

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

"Conviction for Christian Education"

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Dear Radio Friends,

For many of us, this week will mark the return of our children to school. In light of that, we want to consider the Christian's conviction for Christian education.

Next to our love for the church of Jesus Christ stands our love for Christian homes and the schools organized by and existing as an extension of these Christian homes. We love the church as the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we love the Christian home and its extension, the Christian school, as the place where the precious seed of the church is nurtured, where our children are taught to know the Lord and to stand in awe of His mighty works.

We want to ask ourselves the question, as another school year begins, Why do we have Christian, parental schools?

We want to see that a Christian school arises out of conviction, not preference. A preference refers to what one chooses for reasons other than deep-seated belief, one that arises out of a mere preference of one over another and, in that sense, a priority. For instance, you may be applying for a job and you say, "I prefer not to work on Sunday." But, when push comes to shove and you are called to come in, maybe you say, "I made plans for the day. I prefer not." But if the employer says, "Listen, the job is on the line. Come in or else," then you go in. Then you had no conviction at all about the Lord's day. You made God's commandment a preference that you would follow if it suited - not a conviction.

A conviction, you see, is founded upon the belief that God has spoken to me in His Word, and is therefore a belief which is consistently followed in my life. A biblical conviction is the persuasion of faith that my duty in this matter of my life has been made clear to me in the will of God revealed in holy Scripture.

Christian schools must arise out of conviction. That conviction is this: that it is the calling of parents to educate their children according to what the parents believe. In [Genesis 18:19](#), God's Word concerning Abraham was this: For I know him, that he will instruct or train his children in the commandments of the Lord. The conviction for Christian education is that the parent is called of God to train his child in every area of life. And the goal of this training is to equip our children to live as children of God to the glory of God in this world. It is the calling of a parent to do that.

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Christian schools must then not arise merely out of a reactionist movement. The motivation for a Christian school is not simply to get away from that evolution and sex education stuff in the public schools, as people sometimes say. Yes, there are many shameful and false teachings in many schools. But that is not the primary reason or the core of our conviction for Christian education. Nor is the conviction for Christian education a desire to establish a physical kingdom of Christ on the earth, to

bring dominion, as it is said, to every sphere by Christian education. That is not our motive either.

But the conviction out of which a Christian school arises is this: it is the calling of parents to train their children according to what they believe so that their children might know how to serve the living God in every area of life. That is a parental responsibility. Isaiah 38:19, "The father to the children shall make known thy truth." This is the distinctive calling of a parent. Deuteronomy 6, 7, "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." And in Ephesians 6:4, Fathers, nurture your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

It is only the conviction that it is a parental calling to educate one's children that can hold the weight of a Christian school. Convictions are formed by the Word of God. Convictions are formed by the Word of God being brought to bear upon the heart of the believer. Convictions are not formed by arguments. They are not formed by straight-armed tactics. They are not formed by pressure of one group upon other individuals to conform. No. Convictions are sacred. The Holy Spirit brings the Word to bear upon my heart and shows me the way that I must go.

Let us look to the Word of God to form our conviction for Christian education.

What is it that you really want for your children? What should you want, according to the Word of God?

Of course, there are many things that we want for our children which, of themselves, are right and proper and which also rest upon our heart today. I am not referring simply to carnal things, for instance, a desire that your son be the leading scorer on a basketball team, or your daughter grow up to be beautiful or popular, or that your children grow up and have a beautiful home to live in. These are the desires which would center merely in the eyes of men.

No, our desires for our children center in the eye of God. We have, in that connection, many legitimate desires for them. We have questions: Whom are they going to marry? Who will their friends be? Where will they go and with whom? What work will they get? What about their future education in a college? All of these questions center in this: Where are they going to go to school as children and young people? What education are they going to get? What will be the environment? Will this education equip them, will it serve them, or will it be inadequate? We reject with all of our souls the attitude that education is only worthwhile if it teaches us how to make a dollar and to be successful. We want an education which will serve our children, in today's world, to teach them how to be a godly person in this world - a godly husband, a godly wife, a godly parent - to teach them to be responsible, to live in the world as the friend-servant of God. We want that for our children.

In one word, we want godliness for our children - that they live a godly life. That is the most important thing in the world, that they live godly - unto God - in this world. That is not a false piety. That is what some people think when they hear of godliness. They think of a mask, of a pious look, of someone who is of no use to present-day situations in which people live. No, biblical godliness is what we want for our children - a full-orbed, solid, faith-rooted godliness.

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In the Scriptures we read, in Genesis 17:18, that Abraham expresses this desire for his flesh-and-blood thirteen-year-old son, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" Paul says concerning Timothy, his spiritual son, "This is my desire for you, Timothy, be not ashamed of the gospel nor of me its prisoner." Look into the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs turns the heart of a believing parent inside out and tells you what ought to be written in that heart. And what is that desire? "My son, be thou in the fear of God all thy days." Therefore Proverbs speaks to the son and daughter about their companionship,

about sexual purity, about greed, about honesty, about industry, about integrity, about a host of other subjects. We want our children to be men and women of God, thoroughly equipped, says the Scripture, unto every good work, possessing the comfort and the attractiveness of vital godliness. We want a generation which will be to the honor of God. We want to educate them in such a way that they will be wise to discern, skillful to work. That they will be delivered from folly, immorality, greed, pride, dishonesty, all of which stalk the youth of the land, and that they be stalwart sons and daughters fair, a nobility of grace in Jesus Christ. In short, we want for our children what lies in the bottom of our own heart by grace - that they might know Jesus Christ and know God and have eternal life in Him.

Now, a vital aid in attaining this desire is a good Christian school. What is a good Christian school? A good Christian school has three characteristics. First of all, it is parental. That is, it is run directly by parents of like-minded faith, through a board, and by teachers given their mission by those parents. It is not a school handed over to supposed experts who secretly believe that parents are ineffective at best in rearing children. It is not a school which goes off to draft its own mission statement of purpose or vision. It is not a school in which parents take an antagonistic stance against the teachers. But it is a parental school - a school which reflects the faith of the parents. It is a school in which parents have vital involvement of love and covenant fellowship with teachers and children and in which the teacher stands in the place of the parent, sharing the Reformed, creedal belief of the parent.

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Secondly, this school is doctrinal. The basis of instruction in the Christian school is founded upon the truth of the infallible, inerrant, perfect Word of God. There is no place in the Christian school for the leaven of relativism. Relativism is the forsaking of absolutes in truth - absolutes of God's Word. Relativism is the idea that we really cannot be sure about anything. It comes off very pious sometimes. It is the idea that an educated person, an enlightened person, is the one who sees that the former absolutes, the former beliefs of bygone eras are not really so, and there is nothing really dependable, so what we need to do is to learn how to adjust. Therefore, we need to teach our children how to cope, how to adjust as best as they can to the fluctuations of society and to the fact that ultimately there is no solid truth to stand on except that which is right for them, so that they can make decisions in harmony with their own feelings. That is abominable before God - the leaven of relativism that has infiltrated public education with shameful compromise. Whenever the authority of the Bible is questioned, relativism infiltrates Christian schools. A good Christian school is built upon the Word of truth, upon this principle expressed in Romans 3:4: "Let God be true, but every man a liar." A good Christian school does not send forth her students upon the sea of life without a chart, with one paddle in a rubber dingy, but sets their feet upon solid ground and says to the children, "Come what may, this is the truth and it will not change."

Thirdly, a good Christian school is educational. It provides a well-rounded, academically sound education. A Christian school is not just a school with a Bible class and everything else that happens in the school is OK until 3:15 when the bell rings. Then we are done. Oh, no! A biblical school means that the Scriptures are applied in every realm of education. We must nurture them, says the apostle Paul in Ephesians 6. That is, their minds. I press all things, says Paul, into the service of Christ. I bring every thought into captivity to the Lord Jesus Christ (II Cor. 10). A good Christian school is not simply a school for those who have high IQ. Oh, no! That is not the case, either. But the talent given to each child is first of all prayerfully discerned and then skillfully, zealously, passionately developed according to the guidelines of God's Word. What a glorious thing is a Christian school! You must never, as a parent, downplay learning. It is the most fascinating thing that God has given to us as children - to learn of His wonders in Himself and in His creation and in all things as all things ultimately reflect the glory of God.

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This is what we want: a good Christian school - parental, doctrinal, educational - in which our children are trained unto godliness.

That is our conviction because of our commitment to the Scriptures as the inerrant, without error, Word of our sovereign God before whom we delight to bow and whom we delight to serve.

This is our conviction because of the truth of the authority, the perspicuity, or clarity, of holy Scripture. A good Christian school and the schools that Christians organize out of conviction are schools committed to the inerrancy of the Word of God.

We weep when we see in Christianity the subtle, and sometimes more and more blatant, proud denials of the inerrancy and infallibility of holy Scripture. Someday, perhaps, you will go to investigate a school for your child. You will ask, perhaps, "Where does this school stand in its sports program? What place does it give to sports?" You might receive a vague answer. You might receive one that you disagree with. You might ask the question, "What about the band and the music here? What about extra-curricular activities? What about college preparation? What about secretarial schools? What about home-ec?" And you may receive various answers, some that satisfy you and some that may not. But here is the question that you must ask and you must receive the right answer: "Where does this school stand regarding the holy Scriptures and the Reformed, biblical faith expressed in the creeds drawn from holy Scripture? Does this school, and the parents behind it, believe that Scripture is word for word the Word of God who cannot lie and therefore is to be trusted in all of its teachings?" The answer to that is either a "Yes," or a "No."

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For any church, or any Christian school, or any Christian organization to deny the clarity and authority of the Word of God as God's word, word-for-word, is to put the word "Ichabod" above their school, church, or organization. We cry in love to God and to His cause on earth, "Maintain the truth that the Bible is word-for-word God's Word." There is where your child must be instructed.

And in that school, teachers must instruct to a godly life, training up the child in the ways of God. This is our conviction for Christian education.

May God bless it in the coming year. Those who have the grace and privilege of such a school, may you not lose your vision. May you not lose your thankfulness. And may you not become complacent concerning this great gift that God has given you.

In areas and Christian communities where such a school is not to be found, may you be encouraged by the Word of God to labor faithfully in the love of God, one with another, for the establishment of such a Christian school. And as we go forth in this school year, may we do so in confidence as parents, believers, children, and young people.

When we stop to consider the work of Christian education, like all of the other works in God's kingdom, we see that it is awesome, serious, important, and overwhelming. We feel that way as teachers. We feel that way as parents. We feel that way as pastors and elders. We are weak and the world and its sin are strong. There seem to be few who are convicted of these things - the commitment and the taxing work of getting everyone together and behind one project and agreed is so very difficult. We become discouraged and skeptical and bitter. We say, "Well, we're spinning our wheels."

Oh, no! That is not true. A little experience in the work of God will teach you that it is exactly when we

feel at an end and that we cannot go on, it is exactly then that God is delighted to work in us and to give to us.

May He give us and preserve for us Christian schools, organized out of conviction for Christian education.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for Thy holy Word. We pray that Thou wilt bless it unto our hearts. Amen.

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