

The Christian School: Why?

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It is the purpose of this pamphlet to explain why we maintain a Christian school, and why we believe it is necessary for believing, Christian parents to provide Christian education for their children.

The Christian School in History

The Christian school is no new thing. It has a long and honorable tradition. What is new is the willingness of parents who confess Christ to have their children educated in schools from which God's Word is rigorously banned. During the centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, the Word of God was central in the instruction that the people of God gave to their children, a God Himself commanded in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. The education provided for the children of the church during the 1,400 years between the time of the apostles and the time of the Reformation of the church in A.D. 1517 was permeated with the Word of God. In this period, the schools were closely connected with the church. After 1517, the Reformers, notable among whom were Martin Luther and John Calvin, were agreed in their zeal for the establishment of schools in which all the children might receive an education. Their concern for schools was only surpassed by their concern for the church herself. But they were also one in their insistence that these schools be founded upon and ruled by the Word of God, the Bible. Those early citizens of our own country who set up schools and universities that were intended to be Christian continued the long tradition of the Christian school.

What Is a Christian School?

A Christian school is not to be confused with a Sunday School, or with any other institution that exists to give children instruction in the Bible. The Christian school is an institution that has the function of instructing children in the various departments of knowledge that also constitute the curriculum of the public school: reading, history, science, math, and the other subjects. It does this seven hours a day, five days a week, throughout the school year. This raises the question: What is the distinctive feature of the Christian school that warrants its existence as a separate educational institution? The Christian school certainly does begin each day's classes with prayer to God and with the reading of the Bible. It does this under the conviction that nothing that man does is profitable, unless God blesses it. Everything must be "sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (I Tim. 4:5). However, these activities of prayer and Bible-reading, although they are important, are not the main reasons for the existence of the Christian school. The distinctive feature of the Christian school is expressed in the word *Christian*. It is a school that is Christian throughout. It has a Christian foundation; it has Christian teacher; it gives Christian instruction; it provides a Christian moral environment; it has a Christian goal. All of this must be briefly explained.

The Bible Is the Word of God

The starting point is our firm faith that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. The Bible itself teaches this: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (II Tim. 3:16). As the Word of God written, the Bible is the authority for our faith and our life. To believe and live according to God's Word is the mark of a Christian. A Christian school, therefore, is a school that is founded upon and in every respect in harmony with the Scriptures, the written Word of God.

Instruction of the Children of Believers

God in His Word calls those who believe in Jesus Christ to bring their children up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). The total upbringing, or rearing, of the children of believers must be an upbringing that has God as its source, as its standard, as its goal and as its center. It must be an upbringing in Jesus Christ, for it is Jesus who is "Lord." It must be Christian. In calling believing parents to this task, the New Testament repeats the emphatic teaching of the Old Testament. Included in this

required godly upbringing is the education of the children in the schools. The education of the children in the schools is an important part of their upbringing, both from the view point of the nature and power of education and from the viewpoint of the huge amount of time given over to this education in the children's lives.

The reason for God's requirement that the children of believers be reared in a Christian way is God's gracious salvation of these children in Christ. Both Old and New Testaments teach that God saves believers and their children. In Genesis 17:7, God promised to Abraham "to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." In Acts 2:39, Peter assures the believers of the New Testament time that "the promise is unto you, and to your children...." The children of believing parents, by God's gracious appointment, belong to the church of Christ, and are regarded and addressed as members of the church in the New Testament epistles, e.g., Ephesians 6:1-3 and Colossians 3:20.

As covenant children, the children of believers belong to Jesus Christ entirely, with all they are and with all the talents and abilities they possess. He has bought them, soul and body, by His death on the cross. Therefore, He may rightfully claim them for Himself in their entirety. As covenant children, the children of believers have as the one and only purpose of their lives the knowledge and praise of God, who is revealed in His Word and in His creation.

All of the instruction given these children must serve this purpose.

Teaching the Truth

The Christian school is established to give the students a sound education in all the branches of human knowledge. It is not satisfied with anything less than the most thorough academic training. To that end, it hires qualified teachers (those with degrees from State-accredited colleges and universities, usually); it uses the best textbooks; it maintains a classroom and personal discipline that is most conducive to the highest degree of learning; and generally makes every effort possible to promote the instruction of the children. This is directly related to the foundation of the school. The mind, talents, abilities, and time of the children are Christ's and must be developed and used to the maximum for His sake.

In all of this instruction, however, the Christian school is concerned to teach the truth. Although the Christian school does not exist to give instruction in the Bible, all of the instruction that it does give in all of the areas of learning is based upon the Word of God, is ruled by the Word of God, and is in harmony with the Word of God. In every subject, not only in "religion," the truth is God. The truth about every aspect of this creation, including man and his doings, is its relationship to God, the Creator, Ruler, and Judge of the world. What does it reveal of God, who framed the worlds by His Word (Heb. 11:3) and who made all things to show forth His glory (Rev. 4:11)? This is the basic question in every subject. And it is God's Word, the Bible, which sheds light on every branch of knowledge.

The Bible is no textbook for science, math, history, or any other academic subject. Nevertheless, it is the essential basis for teaching the truth of all subjects. It is the essential basis for teaching the truth in science. It condemns the theory of evolution. Evolution is not a correct, accurate description of how the world came into being. More than this, it is not the truth, but is rather the lie, in the sense that it out rightly denies God and intends to rob Him of His rightful glory. Instruction in science that is based on Scripture is able to give the true account of the beginning of the world in its creation by God in six days. The Bible is also the basis for the teaching of the truth in the field of history. It forbids representing history as the slow (evolutionistic!) development of the human race from lowly origins in the animal world to lofty destinies in some perfected society on earth. Scripture reveals that the history of the human race is to be viewed as the life and labor of men who have fallen into sin and who are therefore enemies in their very nature of God and one another. The wars and catastrophes that plague mankind are not regrettable evils that man will overcome, but the consequences of sin and the judgments of God upon sinners. There is hope for peace and life and glory, not from man himself, but from God in Jesus Christ, and from Him alone.

These are fundamental principles of education.

To ban the Bible from the schools is to prohibit the truth. To have the Bible as the basis of the instruction makes the teaching of the truth possible. In the schools, too, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7).

The Moral Environment of the School

Without denying that the responsibility of instructing the children how they ought to live morally belongs to the home and to the church, the school will inevitably engage in some degree of training the children in behavior and conduct. In fact, the school in its totality will possess a certain moral environment in which the children work and play. The very instruction itself must tend towards influencing the children’s ethical attitudes and behavior. When all of the instruction is God-centered, the love and fear of God are stirred up in the children’s hearts. In addition, the Christian school points out to the child that in all the relationships of life he is called to love and fear and, therefore, obey God. This is the very foundation of morality. Out of thankful love to God and His Christ, he is to honor his parents, submit to his teachers, subject himself to the State, live purely, love his neighbors on the playground, and work at his studies to the best of his ability.

For this reason, the Christian school is not a threat to the State. It most urgently and consistently binds upon the children and youth that they submit themselves to the authority of the government, honor the authorities (from the president to the local policemen), and do all this “not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake” (Rom. 13:5). The Christian school abominates the current revolutions among the young and in the schools, and will not tolerate them. It trains young people to be citizens that willingly do their duty to the State.

The Responsibility for Educating

Since the calling of God to instruct their children comes to the parents, it is the responsibility of the parents to provide their children’s education. In Ephesians 6:4, the Word of God addresses “ye father,” when it says, “bring them (your children) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is in harmony with the fact that God gives the children to the parents and the fact that the children belong to the parents.

The Christian school does justice to this parental responsibility for the education of their children in that it is established, maintained, and governed by an association of parents. It is this association, and thus the parents themselves, that have and exercise the authority over the entire school, its instruction and operations. The parents are able, therefore, to see to it personally that the school is and remains in every respect Christian. Nor is this an incidental matter. The current crisis in the schools of our land stems in part from the failure of the parents to execute their responsibility, choosing instead to shrug the duty of educating off on the State and its instructors.

We do not view this task as only a responsibility. It is a joyful work and a privilege.

The Reward

There are special hardships involved in the maintenance of Christian schools. One is the extra financial burden. Parents must pay double. They pay for the support of the non-Christian, State schools, and they pay for the Christian schools. But the sacrifice is not worthy to be compared with the reward.

The reward is implied in the proverb: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). It is a joyful work to be instrumental in training covenant children to live and work in this world as those that see and seek the Lord our God in everything. It is a privilege to strive to the uttermost that the children and youth neither ignore nor deny God in “earthly things,” but, in and with all things “earthly,” confess God’s Name and direct all to His honor.