children.*

Veritas is also a Classical School. What is classical education? Very briefly, it is the tried and tested method of education through which our founding fathers learned to think and to speak.

It revolves around the Trivium - that is: the three levels of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. In grammar we teach our children to learn. In logic we teach them to think - to make connections between the great ideas of God, His word, and our world. And in Rhetoric, we teach them to speak - to articulate clearly, and concisely their understanding of reality.

The Third thing I want you to know about Veritas is that she is a Covenantal School. That is the conviction that God's primary building block of both Church and State is not the individual - it is the family! From that conviction, we believe that before it takes anything else, it takes parents to raise children - before it takes a church, before it takes a

school, before it takes a village, before it ever (God forbid) takes the government - it takes you - mom and dad - YOU are God's ordained resources, God's first choice when it comes to teaching your precious children about life, the universe, and everything.

As a school, the board and faculty of Veritas are committed to helping you be all that you could be, and all that you would be for your children in these turbulent times!

Oh think for a moment of the possibilities - Children growing up and putting God first, others second, and themselves next. Children growing up and knowing how to study, knowing how to think - how to connect the dots, knowing how to speak - how to reason with people, how to articulate their views clearly and concisely, how to recognize lies, how to expose lies, and how to exalt truth!

Think of the impact they will have on their own children, as the truth disseminates through the generations. There is just no telling what difference this school could make! This is change, I tell you, that God believes in.

So, let me plead with you: consider helping us invest in your children's future! With God's blessing that will be a stock that will never go down - that will be a stock that will outlive your retirement! That is treasure laid up in heaven, where neither moth nor recession can destroy, where the IRS cannot break in and steal!

Consider partnering with God. Hudson Taylor, the great pioneer missionary to China, once said, "God's work done in God's way shall never lack God's supply." And I am convinced that God is on the move at Veritas.

We have the right leadership: He has given us first class leadership in the form of Col. Robyn. I could not imagine a more gifted man to stand at the helm of this school in these troubled times.

We have the right faculty: He is continuing to gather a first-rate faculty around him.

We teach the right curriculum!

We are attracting the right families! - Families that refuse to settle for mediocrity - families that strive for excellence!

The question is not: Will God provide for Veritas? He is going to do that and He is already doing that. The question facing you this evening is this: Are you going to be part

of His plan? Are you going to have the privilege of being a co-worker with God in the future of this great school!

And so you are asking me: **How can I help?**

More than anything else: **Pray for us.** I really mean that. I am not asking you to pray as an introit to asking you for money. Without God's blessing, we can do absolutely nothing. Time and time and again, God has taught me this painful lesson in ministry. I have seen my best and most eloquent sermons fall to the ground without any apparent effect upon the people. And then God will take one of my worst, most pitiful efforts and use it mightily in the Church. And I am wondering, "How can that be?" And then, after the service, a little old lady will come up to me and say: "I have been praying for you all week long. Thank you for that sermon. It was such a blessing!" It is in those moments that I know where the power for ministry is found. So please pray for us. Soon, you will see a monthly prayer diary come out from the school that will help you pray specifically for the needs of the school. Please use it.

A close second on the list, however, is money - Can I ask you to consider supporting us financially? I hate asking for money. It goes against every fibre of my being. You know the Scots and Irish are close cousins. And you know what the Scots are like about money. I heard of a Scot once who dropped a quarter.... He bent down so fast, it hit him on the back of the head! I know exactly how he feels! But, having said that, the board needs your help, We want to build a ladder reaching up to heaven, and we are asking you for the wood!

Where, you might ask is this ladder going?

First, and most important, is our need to improve our compensation package for our teachers. A friend of mine back in Mississippi has the Midas touch when it comes to business. He takes a bankrupt business, touches it, and turns it around. I asked him once: "What is your secret?" Do you know what he said? He said: "I have made more money paying more people more money than anyone else in town." I said: "What do you mean?" He said: "From the top down, I find the best people. I pay them the best money, and they do their best work! My workers are my 'Number One' resource." This is our vision for Veritas. We have some of the best teachers in town, and we want to reward them for their diligence on our behalf!

Second, as our student population continues to increase, we must ensure that the operational budget follows this growth. Up until now we have used the tuition monies to fund both this budget and provide scholarships to needy students. Clearly, this has been insufficient.

In response to this shortfall, our development committee has set up an overarching Annual Fund for donors. Monies received into the Annual Fund will be used to augment our growing operational budget and also provide a scholarship fund to assist those in financial need without depleting our already stressed operational revenues.

Third is the Capital Campaign Fund. Our Five-Year Vision calls for a separate building for our Rhetoric School. This facility will represent the capstone of our educational efforts - that we are not just a lower school, a preparatory school, but that all of our efforts focus on graduation from the Rhetoric program. We believe a separate building for the Rhetoric School will foster the deserved sense of kudos students should have as they graduate to and then from the Rhetoric level of the classical system.

And so, we want to find, lease, or even buy a stand-alone home for our Rhetoric School! We want this home to be downtown, as close as possible to our current location. At least initially, this property need not be too large - it need only hold 15-20 students. If you know of such a property, or could help us find such a property, please let us know.

In conclusion, then, this evening, let me thank y'all for your time and your interest in and support for Veritas Academy. No doubt, we live in challenging times. But the principles upon which Veritas is founded are the very principles and practices that made America the greatest nation on earth. And I am convinced, with God's blessing, these same principles will be used to raise up a fresh generation of Saints and Scholars who will return our beloved nation to the old paths. This is why I support this school with my whole being. And that is why I urge you to do the same! Stand firm, hold the line, and may God go with you.

Dr. Neil Stewart
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