SAVE THE CHILDREN: GOOD K-12 FORMAL EDUCATION IS NECESSARILY CHRISTIAN

by
Bruce H Smith

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To my mentor, Hugh John Flemming Jr.

I will always be grateful for your investment in my life
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

We are at war. This is not the war on terror. It is not a war fought with assault rifles, I.E.D.s, or laser guided missiles. It is the struggle launched back in the Garden of Eden. This conflict was declared by God when he said to the serpent, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.” (Genesis 3:15).\(^1\) This is a war for the souls of men and women, boys and girls.\(^2\) This is a spiritual battle. The Apostle Paul reminds us, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12).

One of the battlefields where this war rages is on the field of education. Christian parents generally understand that they have been given a biblical mandate regarding their children, “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deuteronomy 6:6,7). Parents are to play the leading role in the raising of children, including their training and education. There is disagreement concerning the method and content that goes into the training of children. I will argue that we are in an

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1 Unless otherwise indicated all Bible references in this paper are to be the *New International Version Bible (NIV)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1996).
2 In his book, *Battle Cry for a Generation*, Ron Luce presents a powerful reminder that we are in a fight for the hearts of our youth. See: Ron Luce, *Battle Cry for a Generation: the Fight to Save America’s Youth* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2005).
escalating spiritual conflict. We live in a world of ever increasing hostility towards Christianity, with attacks against our faith coming from a variety of directions. Christian parents today need to develop a deliberate strategy like never before concerning the raising of children and specifically in the area of education.

A 2006 Barna study revealed that sixty-one percent of young adults in their twenties, who had grown up in Christian homes, had disengaged (i.e., not actively attending church, reading the Bible, or praying) from their Christian upbringing. Ninety percent of those surveyed had attended the public school system. What role, if any, do public schools play in this struggle? I will argue that it plays a fundamentally destructive role in the war against our children. The public school system has changed over the decades, where any vestiges of Christian influence have vanished. It is now a system that presents an anti-Christian, secular humanistic worldview. It is a system that is beyond reforming. Good K-12 formal education is necessarily Christian. Christian parents today must see Christian schooling and Christian education as an essential plank in their strategy for the raising of their children. This is a life and death struggle. It is a fight that must be taken seriously. We must save the children.

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3 Ken Ham and Brett Beemer, *Already Gone: Why your kids will quit church and what you can do to stop it* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009), 24,179.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the time of the founding fathers education has played a leading role in the life of America. Exploring the history of education provides insight into where it started, and the issues and events that have influenced the direction of education. In, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning and Education 1560-1640*, John Morgan delves into the life of the Puritans and reveals the central role they played in the shaping of the educational system in America. This book traces the Puritans’ struggle against humanist values that germinated during the Renaissance. The clash between the fideism of the Reformation and the humanistic ideology was fought on many fronts. The Puritans saw the necessity of an active faith lived out in every sphere, including education. They emphasized the value of learning for understanding Scripture. My love of history made this an enjoyable read and dealt with many myths that have surrounded the Puritans. It is a fresh reminder of how far the educational system has drifted from its roots.

The great theologian, J. Gresham Machen, was a twentieth-century voice who spoke out against state-run education. His book, *Christianity and Liberalism*, first published in 1923, warned of the rise and influence of liberalism on the church and also within a public school system. Machen writes with such conviction, strength and clarity. Looking back on his work we are reminded of the prophets from the Old Testament who pronounced God’s warnings on the people. That tone is clearly evident when you read Machen’s thoughts concerning the takeover
by liberalism of the education system in America. “Shall we have a Federal Department of Education? (1926),” taken from, *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Summer 1977), pp. 188-97, was an address delivered before the Sentinels of the Republic, in Washington, D.C., January 12, 1926. Here we have Machen’s answer to the question; should we have a government run education system in America? His answer, a resounding no! He then goes into a detailed explanation of why a state-run education system is a terrible mistake. Now having the luxury of hindsight we see how prophetic Machen’s words were in warning of the pending disaster associated with a state-run education system.

*The Christian School*, by Noel Weeks, should be considered a must read by every Christian educator. In this book the author breaks down various subjects within a Christian school curriculum, providing helpful insights in teaching from a Christian worldview. There is something very practical about this book that would help any Christian educator process and work through issues ranging from, dress for students to maintaining morale of teachers. His writing style is very comfortable to read and an excellent resource for Christian schools. Weeks’ book entitled, *The Sufficiency of Scripture*, addresses the doctrine of Scripture and reiterates the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Again, Weeks presents the importance and centrality of Scripture in the life of the church in a manner that the reader can easily follow.

R.J. Rushdoony, in his book, *The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum*, points out the sharp contrasts between a Christian and a secular approach to education. His section on Christianity versus Humanism clearly communicates the antitheses that exists between the two worldviews. Rushdoony has been described as the father of Christian Reconstructionism, a somewhat controversial movement; however, his writings have been a touchstone for leaders of
the Christian school movement. You enter deep waters when you begin reading Rushdoony. I have often sensed that I am not quite getting everything he is saying. What should be recognized is that he was a highly intelligent, godly man, who sought to apply the Bible to every facet of life.

The book, *Contested Classrooms: Education, Globalization and Democracy in Alberta*, edited by Trevor W. Harrison and Jerrold L. Kachur, provides insight into some of the prevailing attitudes and emphasis being promoted in the public school system here in Canada. This reference gives “the other side” prospective on the issue of public education. This book is given to public education teachers as part of their training requirements. Important in research is finding sources from opposing views to avoid a lop-sided argument. This source presents the counter arguments and also provides an opportunity to refute their claims. This book is filled with the latest trends in progressive education promoted in the public school system in Canada. The parallels between the United States and Canada cannot be missed.

In exploring the current state of the public school system it is vital to understand the philosophical movements that are influencing state-run education in America. Dr. Ronald Nash in *The Closing of the American Heart: What’s Really Wrong with America’s Schools* presents a succinct and clear recap of the pervasive intellectual movements impacting education in America. Nash also points out the critical role played by the family and Christian parents in the education of their children. In his work Nash is not only concerned with how people think but what they think. The myth of neutrality is dealt with leaving the reader with no doubt that any education system is built upon a philosophical foundation.
A Christian Philosophy of Education by Gordon H. Clark provides an excellent source comparing the Christian philosophy of education with secular philosophies that dominate the public school system. Clark clearly communicates the antithetical position between a Christian worldview and competing forces. The foundation and authority of the Bible in Christian education is outlined in a readable and systematic manner. I found Clark’s work to be very thorough and comprehensive. He cites many examples of the sad consequences of a public education system that has run aground.

Doing research for this thesis led me to Thomas Sowell, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. All four of his books, Is Reality Optional; The Vision of the Anointed; Compassion versus Guilt and Other Essays; and Inside American Education, all were incredibly insightful, well-written, thought-provoking and offered an excellent critique of the influences and pressures that have shaped the public school system in America. Especially powerful was his view that established brainwashing techniques are disturbingly evident across the state-run education system. I am not sure if Sowell is a Christian but he possesses a keen mind and sharp wit that combined packs a powerful punch in driving home his points.

Bruce N. Shortt has written a thorough critique of the state-run educational system in America. In, The Harsh Truth About Public Schools, Shortt presents a sobering picture of the anti-Christian bias of the public education system, an environment where millions of Christian families send their children every school day. He also clearly articulates his view that school reform by Christians in America is not possible and presents arguments used by Christian parents in favour of supporting public schools. Shortt gives a fair and balanced response ending with a compelling case for Christian schools and homeschooling. The book is very well organized and
is in a readable style. Shortt has clearly done extensive research on the subject of state-run education.

Ron Luce, in his book, *Battle Cry for a Generation: the Fight to Save America’s Youth*, is a compelling read, written in a style that clearly communicates a sense of urgency and a call to action for Christian families in response to the challenges they face in raising their children. It provides a backdrop on the current condition and situation involving America’s youth. The book is written as a symbolic call to arms recognizing that the subject of training and educating our youth is a fight and needs to be approached as a conflict that must be fought.

Samuel Blumenfeld has dedicated a large portion of his life to writing on the public school system in America. His books, *The Victims of Dick & Jane and other essays; The New Illiterates: And how to keep your child from becoming one; N.E.A.: Trojan Horse in American Education; and Is Public Education Necessary?*, have provided tremendous information and research to draw from. Blumenfeld presents the power, influence and role of the National Education Association in the shaping of the public school system. He reveals how the radical left has used public school teachers in their socialist agenda. The failure of the system to provide quality education and the disastrous results that have accompanied a state-run education system are also presented. The volume of work Blumenfeld has produced on the subject is impressive. What becomes clear is that here is a man who acknowledges a crisis in our day and the need to sound the warning to the Christian community that we must take action in response to the public school.

*Foundations of Christian Education: Addresses to Christian Teachers*, is a collection of messages by the great systematic theologian, Louis Berkhof and noted apologist, Cornelius Van
Til. In these addresses delivered to national conventions of the National Union of Christian Schools (now Christian Schools International) Berkhof and Van Til point out the antitheses found in the public school, the philosophy, the curriculum and the view of the children being taught. Both men present strong arguments for the necessity of Christian education and the perils that await a casual attitude, an attitude held by many Christian parents towards the public school system. Assembling these messages by Van Til and Berkhof in one volume creates a powerful impression on the reader that Christian education is no small matter that can be brushed aside.

John Frame in his books, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* and *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, provide a clear picture of the competing worldviews and a Christian worldview that stands in opposition with the intellectual philosophies that swirl around us. Both books present a scholarly tool for Christian apologists. Frame provides a clear definition of a Christian worldview and what is a presupposition; important concepts to understand when exploring the topic of neutrality. I have always found Dr. Frame’s work a challenge to read and understand. He writes at a “top shelf” level where I am at a “lower shelf” level. It is good to be stretched but I oftentimes come away feeling that I really don’t fully comprehend all that he is saying. Clearly a brilliant theologian and apologist who I am grateful stands as an intellectual Christian against the competing worldviews.

A.A. Hodge, “Religion in the Public Schools (1887)”, is an article from, *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Summer 1977), pp. 180-187. Hodge was an American Presbyterian leader who would go on to follow in his father’s footsteps (Charles Hodge) as chair of systematic theology at Princeton. Hodge unveils the early stages in the reorganization of the
public school system in America and the fragmented Christian response along Roman Catholic and Protestant lines. His warnings, back before the turn of the twentieth century that generally went unheeded, have resulted in disaster for the American education system. Hodge joined other great Christian leaders of his time in sounding the alarm. There is such strength of conviction in his writing, presenting a compelling argument for Christians to rally around Christian education.

Andrew Nikiforuk, an award winning Canadian journalist, in writing, School’s Out: the Catastrophe in Public Education and What We Can Do About It, provides a Canadian prospective to the condition of public education in both Canada and the United States. The links and parallels from both countries cannot be missed. Here we have an assessment of the crumbling public school system from a secular source. Nikiforuk does not approach the subject from a Christian prospective. His solutions are to maintain the foundation of the public system, just demolish the structure on top and rebuild it. The recommendations he provides still are fraught with peril because the foundation is still the same. Here is a reminder that there is a consensus from Christian and non-Christian alike that something is not quite right about the current educational system. The solutions and what to do about it are where sharp division occurs.
CHAPTER 3

A BIBLICAL VIEW OF EDUCATION

The first and most basic principle of education is biblical authority. Our faith and the church are built upon the foundation of Scripture. John Calvin writes:

It is therefore clear that God has provided the assistance of the Word for the sake of all those to whom he has been pleased to give useful instruction because he foresaw that his likeness imprinted upon the most beautiful form of the universe would be insufficiently effective. ...the church is ‘built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles’ [Eph. 2:20]. If the teaching of the prophets and apostles is the foundation, this must have had authority before the church even existed.

God has provided us with his word to guide and govern our lives. The authority of God’s word is also stated in The Westminster Confession of Faith. A.D. 1647:

Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation; therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his Church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.

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An important passage found in Scripture regarding principles of Christian education is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-7.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

The Jews called this the Shema (from the Hebrew word for “hear”). The two governing principles found in this passage are: education is to be God-centered and education is a parental responsibility. The passage speaks of a total application of God’s word in every aspect of life. The entire Bible is concerned with education. In the Apostle Paul’s letter to Timothy we see the proof text for a biblical philosophy of education.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you have learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

The curriculum of Christian education must be guided by the biblical view of man. Genesis 1:27 states: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” This reality has a number of implications for how we are to view children. Children have been created in the very image of God. God, not man, is the giver of life. As our Creator, every breath we take has been ordained by him. God is the one who made man to be a living soul. We are religious beings. There are many who seek to

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10 Clark, *Christian Philosophy of Education*, 140.
compartmentalize life, acknowledging a spiritual dimension but arguing that it is simply a component to be addressed on spiritual occasions. But because we are religious beings we have an intrinsic desire to worship. This desire is to be acted upon in every area of life, “...whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31). There are no secular compartments in the Christian life, at home or at school. All aspects of life are to glorify God, including education.

The prevailing philosophies of our day emphasize the autonomy of man. This view seeks to promote others to think autonomously, encouraging humans to think without the correction of revelation. This position presents an anthropocentric focus where man is the measure of all things, the central focus in all of life. This view stands in sharp contrast to the biblical view of man. Adults and children are not autonomous. We are dependant, not independent, finite, not infinite. God is our Creator and the one who sustains life. David writes, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” (Psalm 139:13,14). Children do not find their identity in themselves or from their actions. We are God’s creation, blessed with many talents and gifts through God’s good pleasure. In contrast, a humanistic-based philosophy declares man as the center of his world.

Satan claimed sovereignty over the earth in his temptation of Jesus. He showed Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world” (Matthew 4:8) and declared, “all this I will give you, if you bow down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9). Jesus did not fall for the devil’s lies. The Lord is

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12 Clark, *Christian Philosophy of Education*, 141.
sovereign over all, including the kingdoms of this world.\textsuperscript{15} There is no area of life that does not fall under God’s authority, including education. All creation is under God’s law. We see the obedience of creation to its Creator and we, as part of His creation, are to submit to the commands of the Lord.\textsuperscript{16}

What is the purpose of education? The majority of our population would see the purpose to be a preparatory ground for a career or occupation. Modern educators speak in terms of equipping children to function in society.\textsuperscript{17} Others will point to the purpose of producing “good citizens.” But what do these educators mean by “good”? Some public educators have even admitted their uncertainty as to where the system is going and why they are doing what they are doing.\textsuperscript{18} What does the Bible say is the purpose of education? The answer is found in Proverbs 22:6: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”\textsuperscript{19} Christian education is to nurture Christian children in the truth. Life has meaning because God gives it meaning. We are to have dominion over all the earth. Man is called of God to subdue the earth, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” (Genesis 1:27-28).\textsuperscript{20}

There are those who believe that knowledge can be pursued simply for its own sake, yet educational institutions seek to produce a particular kind of person. The most important element of education is not only the process but the goal of the process. The non-Christian educator

\textsuperscript{15} Thorburn, \textit{The Children Trap}, 12-13.
\textsuperscript{18} Robert Thorburn, \textit{The Children Trap}, 89.
\textsuperscript{20} Thorburn, \textit{The Children Trap}, 21.
wants to produce one kind of person; the Christian, guided by Scripture, desires to produce a very different kind of person.\footnote{Clark, \textit{Christian Philosophy of Education}, 69.} Education is an important subject to study because it has vital relationships with all human activities.\footnote{Ibid., 3.} Education lays the foundation of future character, for morality and religion\footnote{Westerhoff, \textit{McGuffey}, 176. During the nineteenth-century the McGuffey Readers were the basic textbook in 37 states. Its approach to education was clearly based on a Christian worldview. It is estimated that one hundred and twenty million copies of the reader were sold between 1836-1920. \textit{The Saturday Evening Post} ran a story entitled, “That Guy McGuffey”. It claimed that with the exception of the Bible, McGuffey’s Readers had the greatest influence in shaping the morals and tastes of America. Henry Ford wrote: “Most of those youngsters who still survive have a profound respect for the compiler of the Readers. The moral principles Dr. William Holmes McGuffey stressed, the solid character building qualities are emphasized…” See: Westerhoff, 14-15.} and is the single most important factor in the presentation of a society’s culture.\footnote{Perks, \textit{The Christian Philosophy}, 116.} It has also become the main arena for the struggle between the competing worldviews of Christianity and humanism.\footnote{R.J. Rushdoony, \textit{The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum} (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1981), 161.}
CHAPTER 4
THE PROBLEM – COMPETING WORLDVIEWS

War of the Worlds – The Battle of Ideas

Good heavens, something's wriggling out of the shadow like a gray snake, now it's another one, and another. They look like tentacles to me. There, I can see the thing's body. It's large as a bear and it glistens like wet leather. But that face. It ... it's indescribable. I can hardly force myself to keep looking at it. The eyes are black and gleam like a serpent. The mouth is V-shaped with saliva dripping from its rimless lips that seem to quiver and pulsate.... The thing is raising up. The crowd falls back. They've seen enough. This is the most extraordinary experience. I can't find words. I'm pulling this microphone with me as I talk. I'll have to stop the description until I've taken a new position. Hold on, will you please, I'll be back in a minute.  

On October 30, 1938, while millions of Americans tuned into a popular radio program, Orson Welles performed his radio adaptation of H.G. Wells science fiction novel, *The War of the Worlds*. The performance created panic across the United States. Convinced of an alien invasion citizens flocked to the highways, hid in basements, loaded weapons and even covered their faces with wet towels to defend against Martian poison gas! Many listeners truly believed a war of worlds had begun. So many that night mistakenly believed an invasion from another world was reality. Sadly few today, even within the church, recognize the reality that a war of worlds is being waged all around us. This clash was so clearly recognized in *Legacy of Freedom*, by George Charles Roche III, published back in the late 1960s.

26 H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (performed by Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air and broadcast on the Columbia Broadcasting System on Sunday, October 30, 1938 from 8:00-9:00 pm) <http://members.aol.com/jeff1070/script.html>
As a people, or at least as individuals composing our society, we believe in God, in right and wrong, in individual freedom. Unfortunately, a new “intellectual” class has arisen in the modern world whose purpose seems to be leading men away from these beliefs. As the result, the ancient truths and the heritage of our civilization are under attack in our time. The individual citizen, the layman, the “average” man, is unprepared to deal with this attack and comes increasingly to question his own heritage because of his inability to defend it. Such a failure of belief and such a lack of understanding is doubly unfortunate, because the defenders of the Western tradition are active, thoughtful, and very much on the scene in the mid-twentieth century. Yet mass communications, public school education, and public entertainment consistently reflect the values of the “intellectuals” who would destroy the tradition of our civilization.  

This war of worldviews is a war that shapes the thinking of each person and their outlook on life. What is meant by the term, “worldview”? How does a Christian worldview compare with competing forces?

The term worldview is taken from the German, *Weltanschauung*, meaning a way of looking at the world (*welt* = world; *schauen* = to look). German romanticists developed the thought that within cultures one finds a pattern or common outlook on life expressed in various areas such as art, literature, music and social institutions.  

Henry Van Til declared that culture is “religion externalized”. In understanding the culture it is imperative to explore the underlying worldview. Later, the concept of worldview was introduced from a Christian prospective by the Dutch thinkers, Abraham Kuyper and Herman Dooyeweerd who argued the necessity for Christians to understand the philosophy behind current attitudes and views in order to develop their own Christian counter-culture.  

A Christian worldview provides an all-encompassing view of the world. It addresses who God is, the world that He made and the relation of the world to God. It accounts for human beings, their role in the world and their relation to God. A Christian worldview is a

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comprehensive account of metaphysics, epistemology and values. In fact there is no sphere of life left out. Everything in life, history, science, business, education, the arts - all areas receive a distinctive Christian view.\textsuperscript{32} There is little common ground between a Christian worldview and any of the non-Christian systems.\textsuperscript{33} 

In competing worldviews we see the sharp distinctions between a system that denies all revelation, and points to a naturalistically conceived world. Any system of education must be able to make a distinction between truth and falsehood. Truth for the Christian is not in a constant state of flux, something that is constantly changing and pliable.\textsuperscript{34} God is immutable and omniscient. God is truth. Truth does not change.\textsuperscript{35} There are not two kinds of truth, a scientific one and a religious truth. There is only one truth, Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, the word of God who was made flesh and who has been revealed through his infallible word.\textsuperscript{36} 

In the early part of the twentieth century the progressive education movement stressed the importance of the method of teaching. Method was paramount to the point where truth was banished from their system. But truth, or metaphysics, cannot be removed without disastrous

\textsuperscript{32}John M. Frame, \textit{Apologetics to the Glory of God}, 32.

\textsuperscript{33}It is important to acknowledge that there is disagreement amongst Christians on what a Christian worldview has in common with any non-Christian system. Two approaches that would argue the point are \textit{Classical Apologetics} and Cornelius Van Til’s Reformed apologetics. Space will not permit an in-depth exploration of the issue, however it is necessary to acknowledge varying schools of thought. For further study and comparison see, John M. Frame, \textit{Apologetics to the Glory of God}, 219-243, and the audio series \textit{The Bahnsen Sproul Debate: Discussion and Debate with Questions and Answers Over Apologetic Method} (Jackson, Mississippi: Reformed Theological Seminary, Covenant Media Foundation).

\textsuperscript{34}The search for truth can be traced back to the Garden of Eden when the serpent asked Eve, “Did God really say…?” In western philosophy Heraclitus sought the answer to the question, “What is the stuff out of which the world is made?” His conclusion, the basic stuff is fire! He argued that reality is not a number of things but a process of continual destruction. Change is a constant, including truth. As a result Heraclitus became known as the philosopher of change. For further study see: W.T. Jones, \textit{The Classical Mind: A History of Western Philosophy}, Vol. 1 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1980), 14; Donald Palmer, \textit{Looking at Philosophy: The Unbearable Heaviness of Philosophy made Lighter} (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1994), 20; Peter A. Angeles, \textit{The HarperCollins Dictionary of Philosophy}, Second Edition (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 125; Gordon Clark, \textit{Thales to Dewey}, 17.

\textsuperscript{35}Clark, \textit{Christian Philosophy of Education}, 129.

consequences as it is foundational to building a method or practice. Truth provides the goals and
the purposes.  

Relativism

We live in a time where relativism has become the prevailing philosophy in our society. This philosophy presents truth to be relative. Relativism declares that all values have some tie to a respective culture and that culture has the capacity to create different values. Any person who promotes one set of values over another is considered “egocentric or chauvinistic.” All philosophies and views are considered valid except for those who claim to be true. All ideas are tolerated except for those who disagree with these assumptions. For relativists, all religions are seen as basically the same; equally valid, except when it comes to claims of exclusivity (i.e. Jesus declaration as to being the only way to eternal life). Morality is seen as personal preference, good and evil are simply labels. The relativists struggle with being consistent with their own relativism. In their world all truth claims should be valid, including the Christian position, all moral positions, including biblical values and all religions, including Christianity. But we see relativists reject the Christian worldview and yet embrace other truth claims such as evolution. They also hold to moral positions on pro-abortion and pro-homosexual rights and increasingly see Christianity as bad and a threat. Relativism leads to intellectual death and the destruction of education.  

Humanism

In a secular-humanistic approach the emphasis does focus on the inner man and learning is linked to modifying behavior. According to humanist philosophy education becomes the key

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to reforming society. Social reformers use this logic in their argument over the importance of educating the poor, “If poverty was caused by idleness, idleness by ignorance, and ignorance by the lack of schooling, then surely the community as a whole would benefit from investing in education of the under-classes. Their children would be taught discipline, respect for private property, the virtues of manners, and morality. Juvenile delinquency would thus be prevented...”. Quite a tall order for what education could accomplish!\(^{40}\) According to humanists if behavior changes learning is taking place. This position is traced back to the stimulus-response theory of man. But the theory ignores the mind and heart. The decisive issues of man are wrestled through in the inner man. The humanist view is man-centered, an existential theory with no accountability to absolutes or persons outside oneself.\(^{41}\) This competing worldview declares that man, not God, decides the goal of life. Man will also decide his own standard of right and wrong.\(^{42}\) The public classroom has become the staging ground for an intense attack against all traditional values. There is no right and wrong in a specific situation, with the student left to determine right and wrong. All responses are equally valid. Such views are then taught to children in preparing them for life.\(^{43}\) Humanism is the antithesis of Christianity. The following chart reflects the stark contrast between the two:\(^{44}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Humanism</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1. The sovereignty of the triune God is the starting point, and this God speaks through His infallible word.</td>
<td>1. The sovereignty of man and the state is the starting point, and it is the word of the scientific, elite man which we must heed.</td>
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\(^{41}\) Fennema, *Nurturing Children*, 40.


\(^{43}\) Ibid., 225.

2. We must accept God as God. He is alone Lord.

3. God’s word and Person is the Truth.

4. Education is into God’s truth in every realm.

5. Education is discipline under a body of truth. This body of truth grows with research and study, but truth is objective and God-given. We begin by pre-supposing God and His word.

6. God’s standards grade us. We must measure up to them. The teacher grades the pupil.

7. Man’s will, and the child’s will, must be broken to God’s purpose. Man must be remade, reborn by God’s grace.

8. Man’s problem is sin. Man must be recreated by God.

9. The family is God’s basic institution.

2. Man is his own god, choosing or determining for himself what constitutes good and evil (Gen. 3:5).

3. Truth is pragmatic and existential: it is what we find works and is helpful to us.

4. Education is the self-realization and self-development of the child.

5. Education is freedom from restraint and from any idea of truth outside of us. We are the standard, not something outside of man.

6. The school and the world must measure up to the pupil’s needs. The pupil grades the teacher.

7. Society must be broken and remade to man’s will, and the child’s will is sacred.

8. Man’s problem is society. Society must be recreated by man.

9. The family is obsolete. The individual or the state is basic.

Positivism

Joining relativism and secular-humanism in influencing the educational system of America is a third intellectual movement known as positivism. This position holds to the belief that human knowledge cannot be extended past what can be discovered by the scientific method. There are many who believe that science is the only area of study that is true. Everything else is only a matter of opinion. Positivists hold the view that if a belief cannot be tested by the scientific method then it cannot be true and thus must be irrational. It begs the question; can the positivists own thesis be tested by the scientific method? The answer is it cannot. This makes the positivists own claim to be neither true nor rational. This is the self-defeating nature of positivism.  

J.P. Moreland, in his book, *Scaling the Secular City*, writes:

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The aims, methodologies, and presuppositions of science cannot be validated by science. One cannot turn to science to justify science any more than one can pull oneself up by his own bootstraps. The validation of science is a philosophical issue, not a scientific one, and any claim to the contrary will be self-refuting philosophical claim.\textsuperscript{46}

**Worldview Presuppositions**

The eighteenth century movement known as the Enlightenment was aimed at destroying Christianity. Karl Barth described the movement as “a system founded upon the presupposition of faith in the omnipotence of human ability.”\textsuperscript{47} The shaping of the modern education theory has been influenced by the teachings of John Locke. As a champion of the Enlightenment Locke saw the period as a weapon to be used against God. He promoted the mind as a blank piece of paper, a free mind, a passive mind, but a receptive mind. Educators saw the opportunity to remake man. The modern goal of education draws from this premise.\textsuperscript{48}

Competing worldviews are built upon presuppositions. In understanding and responding to competing worldviews it is essential that one explores the presuppositions the intellectual movement is built upon. John Frame defines the term presupposition as, “a belief that takes precedence over another and therefore serves as a criterion for another. An ultimate presupposition is a belief over which no other takes precedence. For a Christian, the content of Scripture must serve as his ultimate presupposition.”\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 66.
The Public School System – Philosophical Underpinnings (myth of neutrality)

To be ignorant and simple now – not to be able to meet enemies on their own ground – would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defence but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered. C.S. Lewis

The prevailing philosophies of our day impact every area of life and lie beneath the state run educational system. But can public schools claim neutrality in their view of religion, specifically Christianity? Many public educators would flat out deny their schools are bastions for secular humanism or promote any philosophical position. They would argue that the classrooms in public schools are simply neutral places for learning. However, neutrality is impossible for man in education. Any educational system derives its approach from an underlying philosophy. Originally, public schools were not to favor any particular denomination and were not intended to attack Christianity. The secularists claimed neutrality, but their worldview is a profession of faith in a false god. Doubt and skepticism form their basis of knowledge. Today Christianity is attacked throughout the public system. One avenue that has been used to refute Christianity is in the field of science and specifically regarding the origin of life and creation. There are numerous reported cases by parents testifying how teachers have used evolution as evidence to contradict Scripture that point to a world created by God. This has been taught to students as early as the second grade. How can a seven or eight year old stand against such teaching?

51 Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen covers the myth of neutrality, specifically in the field of Apologetics in his book, Always Ready. Bahnsen clearly presents the impossibility of locating neutral ground in the clash of competing worldviews. The Christian worldview and humanistic worldview are at odds. See: Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen, Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 1996).
52 Clark, Christian Philosophy of Education, 68, 70.
Some leading secular scholars have openly admitted to the religious nature of education. Alfred North Whitehead recognized that the essence of education is religious. Considered the “dean” of American historians, Henry Steele Commager, declared education to be our first “American religion,” a religion where one must “put our faith,” and declare “our devotion” even in the “architecture” of institutions built “like cathedrals.” John Dewey, considered one of the most influential educators of the twentieth-century, stated, “If we have any ground to be religious about anything, we may take education religiously.” In a publication from Columbia University Teachers College, an institution widely viewed as having significantly influenced modern day education, Philip H. Phenix writes:

Not only does religion provide the ultimate foundation for education, but education provides an admirable field for implementing religious commitments, thus making faith explicit in a concrete act. A significant test of the governing religious convictions of a person or group is the character of the education promoted by that person or group.\(^5\)

Education is a “form of religion in action” as children are molded and shaped to live their lives according to the religious belief. Professor Richard A. Baer, Jr., of Cornell University said, “It is sheer mythology to think there is such a thing as value-neutral or religion-neutral education.”\(^5\)

The position that secular education remains neutral is the Achilles’ heel of public education. “In our democracy we proceed on the assumption that it is illegal to teach the faith on which it rests.”\(^5\)

It is quite obvious that public schools are not Christian but it has also become increasingly clear that these schools are not neutral. Scripture teaches that the fear of the Lord is a fundamental part of knowledge; but public schools have removed any reference to God leaving students with the message that knowledge can be attained apart from God. Taking God out of

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\(^5\) Ibid., 9.

the curriculum, in effect, declares that God has no control over history, that there is no plan being worked out and that God does not foreordain whatever comes to pass. A school system that ignores God teaches its students to ignore God! This is not neutrality! It teaches that God, if he exists, is unimportant and irrelevant in human affairs. This is atheism! A century ago, the theologian, Presbyterian pastor and Confederate Army chaplain, Robert Lewis Dabney, pointed out the impossibility of neutrality in education:

The Instructor has to teach history, cosmology, psychology, ethics, the laws of nations. How can he do it without saying anything favorable or unfavorable about the beliefs of evangelical Christians, Catholics, Socinians, Deists, pantheists, materialists, or fetish worshippers, who all claim equal rights under American institutions? His teaching will indeed be “the play of Hamlet, with the part of Hamlet omitted.”

Dabney went on concerning the topic of origins, asking, if a scientist could give the “…genesis of earth and man without indicating whether Moses or Huxley is his prophet?” The answer is that directionless, nonaligned education is by definition impossible. Certain worldview assumptions will be made. They will either be based on biblical truth, or they will not.

Christian education does not claim to be neutral. The school exists to glorify God! The Bible is the textbook, the starting point of all knowledge. The Christian school is there to support Christian parents in their God-given responsibility in the raising of their children in the fear of the Lord. Training children implies a goal. That objective is one of Christian maturity.

The call for the separation of church and state by many modern educators in the public education system is another way of calling for a “wall of separation” between the Christian

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56 Clark, Christian Philosophy of Education, 72. Martin Luther said, “I am afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures and engraving them in the heart of the youth.” Bruce N. Shortt, The Harsh Truth about Public Schools (Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon Foundation, 2004), 12.
58 Ibid., 58.
59 Thorburn, Children Trap, 18.
church and the state.\textsuperscript{61} This term, “wall of separation between church and state”, is taken from an address given by Thomas Jefferson to Danbury Baptists in 1802. Many argue that Jefferson’s quote regarding the separation of church and state has been taken out of its context and used in the field of education as an argument for the removal of any references to our Christian heritage from the educational system.\textsuperscript{62} Jefferson was answering a question from Danbury Baptists. Their concern regarded the state setting up their own church system. They feared a state church at odds with the doctrines of their denomination and others. It was not a call to separate religion from government but rather to keep the government out of the church. While Jefferson was critical of what he considered religious intolerance he did recognize the role Christianity played as a positive influence on society. Shortly after Thomas Jefferson became President he said, “(The ) Christian religion, when divested of rags in which (the clergy) have enveloped it, is a religion of all others most friendly to liberty, science and the freest expansion of the human mind.”\textsuperscript{63}

The landmark Supreme Court case of \textit{Everso}n \textit{v. Board of Education} (1947) proved to be an effective weapon towards striping Christianity from the public education system. In that landmark ruling Justice Hugo Black declared, “The First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable. We could not approve the slightest breach.” Black went on to state:

\begin{quote}
The “establishment of religion” clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the federal government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another. Neither can
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{61} Shortt, \textit{Public Schools}, 42.
\textsuperscript{62} John Eidsmoe, \textit{Christianity and the Constitution: The Faith of Our Founding Fathers} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), 237-238. Thomas Sowell writes: “Just as plain and straightforward laws have been stretched and twisted for the benefit of various mascots, so this plain and straightforward provision of the Constitution has been stretched and twisted to attack religion. Such phrases as a “wall of separation” between church and state government “neutrality” toward religion have been staples of constitutional interpretation by the Supreme Court, though neither phrase appears anywhere in the Constitution.” See: Thomas Sowell, \textit{The Vision of the Anointed: Self-Congratulation as a Basis for Social Policy} (New York: BasicBooks, 1995), 178.

\textsuperscript{63} Eidsmoe, \textit{Christianity and the Constitution}, 237-238.
force nor influence a person to go to or to remain away from church against his will or force him to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion. No person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for church attendance or non-attendance. No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion. Neither a state nor the federal government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa.

Since this ruling American courts have expanded the separation concept with the education establishment, going even further, taking the wall to new heights and becoming a law until themselves.  

Education by the state will have statist ends. These ends are many times anti-biblical.

The state’s purpose is to recreate society in its own image. The public education and the philosophy behind it is also a matter of sovereignty and of origins. The one who has created something, molded and shaped it, has the ultimate power over it. The author is the ultimate authority. The state seeks to establish its power and sovereignty. But William Penn, founder of the Pennsylvania colony (Thomas Jefferson called him “the greatest lawgiver our world has produced”), outlined his dependence on sovereignty of origins: “He that begets thee, owes [archaic for owns]; and has a natural Right over thee.” Penn understood the relationship between authority and origins concluding, “Next to God, thy parents”; and only then, “next [to] them, the Magistrate.”

The public education system cannot operate in neutral, between a secular or Christian worldview. A policy regarding the disciplining of students cannot be both Christian and humanistic. The two positions differ on what to do, what is evil, and how it originates.

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65 Rushdoony, Education and the Family, 2-3.
66 Adams, Who Owns the Children, 309.
67 Clark, Christian Philosophy of Education, 64.
Morality is part of the public school curriculum. The question is whose morality will be imposed? Public education presents a variety of moral and ethical systems with the student left to pick and choose their preferences. There is no foundational starting point since there is no true knowledge and understanding.  

It is no surprise that the family is attacked and control of children dominates the landscape. The public school curriculum reflects a bias. Removal of traditional family values has been the order of the day. In state-run educational textbooks there are general references to family although the words, “marriage, wedding, husband and wife” are never mentioned. Social Studies textbooks in Grades 1-4 exclude any mention of religious activity, of prayer or church attendance as part of contemporary life. When a child reads, even in the early years, the words have some meaning. Public educators have sought to remove any vestige of God from their textbooks. Talking animals have replaced the family unit. The quote from the humanist Paul Blanchard reveals the underlying current of the public system, “Our schools may not teach Johnny to read properly, but the fact that Johnny is in school until he is 16 tends to lean toward the elimination of religious superstition.” Some would argue that worldviews and neutrality are not really factors in primary education. But the removal of any reference to religion has simply been a result of the complete secularization of public schools. One step further is the attack on Christianity throughout the public school system. The stories featured in children’s readers have no reference or mention of religion in any of the books. Stories focus on animals,

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72 Shortt, *Public Schools*, 54.
73 Clark, *Christian Philosophy of Education*, 70.
archeology and magic. The argument for removal of religion from history text books is the need for separation of church and state. This position is often presented and is the rationalization used by those who have an anti-Christian worldview. However, removing religion from the historical record is to misrepresent the facts. Teaching about religion is not teaching religion. The vast majority of American history textbooks have no mention of the Great Awakenings, the Salem Witch Trials, the links between churches and their role in the anti-slavery movement or the Christian character of Martin Luther King Jr. and his movement. Not only do we find examples of the removal of the role Christianity in American history has played but we also see the retelling of history. A first grade class was told by their teacher that at Thanksgiving the Pilgrims gave thanks to the Indians! A mother of one of the students went to the principal to express her shock at the misrepresentation of facts. When she pointed out that Thanksgiving was centered on a feast to thank God the principal responded that her position “was just opinion and not documented fact.”

We see the influence of romanticism in relation to language learning. Children must learn by being exposed and not by being taught. The student learns through experience, pattern recognition and inference from context. Grammar is not necessary. It’s about being exposed to language. Any necessity for formal teaching is dismissed.

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74 Vitz, Censorship, 65.
75 Ibid., 78. Paul Vitz also points out that a review was conducted examining twenty American history books approved by a public school system in Maryland, a system that had established a primary goal to educate students with their “legal, moral, ethical, and cultural heritage.” The conclusion based on the material reviewed was it appeared that after 1700 Christianity had no historical presence in America... “These textbooks are written to propound the thesis that America was settled for the sake of religious freedom, and that religious freedom means the absence of religion...” (Ibid.,59.)
76 Vitz, Censorship, 57.
77 Ibid., 19.
78 Weeks, Christian School, 140.
In the field of science we see the myth of neutrality further demonstrated. Arnold S. Nash in addressing the situation in modern educational philosophy writes:

In particular we have seen how the liberal Weltanschauung (world-and-life view), based upon the premise that science is presuppositionless and deals with facts and not with values, is dissolving before our eyes.\(^{79}\)

The non-believer starts with the pre-supposition that the world can be understood independently of the God who created and sustains it, and that man possesses sufficient faculties to give order and meaning. These are religious beliefs, received by the non-believers own faith.\(^{80}\) Humanistic science ignores God. But true science, which sits under the authority of the Bible, is very different. It submits to the authority of God’s Word and is a tool for a deeper appreciation for the majesty of God and all that He has created and ordered.\(^{81}\) Non-believers portray the conflict between humanism and Christianity as fact vs. faith. In truth, it is faith vs. faith.\(^{82}\) Man has a predisposition toward religion. But man suppresses the truth about God and builds his own image.\(^{83}\)

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

\[\text{Rom 1:18-23}\]

\(^{79}\) Cornelius Van Til, The Dilemma of Education, 18.


\(^{81}\) Weeks, Sufficiency of Scripture, 17.


\(^{83}\) Calvin: Institutes, 45. Calvin stated: “But they would never have achieved this if men’s minds had not already been imbued with a firm conviction about God, from which the inclination toward religion springs as from a seed.” (italics mine). Calvin, 47, “They do not therefore apprehend God as he offers himself, but imagine him as they have fashioned him in their own presumption.”
Many prefer to deceive themselves rather than acknowledge God’s existence. Intellectual pride makes self-deception quite satisfactory by simply distorting reality.\textsuperscript{84}

The secular humanists influencing public education have taken a page out of George Orwell’s \textit{1984}, “…thought is all we care about. We do not merely destroy our enemies; we change them.”\textsuperscript{85} The vehicle chosen by humanists for their recreation of society has been the public education system and their methodology has drawn from well-established brainwashing techniques.

\textbf{Brainwashing Methods}

1. \textit{Emotional stress, shock, or desensitization}, to break down both intellectual and emotional resistance.

2. \textit{Isolation}, whether physical or emotional, from familiar sources of emotional support and resistance.

3. \textit{Cross-examining pre-existing values}, often by manipulating peer-pressure.

4. \textit{Stripping the individual of normal defenses}, such as reserve, dignity, a sense of privacy, or the ability to decline to participate.

5. \textit{Rewarding} acceptance of the new attitudes, values, and beliefs – a reward which can be simply release from the pressures inflicted on those who resist, or may take other symbolic or tangible form.\textsuperscript{86}

\textbf{Stress and Desensitization} - Public schools, under the umbrella of an educational activity, have been known to subject students to a variety of stress and shock scenarios. During sex education eleven-year-old boys have been subjected to having a plastic model of female genitalia.

\textsuperscript{84} Blumenfeld, \textit{Dick & Jane}, 163.
with a tampon insert passed around the class. In a sixth-grade class students watched a video featuring three actual births of babies so graphic that one of the children fainted. Other desensitizing movies have shown male genitalia, couples in intercourse and masturbation. In a so-called “health” class a junior high class required all the boys to say “vagina” and all the girls to say “penis”. One girl was so noticeably embarrassed that it prompted the teacher to have her stand and repeat it ten times!  

Isolation and Cross-Examination – Success in brainwashing is dependent not only on the stress inflicted on the individual but also the extent any resistance can be undermined. Isolation removes a person from the psychological support of those who share their values and is one method of breaking down their resistance. In classrooms teachers, in trying to reshape values of students, use tone of voice to intimidate elementary students who have not adhered to the teacher’s instruction, challenging any who might wish to disagree. An example of similar manipulation occurred when a teacher raised the moral issues of premarital sex and homosexuality and called on members of the class to defend their positions. The teacher drew from a number of students who shared the same moral beliefs favoring promiscuity and used the peer pressure on one student in an attempt to change his position. That lone student was called upon twenty-three times in one class to defend his values in opposition to his fellow classmates. This isolation from peers is only part of the process. The other component is also emotional isolation from parents. A method sometimes used is called a “magic circle,” where everything said must be kept confidential within the group.

Stripping Away Defenses – In Maoist China, where the term “brainwashing” found its origins, an important element in the process was “the writing of autobiographies and diaries.”

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87 Ibid., 36-40.
88 Ibid., 41-43.
which were then analyzed by the group. This was not the acquiring of facts, but of discovering vulnerabilities and putting the person on the defensive. Every motive was reviewed with the constant question being asked – why? In one seventh-grade public school “health” class a private journal was required, not to record events, but feelings. No effort was made by the teacher to correct grammar, punctuation or sentence structure. It was not an educational activity but rather a method of psychological conditioning. Confidentiality from parents was also stressed. Students were informed that they “could write about personal problems and family relationships even if they were bad because the teacher is a friend and would not tell.”

Attitude-changing programs involve so many schools, teachers, administrators and “facilitators,” with a variety of purposes in mind. The most pervasive principle is that decisions are not to be made by relying on traditional values. Instead, values themselves are to be questioned and compared with other individuals and societies. This is to be done in a neutral or “non-judgmental” manner, not seeking after a “right” or “wrong” but rather to discover what feels best for the individual. The focus is on the person’s feelings. Parents are not presented as guides to follow, or as sources of valuable life experiences, but as problems to contend with, or even examples to avoid.

The Public School System - A Historical Prospective

Important to understanding the current public educational system one should be familiar with the history of education in America.

89 Ibid., 43-44.
90 Ibid., 47-49.
Early Christianity recognized the importance of education and adopted the Greek and Roman models of education. As the church grew formalized educational systems developed. By the Medieval period the church had begun the establishment of universities. The Reformation promoted the need for a higher level of literacy. The priesthood of all believers stressed the importance for all to be educated. Geneva was seen as the model of a Reformed city. Geneva’s influence on the Scottish Reformer, John Knox, was significant. From his visit to the city Knox was convinced of the essential role education played in the advancement of Protestantism and for the establishment of a solid foundation for society. Knox was responsible for the development of “The First Book of Discipline” (1560) which included the church’s role in education. This Church of Scotland Reformed confession of faith would become a blueprint for Protestant society. It outlined a program for poor relief and a massive educational program with every parish having a school as well as a church. The Puritan immigration and later Ulster Scots brought to America their theology, a Calvinist-based doctrine of God, man, and society with a specific view of the role of church and state.

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92 Ibid., 3.
93 Shortt, *Public Schools*, 296, 297.
97 Needham, *2000 Years of Christ’s Power*, 415-419. John Knox’s influence was not limited to education but can even be seen in the American Declaration of Independence. The Scottish intellectual John Witherspoon also played a significant role in shaping the philosophy of James Madison who wrote much of the U.S. Constitution (see Kelly, *Emergence of Liberty*, 132-133). Witherspoon was a key player in the introduction of the Scottish school of common sense philosophy at Princeton that also became the unchallenged philosophy of other leading educational centers across the United States. At the core of Christian education lay the influence of the Scottish school of common sense philosophy. For an excellent overview of its role in Christian education see: David Estrada, “The Scottish School of Common Sense Philosophy,” *Christianity & Society*, Vol. XV, No. 1, Summer 2005, 34-41.
98 Kelly, *Emergence of Liberty*, 119.
The arrival of the *Mayflower* in November, 1620, followed by the *Arbella* a decade later, would be the starting point for the great Puritan migration. Their desire for religious freedom propelled them to this new land.\(^9^9\) The Puritans sought to promote education. Education in early America was dominated by schooling at home or by tutors. In light of today’s standards it was Christian schools taught by Protestant clergy.\(^1^0^0\) The Puritans held to a position that viewed Christianity and education as directly linked.\(^1^0^1\) Eventually, three types of School were established: provision of basic literacy; preparation for apprenticeship involving training in English and arithmetic; and preparation for universities through grammar schools.\(^1^0^2\) The Puritans recognized the need for a godly education and the importance of this training to begin as soon as possible in life. At the heart of teaching in Puritan homes were the Ten Commandments. The parents worked in cooperation with church leaders, combining education and religious instruction.\(^1^0^3\) Parents were to educate their children through catechizing, reading, praying and instructing them in Christian living. Likewise, teachers or schoolmasters were not only responsible to train in basic forms of education but also were to provide examples of godliness and create a godly environment for learning. Teachers were also expected to coordinate activities with the local minister. The Puritans’ theology was not a works-based salvation, however, they did argue that somehow “an improved environment may have a more favorable conclusion”. It was believed that only godly men and a focused action could change the context.\(^1^0^4\) The

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\(^1^0^0\) Shortt, *Public Schools*, 294-295.

\(^1^0^1\) Ibid., 298.


\(^1^0^4\) Ibid., 302.
common schools they established were the original public schools, scattered across New England and supported by local communities. These schools, founded in the early days of the Puritan commonwealth were seen as vital in the training of the next generation of the Calvinist Puritan religion. The Reformation had established biblical authority over papal authority requiring an increased need in biblical literacy. The Puritans were also aware of how Luther and the German nobility had effectively developed a public school system to teach religious doctrine and maintain a rule of order amongst the Protestant states.\textsuperscript{105} Leading Puritans, including John Stockwood, Thomas Norton and John Brinsley, saw the value to the nation of “both temporal and spiritual – of systemically educating the next generation from an early age.”\textsuperscript{106}

A great influence in the development of American thought was the structure of society in colonial America where power flowed from the bottom up not from the top down.\textsuperscript{107} The common schools were funded locally, organized by local committees, who developed their own standards, chose their teachers and selected the curriculum. There was no central authority dictating how each school was to operate.

American Christianity had a strong intellectual focus. Institutes of higher learning were established with foundational Christian roots.\textsuperscript{108} Harvard College was founded in 1636 as a seminary to educate future leaders as clergymen and magistrates. Harvard’s original motto was \textit{Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae} (Truth for Christ and the Church). The institution established “Rules and Precepts,” which included:

Let every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John

\textsuperscript{106} Morgan, \textit{Godly Learning}, 174.  
\textsuperscript{107} Kelly, \textit{Emergence of Liberty}, 123.  
\textsuperscript{108} Shortt, \textit{Public Schools}, 122.
17:3) and therefore lay Christ at the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.\(^{109}\)

Along with Harvard came Yale and Princeton, originally established by Calvinists. Calvin’s influence was so widespread in the field of education that it led the great American historian, George Bancroft, to declare, “We boast of our common schools; Calvin was the father of popular education – the inventor of the system of free schools. Wherever Calvinism gained dominion it invoked intelligence for the people and in every parish planted the common school.”\(^{110}\)

It was also important to have a feeder system of schools to identify and develop local talent for higher studies. What resulted was a Bible commonwealth linked through communities or small republics that shared a common Calvinistic ideology. This commonwealth was short-lived. The change did not occur in one catastrophic event but rather through a series of events over time. With the growth of the colonies came an immigration of other religious sects, an overall rise of prosperity and the introduction of religious liberalism that led to a weakening of the influence of Puritan orthodoxy.\(^{111}\) But even with these developments a high percentage of pre-revolutionary America was Puritan-Calvinists and by 1776 of the approximate three million colonialists as many as two-thirds was of a Puritan or Calvinist background.\(^{112}\) By the War of Independence the population experienced high levels of literacy as emphasized by the Reformed faith.\(^{113}\) The republican style of American education was comprised of four fundamental beliefs: that education was critical to the health of the nation; that a proper education consisted of increased knowledge, the development of virtue (including patriotic civility), and the fostering of


\(^{111}\) Blumenfeld, *Trojan Horse in American Education*, 3,4.

\(^{112}\) Kelly, *Emergence of Liberty* 120. For additional reading on the influence of Calvinism in America and education see: Boettner, *Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 382-399.

\(^{113}\) Ibid., 299.
learning; that schools and colleges were the best vehicle for providing a proper education; and that the most effective means of establishing the required number and kind of schools and colleges was through a system tied to polity.114

A major event that would have a ripple effect throughout the American education system took place in 1805 when Harvard was taken over by Unitarians resulting in the expulsion of the Calvinists. This development created a center for religious and moral liberalism and also a stronghold for anti-Calvinism. The significance of this event cannot be understated. What lay at the root of the fight were the issues of the nature of God and the nature of man. Liberals would not accept the Calvinistic teaching which placed the Bible at the center of spiritual and moral understanding. They were repulsed by the Calvinist doctrines of total depravity, predestination, election and reprobation. This God-centered view, where a person’s life was determined by their personal relationship to an omnipotent God who had communicated his will through the Old and New Testaments, was soundly rejected by the liberals. It was also an anathema to the Unitarians. Unitarians agreed that God was the creator of man, but that man had the freedom to make for his life whatever he desired. It was man who decided the direction of his life and through that life whether he went to heaven or hell. They believed that man was not innately depraved and in fact should and could attain perfection. On the issue of evil, Unitarians believed it was caused by ignorance, through poverty, social injustice, along with other social and environmental factors. Education was the solution in solving the problem of evil. Education would eliminate ignorance, poverty, social injustice and crime. In this system there was no place for the triune God or a divine Savior through whom salvation was attainable.

The instrument chosen by the Unitarians to deliver such a utopia was the public school and their first organized campaign to establish this took place in 1818 with the creation of public primary schools in Boston. The timing of this development coincided with the rise of Robert Owen in Scotland. Considered the father of socialism, Owen was announcing to the world his discovery of the basic principle of moral improvement. He declared that one’s character is produced by society through their upbringing, education and social conditions. A person grew up to be whatever their society chose them to be. If the society was a selfish society then the person grew up to be selfish. No one was innately depraved. A child can be shaped into whatever society determined he would be. This philosophy was welcomed and seized by the Unitarians. Owen went on to produce a national system of education for England in 1816 emphasizing through education “the character of a whole nation could be molded to the good of all.”

The winds of change began to blow even stronger with the rise of Horace Mann, a Calvinist turned Unitarian, considered to be the father of the American government educational system. Mann’s approach to education was influenced by the writings of the Roman master teacher, Quintilian, who emphasized the role education played in the development of character. Mann was made the Secretary of the newly formed Massachusetts Board of Education in 1837. Mann’s hatred of Calvinism and its previous influence on education delighted his Unitarian backers. Standing in opposition to educational statism was the view held by remaining orthodox Calvinists who feared the direction towards an anti-religion public school system, a system that promoted a centralized versus the previous de-centralized common-school

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115 Blumenfeld, Trojan Horse in American Education, 8-10.
116 Andrew Nikiforuk, School’s Out: The Catastrophe in Public Education and What We Can Do About It (Toronto, Canada: MacFarlane Walter & Ross, 1993), 7.
Mann, the lawyer and politician, was influential in establishing an educational system at war with God’s Word. His writings on the future of public education and its role in society reveal much:

The common school [public school] is the institution which can receive and train up children in the elements of all good knowledge and of virtue before they are subjected to the alienating competitions of life. This institution is the greatest discovery ever made by man; we repeat it, the common school is the greatest discovery ever made by man. In two grand, characteristic attributes, it is supereminent over all others: first in its universality, for it is capacious enough to receive and cherish in its paternal bosom every child that comes into the world: and second, in the timeliness of the aid it proffers, - its early, seasonable supplies of counsel and guidance making security antedate danger. Other social organizations are curative and remedial: this is a preventative and an antidote. They come to deal diseases and wounds; this, to make the physical and moral frame invulnerable to them. Let the common school be expanded to its capabilities, let it be worked with the efficiency of which it is susceptible, and nine-tenths of the crimes in the penal code would become obsolete; the long catalogue of human ills would be abridged; men would walk more safely by day; every pillow would be more inviolable by night; property, life, and character held by stronger tenure; all rational hopes respecting the future brightened. [Common School Journal, Vol. 3, No. 1, Jan., 1841, p. 15.]

Mann saw the educational system as a cure-all for the social problems of mankind. The Unitarian influence on Mann cannot be missed. Their belief in the redemptive power of education and the rejection of the doctrine of original sin was embraced by Mann.

The predominantly Unitarian north had embarked on a mission to undermine America’s Trinitarian colleges and universities. The classical Christian curricula that these institutions

117 Blumenfeld, Trojan Horse in American Education, 16. The formation of the National Education Association in 1857 was a further step in centralizing a state run education program (See: Blumenfeld, Trojan Horse, 1.). 118 Roy Atwood, “The Academic Civil War,” Credenda, Volume 17, Number 1, 2005, 12. Mann’s influence did not remain in America but was exported to Canada where his ideas had significant impact on Egerton Ryerson, considered the Methodist father of Canada’s public schools. (See: Nikiforuk, School’s Out, 14.). 119 Robert R. Booth, “Schools are Religious” <http://www.reformed.org/christian_education/schools-religious.html>, (June 19, 2005). “In the ‘objective’ paradise of Dewey and his disciples, as in Huxley’s Brave New World, everybody belongs to everybody else – and not one’s body merely, but one’s mind, becomes public domain. Dewey was bent, though perhaps only half-consciously, on creating an impersonal society: that is, a society where strong personality would be eliminated. For there is no personality, really, except inner personality, subjective personality; if, then, its perfection is denounced as rotten, human beings are expected to efface personality altogether. They become ‘other directed men.’ Lacking belief, loyalty, and self-reliance, dependent upon an unattainable perfect objectivity, they are moved only by fad and foible, and are blown about by every wind of doctrine. Objectivity of this sort terminates in pusillanimity.” Russell Kirk, Enemies of the Permanent Things: Observations of Abnormality in Literature and Politics (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1969), 159. 120 Shortt, Public Schools, 304-305.
offered had mentored almost every major leader in America since the Puritans founded Harvard in 1636.\textsuperscript{121} Prior to 1862 the education offered in schools was seen as preparatory ground for the establishment of a person’s character through the study of classical liberal arts taught from a biblical perspective.\textsuperscript{122}

The great Princeton theologian, A.A. Hodge expressed deep concern and sounded the warnings back in 1887 regarding a centralized, government run public school system. Hodge outlined the following points:

- It is impossible to separate religious ideas from the mass of human knowledge.

First – Education involves the training of the whole person and all of their faculties, the conscience, affections and intellect. A non-theistic approach would not only falsify the truth but would lead to an anti-theistic and anti-Christian promotion of ideas. All history is a product of God’s Providence. A non-theistic or non-Christian treatment of history would be completely superficial and misrepresented. Morals rest on a religious basis, with non-theistic ethics equivalent to an anti-theistic one. The same is true in Science, if God is not recognized he is denied.

Second – The move toward a national system of public schools where all instruction in all grades must remove religious elements is without precedent in the history of the human race.

Third – The new approach of removing theistic and Christian elements from the instructions of our common schools is in direct opposition to the spirit and convictions of their founders. For over two hundred years every college, academy and high-school was established with Christian ends in view.

\textsuperscript{121} One reminder of Harvard’s Christian foundation can be found in the motto for the Harvard Law School, “\textit{Non sub homine sed Deo et lege}” (Not under man but under God and law).

\textsuperscript{122} Roy Atwood, \textit{Academic Civil War}, 12.
Hodge called for a return to a system where common schools would be under the local control of the people where the religious character of the inhabitants of that district would determine the direction. It was also a call for the Christian community to play a leading role in the direction of education.¹²³ His father, Charles Hodge, had been amongst a group of Presbyterian leaders in the 1840’s who had recognized that the move towards state common schools was a dangerous direction and that one could no longer “safely rely” on them for proper religious training. The Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (Old School) expressed concern over the general secularizing of the public schools and the aggressive moves by Roman Catholics to establish their own parochial school system. On May 31, 1847, the General Assembly adopted a resolution stating:

That the interests of the church and the glory of our Redeemer, demand that immediate and strenuous exertions should be made, as far as practicable, by every congregation to establish within its bounds one or more primary schools, under the care of the session of the church, in which together with the usual branches of secular learning, the truths and duties of our holy religion shall be assiduously inculcated.¹²⁴

The implementing of the policy fell to the Assembly’s board of education that would also be responsible to financially assist schools. A school would qualify if they were under the care of a particular session and subject to the supervision of the presbytery. The school had to use the Bible as a textbook for daily instruction, had to be under the direction of a member of the Presbyterian church and had to report annually to the board. Early growth of this system was followed by decline as pastors lost interest or complained of the burden in maintaining schools, money was hard to raise and parents were insufficiently dissatisfied with public schools. By

¹²⁴ Cremin, American Education: The National Experience 1783-1876, 170.
1870 the movement had died and the new constitution of the board of education adopted by the General Assembly of that year made no mention of parochial schools.\textsuperscript{125}

The shift in education from its Christian base toward a secular system was accelerated with the rise of John Dewey, an education theorist and leading secular humanist. In one of his early writings, “My Pedagogic Creed”, Dewey declared that if you systematically change what goes on in the classroom you reshape children and ultimately society.\textsuperscript{126} Dewey saw a “Great Community” with the state school as the established church.\textsuperscript{127} He understood that to reject Christianity meant a rejection of its morality, thus a communal search for morality was needed.\textsuperscript{128} If he left any doubt as to the worldview that lay beneath his philosophy of education it was clarified in 1933 with the *Humanist Manifesto* with Dewey playing a key role in its drafting. The manifesto including the following:

**FIRST**: Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.

**SECOND**: Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as a result of a continuous process.

**THIRD**: Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 170-171.
\textsuperscript{126} Shortt, *Public Schools*, 39. Dewey’s influence over the American public education system has been well-documented. Another significant figure in shaping the underlying philosophy of the system was William James. James writings had an impact on Dewey’s thinking, and in fact following the reading of James’s *Principles of Psychology*. Dewey changed his entire view of psychology and went on to collaborate with James in the shaping of American psychology and philosophy. For further reading see: Robert D. Richardson, *William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006).
\textsuperscript{127} R. J. Rushdoony, *The Messianic Character of American Education* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1963), 160. Rushdoony in response to Dewey’s “Great Community” said: “the Great Community can only be a great graveyard, a Tower of Babel leading to vaster confusion, a new Holy Roman Empire and a new inquisition.” Also writes Russell Kirk, “Every radicalism since 1789 found its place in John Dewey’s system; and this destructive intellectual compound became prodigiously popular, in short order, among that distraught crowd of the semi-educated and among people of more serious pretensions who found themselves lost in a withered world that Darwin and Faraday had severed from its roots.” Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), 365.
FOURTH: Humanism recognizes that man's religious culture and civilization, as clearly depicted by anthropology and history, are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage. The individual born into a particular culture is largely molded by that culture.

FIFTH: Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values. Obviously humanism does not deny the possibility of realities as yet undiscovered, but it does insist that the way to determine the existence and value of any and all realities is by means of intelligent inquiry and by the assessment of their relations to human needs. Religion must formulate its hopes and plans in the light of the scientific spirit and method.

SIXTH: We are convinced that the time has passed for theism, deism, modernism, and the several varieties of "new thought".

SEVENTH: Religion consists of those actions, purposes, and experiences which are humanly significant. Nothing human is alien to the religious. It includes labor, art, science, philosophy, love, friendship, recreation—all that is in its degree expressive of intelligently satisfying human living. The distinction between the sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained.

EIGHTH: Religious Humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now. This is the explanation of the humanist's social passion.

NINTH: In the place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being.

TENTH: It follows that there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural.

ELEVENTH: Man will learn to face the crises of life in terms of his knowledge of their naturalness and probability. Reasonable and manly attitudes will be fostered by education and supported by custom. We assume that humanism will take the path of social and mental hygiene and discourage sentimental and unreal hopes and wishful thinking.

TWELFTH: Believing that religion must work increasingly for joy in living, religious humanists aim to foster the creative in man and to encourage achievements that add to the satisfactions of life.

THIRTEENTH: Religious humanism maintains that all associations and institutions exist for the fulfillment of human life. The intelligent evaluation, transformation, control, and direction of such associations and institutions with a view to the enhancement of human life is the purpose and program of humanism. Certainly religious institutions, their ritualistic forms, ecclesiastical methods, and communal activities must be reconstituted as rapidly as experience allows, in order to function effectively in the modern world.
FOURTEENTH: The humanists are firmly convinced that existing acquisitive and profit-motivated society has shown itself to be inadequate and that a radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted. A socialized and cooperative economic order must be established to the end that the equitable distribution of the means of life be possible. The goal of humanism is a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good. Humanists demand a shared life in a shared world.

FIFTEENTH AND LAST: We assert that humanism will: (a) affirm life rather than deny it; (b) seek to elicit the possibilities of life, not flee from them; and (c) endeavor to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all, not merely for the few. By this positive morale and intention humanism will be guided, and from this perspective and alignment the techniques and efforts of humanism will flow.129

Dewey and his cohort’s hostility towards traditional religion with its belief in a transcendent reality and in revelation were clearly conveyed through their manifesto.130 He did not promote freedom of religion; rather, what Dewey and the humanists wanted was freedom from religion.131 Dewey’s antagonism towards Christianity played a major role in his thought. He believed Christianity had been disproved by science.132 His major weapon used in his attack on Christianity through science was found in Darwin’s theory of evolution which he introduced into the public school system.133 Dewey substituted the religion of modern science for the historical Christian religion.134 It was his attempt to return to the sixteenth-century Renaissance period, the birth of the scientific mind and a social and educational revolution.135

129 Humanist Manifesto I (1933) <http://www.americanhumanist.org/Who_We_Are/About_Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_I> (November 21, 2010).
130 Paul C. Vitz, Censorship: Evidence of Bias in our Children’s Textbooks (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1986), 86. Later would come the 1973 Humanist Manifesto II. It was a continuation and an affirmation of the 1933 Manifesto stressing that moral values can be established by human experience. See: Shortt, Public Schools, 28.
131 Blumenfeld, Dick & Jane, 66.
133 Ian Taylor provides a comprehensive account of how Darwin’s theory has been used by the humanists in their attack on Christianity. He points out the counter-evidence against evolution. See: Ian T. Taylor, In the Minds of Men: Darwin and the New World Order (Toronto, ON: TFE Publishing, 1984), 425.
The movement towards state-run education was actually supported by many orthodox Protestants in the mid-nineteenth-century as a way of dealing with the rise of Irish Catholic immigrants and their potential influence in education.\(^\text{136}\) Roman Catholics created their own school system in the 1850’s driving many Protestants into the public school camp as a way of combating the growth and influence of Catholics.\(^\text{137}\) But there were others in the evangelical community that sounded the alarm over the trend towards state-run education. A.A. Hodge saw the dangers of the state run public education and predicted the pending outcome. Sadly, his warnings were dismissed.

A comprehensive and centralized system of national education, separated from religion, as is now commonly proposed, will prove the most appalling enginery for the propagation of anti-Christian and atheistic unbelief, and of anti-social nihilistic ethics, individual, social, and political, which this sin-rent world has ever seen.\(^\text{138}\)

Other godly leaders would follow sounding the same alarm. Another dissenter of the government run education system was Dr. J. Gresham Machen, professor of New Testament studies at Princeton Theological Seminary. In his address to The House and Senate Committees on the Proposed Department of Education (1926), Machen stated that education is not a matter for the state. Machen concluded: “If you give the bureaucrats the children, you might as well give them everything else as well.”\(^\text{139}\)

\(^\text{136}\) Shortt, *Public Schools*, 306.
\(^\text{137}\) Blumenfeld, *Trojan Horse*, 27-28. This move by Roman Catholics to distance themselves from any public system was repeated in Canada during the same time period. Likewise many Protestants felt “Christian values” could be promoted through the public school with the Lord’s Prayer, Scripture reading and reciting the Ten Commandments as a required practice. In the New Brunswick School Act of 1858 teachers were obligated to “impress on the minds of children...the principles of Christianity, morality and justice...” Such requirements were common in other Canadian provinces. See: Axelrod, *The Promise of Schooling*, 30.
\(^\text{139}\) Transcript of the proceedings of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor and the House Committee on Education, February 25, 1926, Congress of the United States, Washington D.C. <http://homepage.mac.com/shanerosenthal/reformationink/jgmcongress.htm>, (June 20, 2005). The transcript of the proceedings records that following Machen’s statement concerning the giving over of children to the control of bureaucrats he received an ovation from the audience. This writer feels such a statement made in a similar situation today would not be met with applause but instead with catcalls of condemnation.
The Public School System – Quality of Education

G.K. Chesterton notes, “It ought to be the oldest things that are taught to the youngest people.” Yet schools are failing to transmit the American intellectual tradition and so are increasingly unable to cope with the present or to anticipate wisely the future.140

The evidence indicating a steady decline in the quality of education has been building over the decades. Scholastic Aptitude Test scores have reflected an ongoing downward trend, universities have reported poorly equipped high school students entering their programs, school administrators complain of growing problems with students and teachers, and politicians have placed the quality of American education on the public agenda. If one single event could capture the growing discontent over the quality of public education it came in 1983 when the National Commission on Excellence in Education sounded its warning, “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people.”141

It is difficult to determine with accuracy how bad the quality of education in America is as in recent years States have been engaged in the “practice of low-balling state reading and math standards.”142 Contrary to the claims by the media and the educational administration that American children are the best educated ever is the evidence indicating many public school students struggle in the basic elements of education. More and more students are reading and

141 Trevor W. Harrison and Jerrold L. Kachur, eds., *Contested Classrooms: Education, Globalization, and Democracy in Alberta* (Edmonton, Canada: The University of Alberta Press, 1999), 12.
142 The White House, *Office of the Press Secretary*, March 10, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Fact-Sheet-Expanding-the-Promise-of-Education-in-America/> (November 23, 2010). E.D. Hirsch Jr. addresses the need for reliable research. Hirsch also points out how research can be skewed in a direction to prop up a given position. “Research findings that are accurate and reliable must transcend partisanship, and must be seen to do so. When research is cited with misleading selectivity, or when it is second-rate and unreliable, it ceases, after a time, to be useful even as rhetoric.” See: E.D. Hirsch Jr., *The Schools We Need and Why We Don’t Have Them* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 127.
writing at incredibly low levels of proficiency. The look-say teaching method for reading has been a disaster, leaving the student with only two avenues for reading success, either an expert guesser or a photographic memory! Most are unable to do mathematics or science at an advanced level and would struggle to find a major U.S. city on a map. The “New Mathematics” and “New English” have simply produced worse and worse results on the Standard Scholastic Achievement Tests. Graduate students cannot write because they cannot think. Basic historical facts are unknown by an alarmingly large percentage of students. What has been the response of the government to this decline in results? Their solution is to pour more money into the system. What have been the results of this approach? The government has watched a further decline in reading scores across America. Never have there been so many resources invested in so many students with such little results. The continuing decline of the quality of education in the public school has been blamed on everything from, social changes (i.e. the breakdown of the family or the impact of television) to incompetent teachers to

143 Shortt, Public Schools, 129. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed in 2000 that 68% of all American fourth graders cannot read at a proficient level.
145 Shortt, Public Schools, 12.
147 Shortt, Public Schools, 130. Results of a survey published in 2001 by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation recorded that almost a quarter of the teenage students did not know American states fought each other in the Civil War; over a fifth of the teens did not know the original thirteen colonies declared their independence from England; and 15% had no idea of the significant event that took place in American history on July 4, 1776. Further examples of poor historical knowledge were revealed in another NAEP survey completed in the 1990s when one-third of 17-year-old students didn’t know the U.S. fought in World War II and could not identify the role of Abraham Lincoln in American History (see page 131).
148 A common response by secular humanists to social and educational problems is to seek more money for programs, that the solution to man’s problems can be solved by greater education and information to shape society into their own image.
149 Blumenfeld, Dick & Jane, 23.
150 Wilson, Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning, 139.
structural flaws in the system. The primary blame must fall on the faulty theories promoted in education and accepted by educational policymakers.\textsuperscript{151}

**The Public School System – Student Behavior**

Surveillance cameras mounted in strategic points within buildings, twenty-four hour a day, seven days a week monitoring of activity, security personnel performing random spot checks for weapons and an administration managing a budget in excess of one million dollars for safety and security. If you think this scenario describes a local prison think again. It is a description of an American public high school!\textsuperscript{152}

It is not a difficult case to make that something is seriously wrong in our society, specifically, with youth in America.\textsuperscript{153} The facts speak for themselves:

- In 1962, 4 million Americans had experimented with illegal drugs. The number by 1999 had risen to an incredible 87.7 million. Marijuana use by teens from 1992 to 1999 skyrocketed 300%! In 1999, 55% of high school seniors admitted their use of an illegal drug.
- The number of juvenile murders tripled between 1984 and 1994.

\textsuperscript{151} E.D. Hirsch Jr., *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), 110. Here in Canada one province is promoting a curriculum developed by the students, featuring topics of interest to the student! “The door is open for them (students) to take control of their own learning.” This student controlled approach is another example of the man-centered humanistic philosophy at work in public education. See: *The 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Series*, “Igniting Passion,” Part Three, The New Brunswick Department of Education, five-part video series <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qRDwwVRYtc&feature=related> (January 16, 2011).

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 180.

\textsuperscript{153} During the spectacular rebellions and uprisings of the 1960s many asked the question: why? Russell Kirk, considered a leading figure in the conservative movement in America, recognized the central role a man-centered public education system had played in youth violence. “The root of the trouble, said Kirk, was boredom. Huge and ever-increasing numbers ill-prepared, rootless students, often imbued with ‘American Pelagian heresy’ that education would save us all ... Drifting about aimlessly on a sea of mediocrity, intellectual irrelevance, and ethical purposelessness, these permissively reared, undisciplined students understandable became bored, resentful and rebellious. No wonder trouble developed.” See: George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1996), 280.
- In the mid-to-late 1950s, 8% of girls had sexual intercourse by age 16. In 1999, 39% of girls reported having sexual intercourse by age 16.

- Since 1940 illegitimate births have increased by 700% notwithstanding the access to abortions on demand (It is estimated that 35 million abortions have been performed between 1973 and 1997).

- In 1999 Rutgers University National Marriage Project reported that the marriage rate was at its lowest point in recorded history. The number of unmarried couples between 1970 and 1998 increased by 800%.

- Between 1970 and 1996 the number of adults who have divorced has more than quadrupled.

- A 2001 study revealed that 75% of high school students admitted cheating at least once on a test in the past year, as compared with 50% in 1993 and 25% in 1963. 154

- Over the last forty years teenage suicide has increased by 200%. 155 There are eighteen teenage suicides a day in the United States or about 6,570 per year. 156

So what are the solutions prescribed by government schools? More money needs to be spent on greater education to assist students in their development of individual values. Examples of state school efforts to better inform students are found in drug awareness programs and sex education. The Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program was developed and has now been implemented in all 50 American states and across Canada. Its sessions provide students with information on the variety of drugs available on the street and the various “highs” and risks associated with each. However, DARE is a prime example of the public schools value-neutral approach to education, avoiding ever telling students that it is wrong to take illegal drugs or

154 Shortt, Public Schools, 86, 87.
155 Ibid., 51.
156 Blumenfeld, Dick & Jane, 43.
warning them, “Don’t use drugs.” This would run the risk of imposing someone else’s values on another.\textsuperscript{158}

A well-established addition to curriculum in public schools has been sex education programs that encourage “safe sex” as part of a response to the growing teen pregnancy problem in government schools. Birth control devices have been made available to students and abortion is presented as a viable option.\textsuperscript{159} Abstinence is not taught as part of the course. A study conducted to gauge the effects of sex education programs on the sexual activity of girls ages 15-17 found that 15 year old girls who had sex education were 40% more likely to begin sexual activity then girls who had not had sex education and 16 year old girls who had sex education were 25% more likely to become sexually active then girls who did not have sex education.\textsuperscript{160}

Following the humanist philosophy of the need for greater education in dealing with social problems was the introduction of “Death Education” in the early 1970s as a way of responding to the rising rates of teen suicide. One of the goals of death education is the “desensitization” of children towards death. Since the introduction of death education in the early 1970s over 50,000 American teenagers have committed suicide.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{157} Shortt, \textit{Public Schools}, 65.
\textsuperscript{158} DARE is just one example of the comedy of non-directive approaches to moral education. This approach leaves the door open for the question to be asked with reference to cheating on exams; who says it is wrong? How dare you! The non-directive approach paints parents and churches that teach Christian values as pushy, intolerant people who try to force their values on others. See: Shortt, \textit{Public Schools}, 64,67. “Tolerance” is the ideology that threatens to silence all who voice opposition to absolute relativism. See: Albert Mohler, “America’s Educational Crisis: A Christian Response,” \textit{Classis}, Volume XII, No. 2, March 2005, 1.
\textsuperscript{159} Thorburn, \textit{The Children Trap}, 87.
\textsuperscript{160} Shortt, \textit{Public Schools}, 88.
\textsuperscript{161} Blumenfeld, \textit{Dick & Jane}, 46. One example of the curriculum’s approach: “Death, dying, funerals, wills and organ donations – pretty morbid stuff, but not for a group of Winslow High School seniors. They wrote their own obituaries and epitaphs, filled out organ-donation cards, visited a funeral home and talked about such issues as mercy killing.” For further detail on the role that death plays in humanist philosophy, see: Malcolm Muggeridge, \textit{The Great Liberal Death Wish} (Flesherton, Ontario: The Canadian League of Rights, 1979).
The evidence speaks for itself that the answer to America’s social ills is not found in more education or more money for informational programs. The solution will not come through greater education.

**The Additional Curriculum**

The public schools provide an education within the educational system when it comes to communicating and shaping values and morals. This introduction of non-academic material, activities and programs into the public schools has been justified by modern educators as necessary because “society” has loaded this responsibility on them. This argument will not stand. The twentieth century has witnessed a battle between educators and laymen, with the National Education Association and other groups pushing for the introduction of non-academic courses and programs in public schools, while laymen have pressed for a focus on academic subjects. The public is generally kept uninformed or misled about such programs to avoid negative reaction to their fashionable “innovations.”

Schools promote homosexuality as a “valid, healthy preference and lifestyle” and those in opposition are viewed as equivalent to racial bigots. In New York City one school district amongst many other districts actually objected to a first-grade textbook featuring “daddy’s room mate” and a girl who “has two mommies.” An ensuing storm was not over the material but the fact that there was an objecting district. Sadly, even within the unwilling district, the objection regarded a view that the first grade was too early, not that the material was inappropriate. The success of this indoctrination shows in the numbers. A 2001 poll conducted by Hamilton College and Zogby International of 1,003 high school seniors revealed that 85% felt

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163 Ibid., 106,94.
homosexuals should be accepted by society and almost two-thirds felt it should be legal for homosexuals to marry and adopt children.\textsuperscript{165}

The rise of feminism and its influence on the state educational system has led to an assault upon masculinity, leaving women either as trophies for men or aggressive, assertive competitors with men. Public schools promote women to be men leaving many women lost in their own identity. Men are increasingly emasculated by the school system.\textsuperscript{166} The result is more and more males dropping out of the system. Here in Canada only 43% of 2002 university graduates were male.\textsuperscript{167}

Then there is the emphasis on the building of self-esteem. Education is no longer a process of learning; rather it is an opportunity to enhance self-esteem.\textsuperscript{168} In the public education world moral teachings are out, creating a void when it comes to the establishment of values. The government schools answer was to draw on the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers. Rogers’ approach stressed a reliance on the individual to sort through the issues and rely on his own feelings and attitudes. This self-esteem building process involved an implicit moral relativism.\textsuperscript{169}

Effective discipline in government schools has been virtually eliminated by court rulings in favor of students over teachers and administrations.\textsuperscript{170} But the public schools have fought back

\textsuperscript{165} Blumenfeld, \textit{Dick & Jane}, 108.
\textsuperscript{168} Mohler, \textit{America’s Educational Crisis}, 1.
\textsuperscript{169} Shortt, \textit{Public Schools}, 61,62. Carl Rogers along with several of his early collaborators would later reject his own psychotherapeutic techniques. In 1981 while addressing a gathering of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, Rogers declared his rejection of his own therapy, “I hope Rogerian therapy goes down the drain (see page 62).
\textsuperscript{170} Thomas Sowell writes, “My English teacher in junior high school was from the General Patton school of education. You could be any color of the rainbow and she still would give you hell if you didn’t shape up. She didn’t care whether your home was broken or bent. Not once did she ask compassionately whether I had a nickel to ride the trolley to school or had to walk the whole 15 blocks. What she let me know was that I had better be there on time – and with my homework done. Like many ghetto youngsters, I never finished high school. A lot of rough
with a solution of their own in combating behavioral problems by the drugging of kids.

Administrations use school evaluations as a method to diagnose students as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) treating a behavioral situation as a clinical issue.\textsuperscript{171} The drug of choice in treating this condition is Ritalin. Prescriptions for the drug have jumped 700% from 1990 to 2001!\textsuperscript{172} Interestingly the incredible rise of ADHD prescribed medication for students has been restricted to a United States/Canada phenomenon.\textsuperscript{173}

\textbf{Reform or Reconstruct?}

Considering the facts regarding the public school system and the philosophy behind the institution, what is the appropriate response for Christian families and the church? There are those Christian parents who argue their children should remain within the public school system. Many Christian parents share the view that it is the state’s responsibility to educate their children. This public education is a service paid for by the state. These parents also believe that the public school system is simply an institution of education and that neutrality can be maintained.\textsuperscript{174} Parents will say that our government school is different. Many times it is another way of saying that they have no idea what exactly is going on in their local public school.\textsuperscript{175}

Another view from Christian homes is that we are “salt and light” and so their children perform that role in the school. Truly Christ called His followers to shine in the world, but with youth in the government educational system, who is influencing whom? About 85% of Christian

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\textsuperscript{171} Shortt, \textit{Public Schools}, 224-225.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., 206
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 210, 211.
\textsuperscript{174} Thoburn, \textit{The Children Trap}, X.
\textsuperscript{175} Shortt, \textit{Public Schools}, 317.
\end{flushleft}
children attend government schools. Within two years of graduation 70% to 88% of teenagers from evangelical homes stop attending church.\textsuperscript{176}

“But we just can’t withdraw from the culture!” The statement presupposes that the only way we can engage our culture is by sending Christian children into an anti-Christian system. The most effective way for children to enter society as productive well-prepared citizens is to have received a solid Christian education. From this foundational base children can enter society to impact the culture for God’s glory.\textsuperscript{177}

Because there are still Christian teachers in the public system, some parents would argue that their children are receiving a Christian education. But the law, the approved curricula and restrictions upon Christian content make it impossible for any vestige of a biblical worldview to be presented in government schools.\textsuperscript{178}

Other Christian parents look back on their own experience in public schools and feel that since they turned out okay then the system can’t be that bad. But the decline of the state-run schools has steadily worsened. It is not a fair comparison to look at schools from twenty or thirty years ago and compare them with the system today.\textsuperscript{179}

Rapidly one must come to the conclusion that reforming the public school system is impossible.\textsuperscript{180} The state schools are rudderless, without direction and unable to cope with the

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 51. Christian children were asked to respond to the following statement: “Because human nature is constantly changing, values and ethics will also change. Therefore each generation should be free to adopt moral standards appropriate to their preferences.” Only 14.7% of Christian children attending government schools strongly disagreed while 74.3% of children attending private Christian schools strongly disagreed. (Shortt, 52).

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 326.

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 327.

\textsuperscript{179} In reflecting on my own public school experience there are memories of singing from a hymnal in general assembly, morning prayer and daily Bible reading. Today in the Canadian public schools such practices would get a teacher fired!

\textsuperscript{180} Dorothy Sayers calls for total reformation of the approach to education. She presents an intelligent, scholarly and convincing argument for a return to an education model that disappeared three hundred years ago. See: Dorothy Sayers, \textit{The Lost Tools of Learning and The Mind of the Maker} (LaVergne, TN: Oxford City Press, 2010).
many serious moral and behavioral problems because the system does not believe in an absolute right and wrong.\textsuperscript{181}

Almost by definition public education rejects Christian reform.\textsuperscript{182} In fact there is a new and perceived threat according to public educators that must be thwarted. This movement, reported to be found in the United States, Great Britain and Canada, is referred to as the “New Right.” It is defined as a broad-based movement which supports a market-driven free enterprise system, opposes state regulatory guidelines, distrusts state officials and fears the loss of authority, traditional values and standards. This “New Right” is seen by some public educators as:

…an amalgam of disparate forces such as pro-family, business lobbyists, opponents of the welfare state, neo-liberal groups, right wing organizations, and other popular forces that seek a return to ‘traditional’ values. Education, because it touches family life, economic futures, and other concerns vital to people’s lives, hopes and aspirations, has become a prime target for reform by the New Right.”\textsuperscript{183}

This so called “New Right” is viewed as a threat, a threat that must be feared and fought against. Parents who object to anti-Christian indoctrination through public schools are often declared to be an example of attempts by the “religious right” to “force their beliefs on other people.” This has nothing to do with seeking to force their beliefs on others but rather defending and protecting their children from the same being done to them.\textsuperscript{184} Here we see how many public educators recognize the competing worldviews that exist. The battleground is on the field of education.

The sphere of education has been one of the most successful areas in which the Right has been ascendant. The social democratic goal of an expanding equality of opportunity (itself a rather limited reform) has lost much of its political potency and its ability to mobilize people. The ‘panic’ over standards and illiteracy, the fears of violence in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[182] Wilson, \textit{Recovering the Lost Tools}, 139.
\item[184] Thomas Sowell, \textit{The Vision of the Anointed}, 179-180.
\end{footnotes}
schools, the concern with the destruction of family values and religiosity, all have had an effect. These fears are exacerbated, and used, by dominant groups within politics and the economy who have been able to move the debate on education (and all things social) onto their own terrain, the terrain of ‘tradition’, standardization, productivity, and industrial needs.  

Sadly, so many Christian parents do not see the clash of ideologies that public educators are well aware of. But in ever increasing numbers Christian families are coming to grips with the reality that the influence of secular humanism has infiltrated the government education system to such an extent that reforming it is impossible. A.A. Hodge, back in 1887, warned the Christian community of the perils of the state-run public system. He concluded:

One thing is absolutely certain. Christianity is ever increasing in power, and, in the long run, will never tolerate the absurd and aggressive claims of modern infidelity. The system of public schools must be held, in their sphere, true to the claims of Christianity, or they must go, with all enemies of Christ, to the wall.  

This pronouncement by Hodge should be seen as a call to action for Christians. The public school system has not held true to the claims of Christianity. The system needs to go “to the wall.”

What evidence can the educators produce that American public education can influence society for good instead of evil? Whatever happened to the “little red schoolhouse”? A pagan

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185 Ibid., 248.
187 Shortt, Public Schools, 14.
Dewey and Mann sought to establish the state school as the established church. Their goal in public education, of producing a “Great Community,” has failed miserably. The humanistic view, that education would be the solution to the problem of evil, that all poverty, social injustice and crime could be eradicated through education over time, has revealed the folly of such thinking. The condition of state run schools after one hundred years is a disaster. Instead of quality education we see intellectual mediocrity, more guns, knives, more teachers assaulted, more drugs, alcohol and illiteracy. Even modern day public educators are recognizing that Dewey’s ultimate goal for education in the transformation of society has failed:

And the ultimate objective for progressive education was, quite literally, the transformation of society itself. Both for Dewey and his disciples in Alberta, “social reconstruction” was the ultimate objective; schools were merely the chosen instruments for achieving their objective. The experiment lasted until mid-century. It then imploded, undermined by weakness from within and pressures from without.

The failure to reach the end goal was not so much an issue of pressures and weakness but rather the philosophical foundation upon which the education system was built. That foundation was of sand. It could not stand because trying to build on anything apart from God’s word and His authority will end in disaster.

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

Matt 7:24-27

\[^{188}\text{Gairdner, War Against the Family, 207.}\]
\[^{189}\text{Harrison and Kachur, Contested Classrooms, 8.}\]
CHAPTER 5
THE SOLUTION - CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A Brief History of Christian Schooling

History records the critical role that Christianity played in the early formation of an American education system. The founders of America understood the link between a solid education based on biblical absolutes and the future of the nation.\textsuperscript{191} It is evident that many Christian homes in America are reaching the same conclusions regarding the impossibility of public education reform and have turned to Christian schools and homeschooling as the appropriate response. There are about 20,000 Christian schools in America and growing.\textsuperscript{192} The Christian school offers a service to the family in response to the educational responsibilities God assigns to parents.\textsuperscript{193} At the foundation of Christian education is the recognition that a Christian worldview is essential in every area of life, especially in the education of young minds.

Modern educators, critical of the Christian school movement, have focused on the socialization of the students arguing that Christian schools “prepare their students for jobs in a factory, some automated office, or the army.”\textsuperscript{194} James Cole, under contract with the National Center for Education Statistics, drew a sharply different conclusion. His report stated:

1. Private schools provide better character and personality development than public schools

\textsuperscript{191} DeMar, \textit{America’s Christian History}, 39.
\textsuperscript{192} Shortt, \textit{Public Schools}, 336.
\textsuperscript{193} Perks, \textit{The Christian Philosophy}, 65.
\textsuperscript{194} Nash, \textit{The Closing of the American Heart}, 132.
2. Private schools provide a safer, more disciplined environment than public schools
3. Private schools are more successful in creating an interest in learning than public schools
4. Private schools encourage interest in higher education and lead more of their students to attend college than public schools with comparable students
5. Private schools are more efficient than public schools, accomplishing their educational task at lower cost
6. Private schools have smaller class sizes, and thus allow teachers and students to have greater contact\textsuperscript{195}

Homeschooling is the fastest growing trend in education. It is estimated that there are 2 million home school students across the nation.\textsuperscript{196} This trend is almost exclusively found in the Christian community and reflects a growing desire to de-centralize education in the hands of the state and provide an alternative to the humanist institutions called public education.\textsuperscript{197} The movement did not come without a price. In the 1960s and 1970s many homeschooler pioneers were dragged into courts, some were imprisoned. A number of Christian lawyers, leaders and educators stepped forward to successfully defend the rights of parents to home school their children.\textsuperscript{198} In 1980 homeschooling was illegal in 30 states but by 1993 all 50 states recognized the legitimacy of the practice.\textsuperscript{199} It has been argued that parents who chose to home school are unable to provide the quality of education available through the public system. The evidence for

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 134.
\textsuperscript{196} Shortt, Public Schools, 340.
\textsuperscript{197} Thoburn, The Children Trap, 39.
\textsuperscript{198} Blumenfeld, Dick & Jane, 187.
\textsuperscript{199} Shortt, Public Schools, 340.
the poor quality of education has already been presented. In fact homeschoolers are
outperforming public educated students by a large margin.\footnote{Ibid., 342. A 1999 fifty-
state study by the University of Maryland looked at 20,000 homeschooled students. It
was found that homeschooler median test scores by grade were between the 75\textsuperscript{th} and
85\textsuperscript{th} percentiles, private school students were between 65\textsuperscript{th} and 70\textsuperscript{th}
percentiles and government school students were in the 50\textsuperscript{th} percentile.}

Another criticism of homeschoolers focuses on the perceived “lack of socialization” or
“isolation from the world,” that children who are home schooled are not living in the “real
world.” However, when you consider the public system confines students 180 days in a
classroom filled with children their own age who are unable to relate to other ages or adults,
where there are no absolute standards, where little or no responsibility is given and everything is
provided, it begs the question who is actually living in the “real world”? Homeschoolers are
given the opportunity to prepare for the workplace and the home. They regularly relate to adults
and follow their examples and not their many misguided peers. They learn with a “hands on”
approach. The only thing they miss out on in not attending the public school is unhealthy peer
pressure and immorality.\footnote{Christopher J. Klicka, \textit{The Right Choice: Homeschooling} (Gresham, OR: Noble Publishing Associates, 1995),
141.}

Homeschooling is not a passing fad. The success of one-on-one instruction, which tailors
to the individual needs and abilities along with avoiding the negative peer-pressure associated
with a secular education system, will lead many more Christian parents toward the avenue of
homeschooling.\footnote{Ibid., 147.}

**Christian Philosophy of Education**

In contrast to the secular worldview stands the Reformed faith that begins with the
presupposition of the absolute truth of the Christian position. It is a God-centered view where
neutrality is impossible, including the field of education. Augustine recognized that there is no such thing as learning without understanding. In his work entitled, “On Christian Teaching,” Augustine presented the centrality of Christ in all of learning and Scripture as the subject matter to be taught.

History records the intertwined relationship between Calvinism and education. Wherever Calvinism spread with it went the emphasis on schooling and education. Based in Geneva, Calvin established the Academy where thousands attended from all over continental Europe and the British Isles and then carried their knowledge to every part of Christendom. It is well documented that Calvinism played a leading role in the development of education in America. Calvinists recognized that man must love God not only with his whole heart but also with his whole mind. Calvin believed that “a true faith must be an intelligent faith.”

The Christian approach to learning is a complete and integrated approach. Words, belief and knowledge have much the same meaning in Scripture with three interrelated, interdependent elements. The Hebrew verb, yadá, “to know” relates to a unified intellect, feeling and action. For true knowledge or belief there must be cognitive assent. Christian schools make abundant use of memorizing as memory is fundamental to retention. Exertion is important for the child as it strengthens the mind.

Essential to Christian education is this God-centered approach to the various disciplines. In public education leading historians are at a loss to explain why teaching History is necessary.

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204 Ingram, *Tasks of the Christian Educator*, 45.
This inability to cogently articulate a response is the direct result of five hundred years of irrational thought spun from the web of Renaissance humanism.\textsuperscript{208} The Christian worldview is able to interpret history in terms that God conferred in the act of creation.\textsuperscript{209} In Genesis 1:26-28 the dominion mandate is given by God for man to make use of the earth and to treat it as his possession as a steward of God and given the responsibility to care for it.\textsuperscript{210} Science, from a biblical foundation, is the study of the Creator’s handiwork and is faithful to fulfilling the mandate given by God in the Garden of Eden. Nature is recognized as the embodiment of God’s ideas and, in its pure form, the reflection of His virtues. God is the unifying thought of all science since it is the unfolding of His plan.\textsuperscript{211} A Christian prospective recognizes that our creator God made man in His own image. This must be taken into account in the study of History.\textsuperscript{212} In Mathematics, taught from a Christian worldview prospective, God is recognized to be the foundation of all knowledge. Mathematics describes the numerical and spatial aspects of God’s creational structure.\textsuperscript{213} Augustine said: “We think God’s thoughts after Him.” By the Holy Spirit we can possess the mind of Christ. He can open our minds to Christ in creation through all avenues including History, Science and Mathematics.\textsuperscript{214}

A major qualification for teachers in Christian schools are, according to Scripture, primarily focused on character. The teacher must be worthy of imitation just as was the Apostle Paul. Teaching is best done by word and life together. The teacher’s life must reflect a level of

\textsuperscript{209} Ibid., 64.
\textsuperscript{210} Blumenfeld, \textit{Dick & Jane}, 133-134.
\textsuperscript{211} Boettner, \textit{The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination}, 398.
\textsuperscript{212} Blumenfeld, \textit{Dick & Jane}, 141.
godliness adequate to demonstrate the meaning of his or her teaching – a way of life noticeably different from that of the world.  

The purpose of education by the state is the process of maturation into the image of man as defined by the state. The Christian view is that the God of Scripture created and defines man. God has created man in His own image. The purpose of Christian education is to enable the child to accept the responsibility and privilege of being God’s image bearer and to be equipped for a life of service to God. Some Christians see Science, culture and History as disconnected from religion. But a Reformed view sees that Christianity cannot exist in a void apart from life. The Almighty has also provided a model for education as communicated through Scripture, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalms 111:10). The entire Bible is concerned with education, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (II Tim 3:16). The modern idea that education is the responsibility of the school is not consistent with the biblical philosophy of education.

**Education - a Covenantal Responsibility**

The evangelical community in general has no concept of the doctrine of the covenant. The evidence in support of this assertion can be found in the numerous systematic theology books that do not devote a single chapter to the doctrine. Equally sad is even in churches that do

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217 Ibid., 39. Ronald Nash quotes Kenneth Gangel regarding the heart of Christian education. “The purpose of Christian schools is to present to our children, as clearly as possible, the truth about God, about life, about the world and everything in it, and to present the Word of God as the authoritative source upon which to build a life that has purpose and meaning.” Ronald H. Nash, *The Closing of the American Heart: What’s Really Wrong With America’s Schools* (U.S.A.: Probe Books, 1990), 128.
218 Zylstra, *Testament of Vision*, 139-140.
220 Ibid., 66.
confess its support, there is little evidence of the impact it has on the life of the people, and specifically regarding the education of their children.\textsuperscript{221} In Scripture covenants are solemn agreements, negotiated or unilaterally imposed, that binds the parties to each other in a permanent defined relationship which includes specific promises, claims and obligations for both sides. One example of such a covenant is found in the marriage covenant, “You ask, ‘Why?’ It is because the LORD is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.”(Mal 2:14).

When God makes a covenant he alone establishes the terms. His covenants rest on his promises.\textsuperscript{222} The covenants in Scripture all have the same five points. The covenantal institutions are to be governed from these five, the family being one of those institutions:

1. A sovereign Creator God who runs everything
2. A hierarchy of authority with God at the top
3. A system of law (ethical rules) for dominion
4. A judicial system for making evaluations
5. A program for inheritance\textsuperscript{223}

The nature of our relationship with God is through the concept of covenant.\textsuperscript{224} “I will be your God and you will be my people” is at the core of every divine covenant in the Bible. It is God’s message of hope for His people.\textsuperscript{225} With Adam’s sin against God he broke the covenant and in Adam we all fell. God re-established man’s standing with Himself through faith in Jesus Christ.

\textsuperscript{221} Berkhof, Foundations of Christian Education, 65.
\textsuperscript{223} Thoburn, The Children Trap, 35.
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., 52.
\textsuperscript{225} O. Palmer Robertson, Covenants: God’s way for his people (Philadelphia: Great Commission Publications, 1987), 5.
The life of God’s people is to be covenantally structured with the role of the family as the basic and primary unit through which the covenant life is realized. In that covenantal relationship we acknowledge that the triune God created everything for His glory. He also created all things for us to use and enjoy. Growing in our knowledge of God and His creation enables us to appreciate and enjoy Him all the more. The Scriptures teach that Christian education is a priority for God’s people, “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children…” (Deut 6:6,7).

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

Deut 11:18-21

The education of children is the responsibility assigned by God to husband and wife. The Christian school is an outgrowth of the covenant. The doctrine of the covenant was always at the heart in the struggle for Christian schools. In this covenant there is something more than an offer and a promise; there is an agreement. This established covenant by God is a covenant agreed to by parents for their children. Christian parents are not free to accept or reject. This is the obligation that they have before God, to intercede for their children and educate them in the fear of the Lord.

229 Ibid., 75.
Christian Education – the Role of the Family

The Old and New Testament lay the responsibility for the training of children at the feet of parents. It calls for a comprehensive and deliberate strategy in response to the biblical mandate. It is a parent’s God-given responsibility to provide a Christian education that seeks to produce a well-educated Christian steeped in the knowledge of God and His law. Christian parents need to see their responsibilities in terms of parental concern.

The most basic level is emotional. Parents are to love their children, care what happens to them and want the best for them.

The second plateau is the level of spiritual concern. When parents concern is limited to an emotional level their vision will be lacking in important ways. Such a limit causes the parent to see only a goal of temporal happiness and success for their child. Wise Christian parents recognize that God calls His children to live their lives for Him and for others. These parents want more than earthly success and material prosperity for their children. They desire to see their children as faithful believers who love the Lord and His Word, and who sincerely seek to do His will.

Then there is the level of theological concern. There are so many Christians who do not see the importance of sound doctrine. It is important that we believe (spiritual concern), but it is also important what we believe (theological concern). The pendulum swings in both directions with one side only stressing doctrines and creeds while neglecting the personal and subjective side to the Christian faith. What we know objectively must be combined with the subjective commitment. On the other side are those who focus on the subjective while neglecting the

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231 Blumenfeld, Dick & Jane, 98.
objective, theological side. Either direction leads to a Christian operating with less than the full Gospel.

As Christian young people enter into the post-secondary stage of life they need to be prepared for the many occasions when their faith will be tested. Suddenly confronted by a professor or classmate with a problem or question they did not know existed they are ill-prepared for such an encounter. It underlines the necessity of knowing the objective dimension of our faith. It is vital that we know what we believe and why we believe it.

The last level is the intellectual concern, the hardest to get most Christian parents to accept. All normal parents are involved with their children emotionally and not hard for Christian parents to see that their love extends to a spiritual concern. A more difficult climb for some parents is the recognition and importance of equipping their children theologically and through studies in apologetics. The final level is so beyond many Christian parents who do not see the need for an intellectual concern because of its apparent irrelevance to religious matters. This level is acquiring knowledge for its own sake, the study of history, or mathematics, economics, philosophy or art. The common practice is to compartmentalize knowledge into sacred and secular. This is unbiblical and leads to the dangerous idea that secular knowledge is less important, worldly, and unfit for the spiritual Christian. The truth of God as revealed in Scripture is sufficient for faith and conduct, it is not exhaustive. The truth outside the Bible is also worthy of our study. It is important that we reject the idea that faith provides a shortcut to the truth that eliminates any need for grounding in so-called secular areas of learning.\textsuperscript{232}

\textsuperscript{232} Nash, \textit{The Closing of the American Heart}, 98-100.
God established the first family through Adam and Eve. The greatest school is the family, and home is a child’s first school. J. Gresham Machen once said: “The most important Christian education institution is not the pulpit or the schools, important as those institutions are; but it is the Christian family. And that institution has, to a very large extent, ceased to do its work.” The Christian school is an extension of the home. The school is to work closely with parents in supporting their biblical mandate in the training up of their children. There is a hierarchy when it comes to education. God is at the top. He has determined that parents are responsible for the teaching of their children. Fundamental elements of character are developed in children by their parents. The responsibility for the moral and religious training of children is in the domain of parents and not the state. The state has claimed legal ownership of children with the parents as merely custodians or “parental guardians”. The state declares itself to have ultimate ownership of the children. But the state does not have children. Parents are entrusted by God with children to bring them up in the ways of the Lord. A welfare state, where God-ordained areas of responsibility are provided by the state, is unbiblical and anti-covenantal. The roles of state and family are clearly defined in Scripture. The state’s primary responsibility is the ministry of justice, however, today we see the government in areas that they were never meant to be. Parents bear the fundamental responsibility for the education of their children. But Christian parents are not only responsible for seeing that their children receive an

236 Machen, *Transcript Senate Committee on Education*.
239 Mohler, *Educational Crisis*, 3.
education, they are also responsible for the kind of education.\textsuperscript{240} Christian parents are to see it as their duty to provide their children with a godly education, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (Eph 6:4).\textsuperscript{241} Parents are not called to succeed in the raising of their children but they are to be obedient to God’s calling and guidance according to Scripture.\textsuperscript{242}

Education is a unitary process. Sadly, the most important educational agency (the public school) neglects the most fundamental element in education, undermining the Christian home. In fact the government educational system stands in direct opposition to the spirit of the Christian home.\textsuperscript{243} Christian parents, by sending their children to public schools, are transferring the responsibility of education to a system in opposition to a Christian worldview. It is a system that teaches that we are simply a higher stage in the animal chain, not that we were made in the image of God. It is a system that is producing large numbers of barbarians and they are at the gates of society or in the next room watching television.\textsuperscript{244} John Frame expresses his concern and warning to parents:

I find it hard to imagine any situation where parents could justify sending children to an American public school. Perhaps utter financial destitution might be one justification, or the total inability of a family to teach their children at home. But public schools exclude Christian influences; indeed, they often falsify world history so as to deny the immense influence of Christianity upon civilization. Yet, today they realize (as they did not thirty years ago) that they must communicate some values. Those values tend to be secular humanist, New Age, relativist, occultist, etc. And of course, there are the problems within public educational systems always mentioned in the media: violence, drugs, relativist sex education, rampant teenage pregnancies, and so forth.\textsuperscript{245}

\textsuperscript{241} Rushdoony, \textit{Education and the Family}, 2.
\textsuperscript{242} George Barna, \textit{Revolutionary Parenting: Raising your Kids to become Spiritual Champions} (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2007), 16.
\textsuperscript{244} Blumenfeld, \textit{Dick & Jane}, 136.
The Church’s Role in Education

The church must recognize its primary role of proclaiming God’s Word, administering the sacraments and governing herself in light of Scripture. But the church must also understand the importance of stressing Christian education to the flock. Churches need to develop ministries that partner with parents in this educational task. Christian schools are not the church. Each has different functions but these roles are not unrelated. Christian education must be both an education and Christian.

Disturbingly, many churches have failed to see the necessity of Christian education. The emphasis rests on the development of youth activities and programs designed to entertain, attract and amuse young people. The church needs to recognize the importance of Christian education in their ministry responsibility to the people. It is impossible for Christianity to impact a culture without providing an education based on a Christian worldview, through the church, homeschooling, Christian schools and colleges. Christianity has been forced to fight a defensive campaign to maintain its influence in society, “culture wars really constitute religious wars fought on cultural battlefields.”

Christian education, through Christian schools, is providing the church with a great opportunity to challenge and transform our culture. The church should encourage the establishment of new Christian schools or support those already in existence. As the public school system continues to decline (and it will since its foundation is built upon sand) parents,

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246 Rushdoony, Intellectual Schizophrenia, 41.
247 Mohler, Educational Crisis, 3.
250 Ibid., 115
251 Blumenfeld, Dick & Jane, 162.
Christian and non-Christian, will seek alternatives. The church needs to recognize the opportunity for ministry Christian schools provide. The school’s first priority is in support of Christian parents in the fulfillment of their responsibilities. Yet the Christian school can also serve as an opportunity to present the truth.²⁵⁴ It has the potential to broadly impact our society along with reaching into families within our communities, sharing the transforming message of Jesus Christ. John Frame writes:

Christian schools are a “sleeping giant,” potentially one of the greatest Christian weapons in the present spiritual battle. Many people are concerned about the failings of the public schools and are looking for something better. If Christians can show that they can do better at teaching facts and values, people with no Christian background will run to their door. This could be the greatest evangelistic opportunity in the third millennium. But I fear that Christian schools have largely neglected this opportunity. This is one of the worst failings of the modern church; and the Reformed, who have led the Protestant churches in the field of Christian education, must take a large part of the blame.²⁵⁵

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²⁵⁴ Noel Weeks is supportive of the concept of Christian schools as a tool for evangelism but cautions that too great an emphasis can lead to compromise on curriculum, admission policy and methodology. For further reading see: Noel Weeks, *The Christian School*, 95-105.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There is consensus among Christian and non-Christian alike that there is something seriously wrong with the educational system in America. Where the disagreements begin is in regard to solutions to the problem. The research for this thesis has convinced me that K-12 formal education is necessarily Christian.

One reason for this conclusion is the terrible condition of the public school system. It is a system built on a foundation of competing worldviews, philosophies antithetical to a Christian worldview. It is an education system built on a faulty foundation, an anti-Christian foundation that will not hold up under the prevailing pressures. The current system of public education is morally and philosophically bankrupt, and the cheques are bouncing. The government’s response to a broken system is to simply throw more money at the problem. Spiraling upwards, the rising costs of public education has only produced further declining test scores and a quality of education that has alarmed universities, school administrators and business communities. More money will not solve the problems. There has never been a time in human history where so much money has been spent on an educational system that has produced such disastrous results.

K-12 formal education is necessarily Christian because it is impossible to educate from a position of neutrality. Public educators attempt to present their schools as domains of neutrality, as neutral ground for learning, is over time showing that, in fact, state-run schools have statist goals and ends with, often times, anti-biblical positions. All educational systems have an
underlying philosophy. The public education system is built upon a secular worldview at odds with a Christian worldview. Christian parents who choose to send their children to public schools expose them at a young age to a hostile environment where the foundations of their faith will be attacked.

There are clear parallels between the United States and Canada on the topic of the public school system. The prevailing philosophy of education in Canada’s educational program is also secular humanism. The consequences of its domination are also being felt in this nation. The anti-Christian sentiment that permeates our public classrooms is being carried to the corridors of government. The recent redefinition of marriage, passed by the Canadian federal government, is just one example of the assault upon the foundations of Christianity.

The Church needs to recognize that supporting Christian schooling could be one of the greatest avenues of ministry made available to us in the twenty-first century. As the public school system continues to deteriorate morally and academically non-Christian parents are beginning to look for alternatives and solutions. The Christian school can stand as a beacon in the community pointing families toward Christ.

The study, reading and research done for this work has convinced this writer that the only response appropriate for Christian families in both the United States and Canada is to support Christian schools or homeschooling. The growth of Christian schools and homeschooling across America is evidence that more and more Christian parents are coming to the same conclusion. To remain committed to the public school system is at the peril of our children. Transferring this responsibility to public schools and a system in direct opposition to a Christian worldview is to flirt with disaster. My first hand experience with such a disaster took place years ago involving a dear Christian couple who sought to raise their two boys in the ways of the Lord. The boys were
enrolled as students at the local public high school. It was there that they were exposed to a destructive influence in the form of a teacher. This teacher had gained the respect and admiration from both boys. Over time his anti-Christian worldview became increasingly obvious. This public school educator was able to convince these two young men that this belief in what he saw as fairy tales, which they had been taught by their parents, could not seriously be embraced by intelligent people like themselves. The boys came to the point where they viewed their parents as simple folk, holding on to myths and wishful thinking, but as intelligent, well-educated, thinking young men they could not and would not embrace such beliefs. This public high school teacher played a leading role in shipwrecking the faith of these two young men who had grown up in a godly, loving home. Two impressionable young people, who had been raised in the training and instruction of the Lord, had been exposed to an influence that they were ill-equipped to meet.

Christian parents must recognize their covenantal responsibility to provide their children with a God-centered education. Scripture emphasizes that God’s people must see the priority of Christian education. The doctrine of the covenant was always at the root of Christian schools. It is a parental responsibility to educate their children in the fear of the Lord. The attack on the family requires, like never before, a deliberate and directed plan concerning the training and education of our children. The public education system seeks to produce a certain kind of person as defined by the state. But God has created man in His own image and He determines the purpose of education, an education that leads His image bearers toward being equipped for a life of service to Him.

We continue to be involved in the great struggle launched back in the Garden, a struggle for the souls of man. We also take great comfort in the knowledge that there is a day coming, a
day when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).
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