

# Reselling Christian Education

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Christian education is scripturally sound, philosophically reliable, and academically credible. It has a firm foundation, clearly defined goals, and an unerring focus. It is a compelling, viable alternative to godless, public education; and it ought to be the natural choice of Christian parents for their children. Yet experience teaches that such is not necessarily the case. After decades of growth and development that propelled Christian education from tentative and modest beginnings to a force that effectively challenged its secular counterpart's claims to the educational monopoly, the movement is being abandoned by many whom it served so well while other Christians still continue to withhold their support. Brethren, these things ought not so to be.

There are no new arguments for the value of a Christian liberal arts education. The old ones are as powerful and persuasive as they have always been. Based on the eternal, immutable, indivisible, and absolute truth of God's Word, a Christian liberal arts education will enable a person to examine rationally, judge critically, weigh alternatives, reach intelligent decisions, observe moral values, offer leadership, maintain vision, keep historical perspective, and preserve cultural and religious heritage -- all objectives that long ago departed from the public school's list of priorities. Realizing that the Christian is a citizen of two worlds -- a temporary and a permanent one -- Christian education endeavors to prepare students not only for time but also for eternity. It is only logical to expect that such philosophical orientation will yield a better end product; and thus the student will learn not only how to make a living but how to live.

Persuaded by the truth of the above remarks, all Christian parents ought to choose for their children a Christian education, either in a conventional school or a home school environment. Many do not for reasons of their own. Personal discussions, hearsay, reports, and reflections have brought to light some reasons for the shunning of Christian education. Let us examine their validity.

First, it is a lamentable but undeniable fact that more and more parents abdicate their divinely imposed responsibility and allow their children to make decisions of serious consequence before they are ready to do so by reason of experience and maturity. Young people who find it a major challenge to decide what sweater to wear to school are trusted to handle choices that will significantly influence the rest of their lives. Lacking the wisdom that years of experience often provide, young people have a propensity toward making decisions -- even weighty ones -- on spurious and emotional grounds. Thus the choice of where to go to school is often determined by a school's athletic program or its proximity to a shopping mall. A caring parent would certainly stand in the way to intercept an errant and unsuspecting child as he rushes heedlessly into some physical danger. Yet the same concern is often not evident when spiritual and eternal values are at stake. To teach children to make their own decisions is a noble educational goal. However, it should be kept in mind that a proper decision-making process involves careful evaluation of pertinent information and evidence, presupposing a level of maturity which most young people have not yet attained. To make decisions on any other grounds is mere whim and caprice.

A second reason for the apparent indifference toward Christian education is a complacency about topical issues. As we all know, the public school long ago ceased to be a sanctuary of academic tranquility. The sordid agendas of social engineers of every stripe have not only invaded the schools but have moved to center stage. Junior high and elementary school children have to listen to graphic presentations and

participate in detailed discussions about deviant and perverted lifestyles at an age when by nature they are hardly aware of gender differences. Instead of receiving character training and learning about outstanding heroes of the past, children are made to read books such as *Heather Has Two Mommies* or *Daddy's Roommate*, celebrations of lesbianism and homosexuality that make these abominations appear to be not only normal but even desirable behavior. The Bible and all Christian vestiges have been thoroughly purged from the curriculum. The official government neutrality toward religion as codified in the Constitution has been twisted into a militantly antireligious crusade. In history textbooks one searches in vain for any mention of the rich religious heritage that in such a brief time made the United States the foremost country on this earth. Instead, our children are taught that the pilgrims merely were people who liked to go on long trips. The courageous settlers who explored the West and subdued the wilderness are vilified as unwelcome intruders who were driven by greed and lust for power. Sociology textbooks advocate global citizenship that must replace national self-determination. War for whatever reason is denounced as obscene. The government's constitutional obligation to promote the general welfare is interpreted as a mandate to create the welfare state. There is, of course, an alternative to this deplorable state of affairs; and that alternative is Christian education. Parents need to be aware of the ideas that suffuse and damage their children's minds in the name of education. Ignoring these issues will not make them disappear; it will only buy temporary peace of mind at the expense of long-term, perhaps permanent, injury.

Third, it is difficult to appreciate the necessity and superiority of a Christian education without a deep philosophical commitment. Our philosophy informs everything we do, because it is a system of values and beliefs that guides our every action; and that includes teaching. All teaching is done in accordance with a philosophy which is either Christian or non-Christian. Christian teaching is founded on the touchstone of truth, the eternal Word of God. Secular education, on the other hand, denies the absoluteness of Scripture and substitutes multiple, ever-shifting human constructs for God-established eternal verities. Thus the public school teaches situation ethics, according to which there are no absolutes by which to live, making man the final arbiter of his actions. It teaches a distorted realism, a belief that all students should be exposed to diverse "realistic" viewpoints, including emphasis on profanity, immorality, and perversions as acceptable modes of self-expression. An anti-Biblical bias permeates all instruction, asserting that man creates God out of his own experience; and since there is no heaven to be hoped for nor any hell to be feared, euthanasia and suicide are appropriate choices under given circumstances. Recently, new age philosophy and occultism have begun to engulf the public school.

Under the guise of critical thinking and concentration techniques, children are taught such occult practices as channeling (listening to spirit guides), deep processing (transcendental meditation), imagery (visualization), attention control (self-hypnosis), and free imagination (preparation for out-of-body experiences). Let us suppose that the children come from a good Christian home, and let us further concede that they regularly attend a church where the Bible is preached. Nevertheless, there is no denying the fact that the above-described secular teaching will have some negative influence upon the students. At best, they will experience a tremendous amount of cross-pressure. They are being taught one set of values in school, and another set of values at home and in the church. It would be naive to expect that the home and church will necessarily win out in every case. In fact, it may not even be victorious in most cases. Lies and falsehood are so attractively packaged that it often takes nothing less than perfect knowledge of the Scripture and a good deal of spiritual maturity to discern error from truth. It is hard to imagine that Christian parents would willingly subject their children to such pernicious influences. Many of them might not even be aware of this situation. It only makes good sense to seize the alternative of Christian education, an education in the truth with the purpose to promote Christlikeness in the student which should result in godliness of character and action.

A fourth reason for depriving their children of a Christian education is a distorted sense of enlightenment expressed by some parents. They admit that Christian education was good for them, but they would not

want to subject their children to it. They recall their educational experiences; and they focus, perhaps, on practices and procedures that while providing enduring benefits were not necessarily enjoyable at that particular time. They naively expect their children to learn the same lessons but with a totally different process and environment that call for less effort, less concentration, less hard work, and less personal discipline. With protective benevolence parents want to shield their children from experiences like their own and expect academic and personal excellence to ensue without the necessary preparation and ingredients. It must not be forgotten that accomplishment brings feelings of pleasure and exhilaration. Yet for those feelings to be genuine, they often have to be preceded by frustration and, at times, even pain. It is exactly the personal investment, the sacrifice that the student is willing to make that brings success. Success will not come as a result of ease and comfort. All things being equal, it is the Christian school that still demands the student's best effort in accordance with his potential. It is the Christian school that still teaches the truth rather than political correctness. It is the Christian school that insists upon decency and virtue. Someone cared enough about the parents when they were young to send them to a Christian school. Should they not, in turn, demonstrate the same concern and put their children into a learning environment that offers the likelihood of spiritual as well as academic success?

As a corollary to the above, let us realize that many youngsters, as well as parents, decide against Christian education because of the discipline that it teaches. Ours is a society that revels in personal freedom without fully understanding the precise meaning of the concept. As a result we are exposed to the most absurd arguments in favor of abortion, perversion, euthanasia, egalitarianism, and other aberrations. True freedom does not exist in the absence of responsibility. It is not a one-way street. "Freedom from" must irrevocably be linked to "freedom unto," or man will become a slave to his desires, drives, and instincts. Personal success and achievement can never be realized without personal discipline. But personal discipline is not innate. It must be taught. It is not easy to do those things that need to be done when many other activities vie for the student's attention -- activities that promise immediate, yet temporary, pleasure and fun. Yet it is the mark of an educated person not to be willing to nail future tranquility to the cross of present gratification. In order to learn personal discipline, a person must be willing to subject himself to a disciplinary framework outside himself. Once he has learned to meet the demands of structured discipline imposed upon him and to do so without resentment, then he will be able to work on his personal discipline, the requisite to all meaningful attainment. Understanding the Scriptural basis for these precepts, the Christian school remains committed to this valuable component of a true education, losing perhaps the evanescent popularity contest with public education but serving its students in a way that will earn their belated, yet lasting, gratitude.

Finally, let us ask the fundamentalist pastors for renewed support and enthusiasm in the reselling of Christian education. That support was there at the beginning of the movement and continued for some time. It sounded forth from the pulpit, appeared in newsletters and articles, dominated personal conversations and counseling, and resulted in the sending of their own children and the church's youngsters to Christian schools and colleges. Something has happened to this "first love." What has muted this intense, personal interest? Are their own children past college age now? Are there other, more pressing, more topical, more controversial issues now that direct attention away from Christian education? Is there more personal visibility to be gained by engaging in political debate or confrontation about insignificant issues? Surely nothing can be more important than the concern that our children and grandchildren receive an education in the truth and be prepared for the ever-increasing satanic attacks on the gospel and those who hold it dear. If the good pastors of America would once again commit themselves wholeheartedly to educate their congregations about Christian education, many parents would realize their errors and misconceptions concerning their responsibilities and options.

From a human standpoint, we cannot have much hope for our society. We are beset by error, perversion, and lies on every side. As Christians, however, we rejoice in the opportunities thus presented to us. The darker the world gets around us, the brighter our light must and will shine. We have the truth. While the

world gropes and seeks and clumsily attempts to improve its academic curricula and objectives -- outcome-based education being the latest farce -- we will hold fast to what the Lord has given us and be determined to resell Christian education.

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