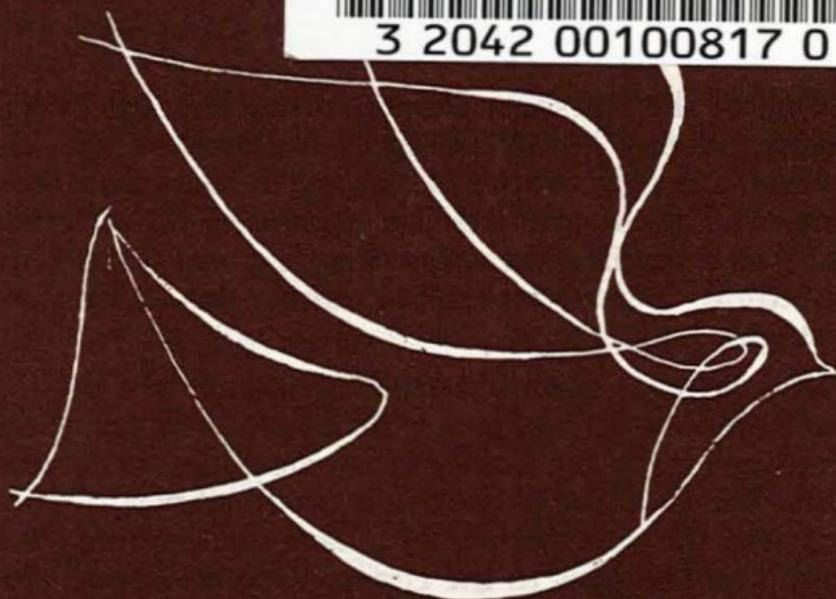


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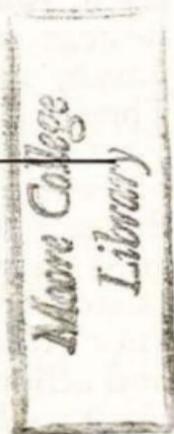
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Back to God Flour

**HOSTAGES
OF
EDUCATION**

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DENOMINATIONAL BROADCAST
OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES
OF AUSTRALIA

HOSTAGES OF EDUCATION

"O simple ones, learn prudence; O foolish men, pay attention." Proverbs 8:5

One of the fearsome elements that are part of living in our day is the taking of hostages. There are several strongly opposed forces in our disturbed time, and their conflicts are expressed on different levels and in different ways. But few ways are more unsettling and exasperating than the taking of hostages.

In a hostage situation there is always the feeling that someone is taking unfair advantage, for these situations leave the holder of the hostages somewhat above the law, above the usual circumstances of conflict, and the poor people who have surrendered their friends as hostages to the enemy must look on helplessly.

Surely, much has occurred over the last several years to make us all familiar with the taking of hostages, and we know something about the difficulties involved in trying to get the opposition to return them; worse yet, we know the cost involved in trying to snatch the hostages away from those who hold them. And I would like you to consider with me a hostage situation which is extremely vicious, but which, surprisingly, has gone virtually undetected. There is a good chance that it may involve some of your own family—yes, it's possible that one or more of your own family may have been taken hostage. But as I said, this widespread hostage problem has gone largely unnoticed, and practically no one has raised a complaint about it. Because this hostage situation attracts so little notice, there are no great plans and actions existing to get the hostages back. Possibly if we begin talking about it more, some progress can be made in returning the hostages to those who should have the care of them.

Now as I talk about this hostage situation, there may be some who will say that I am simply using a figure of speech—that the people I am calling hostages are really not hostages at all. Others may accuse me of exaggeration; they will say that the people

I identify as hostages should certainly not be called that. Some may even accuse me of trying to arouse hatred and conflict when we should all be working for tranquillity in our society. I hope that after you have looked at the facts with me though, you will admit that it is true—there is a large body of people being held hostage in our very country, and it is past high time that we who recognize this do all in our power to achieve their release.

What I am talking about is the situation in which millions of young people are being held hostage by a hostile educational system. I believe that when we analyze the educational situation in our day we will discover that a large percent of children who are attending the general tax-supported schools are in fact being held hostage. I realize that the charge I am making is serious, even incendiary, but it can be substantiated. And I assure you that I do not make it in order to cause unrest. I make it so that as more and more people recognize the virtual hostage situation that has developed, more and more people of good will and sensitive conscience will band together to correct what is now occurring. It is my conviction that one of the reasons this situation exists at all is that the very people who are holding so many children hostage do not realize what they are doing, and it is my hope that once they see the seriousness of their action, they will agree that change is necessary.

I also feel that many who have surrendered their children to the opposition that now holds these young people hostage do not themselves realize what has happened, and so they fail to be incensed by what has occurred. It is my hope that once they see the actual situation for what it really is, they will launch heroic efforts to release their children so that parents may once again be the primary influence in the lives of young people.

Think with me then for a few minutes about education, about hostages, and about hostages to education. Thinking along this line could be one of the most important things you do today.

When I talk about education now, I am really talking about educational *systems*. We all recognize that

what our children learn in school is more than specific skills and items of knowledge given them in the classroom. To be sure, education consists of these; when our children graduate we expect them to know certain facts and to be able to do certain things. They must know something about our country's history, for example, and if they get a job clerking in a store, they should know how to return the proper change to their customers.

But we don't have to think very long about education before we see that it involves much, much more than developing skills and imparting knowledge. It is necessary for a school to make choices regarding what knowledge is going to be communicated and to make a decision about which skills will be developed and which will be neglected. For example, if we are going to train young people to function well in a computer-dominated society, we will teach them certain skills; if they are going to function in a society that emphasizes interpersonal relationships, we will teach them other abilities.

In other words, we have educational systems operating these days, and in terms of their being systems, choice is expressed in one direction or another. And the choices expressed are expressed in terms of the *educational system*. The system determines the directions the schools will go, the choices they will make.

When you think about education and when you think about your child's education, remember that the education a child receives is part of a system. And educational systems are designed to accomplish certain goals. Take for example the various goals that have dominated the American educational system over the last years. Christopher Lasch in his book *The Culture of Narcissism* provides a thumbnail sketch of the development of educational goals.

Lasch shows how from the beginning of mass education in the common school in America, the goal of Americanization played a leading role in determining the character of the school system. There was a clear recognition that the schools were an expression of social control, and the goal was to produce a citizen reasonably knowledgeable about his country, but

above all to produce a citizen useful in developing the industrial economy of the country. During the forties and fifties, the goal of Americanization gave way to a more general "life adjustment" goal, and at the end of the fifties the educational system was expected to produce young people accomplished in science.

Christopher Lasch also describes the decline of the moral perspectives that formerly distinguished education in this land, a land which traced its origin to men who believed in God and who viewed themselves as people with a magnificent calling—the calling to serve the Almighty in His earthly kingdom. What occurred was a virtual moral illiteracy. Lasch says:

With the collapse of religion, biblical references, which formerly penetrated deep into everyday awareness, have become incomprehensible. . . .

In the space of two or three generations, enormous stretches of the "Judeo-Christian tradition," so often invoked by educators but so seldom taught in any form, have passed into oblivion.

In other words, what we have here is a massive system of education that has gradually moved away from the Judeo-Christian principles which originally functioned within it. This large system of education continues to function as one of the most efficient instruments of social control in the world. But it now exercises control over the citizens of the land in terms of a thoroughly secularized view of man and his duty.

The educational system has become thoroughly secular. Secular—what does that mean? It means that the educational system functions with no reference to objective standards of truth and of right and wrong. Whatever is described entirely in terms of the present age—the here and the now—is secular. *Secular is relative*. And for many of us it is this secular quality of the dominant educational system that makes it unfit for the education of our children. To be sure, with many others we are upset that the modern school system often fails to develop minimal levels of knowledge and skills among the young, and

that within the schools there are serious violations of the law (for example, the problem of drugs), but none of these is the system's most basic problem. The most basic problem is that the school system which is a massive instrument of social control operates with no reference to the truth and to the way of life to which many of us are totally committed.

There are some, even today, who reject the secular world view which has become the foundation for common, publicly financed education. Into our secular world there comes the biblical call which wisdom itself addresses to our times. The words of Proverbs 8 apply here. Here the wisdom of God is personified, made personal, and Wisdom calls to mankind—calls out, too, to this age which has abandoned biblical truth as it educates its children. This is what we read in Proverbs 8:

Does not wisdom call,
does not understanding raise her voice?
On the heights beside the way, in the paths she
takes her stand;
beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud:
"To you, O men, I call,
and my cry is to the sons of men.
O simple ones, learn prudence;
O foolish men, pay attention" (vv. 1-5).

The secular world view is not the only world view. No. There are still many today who believe that what the Bible says is the truth. The Bible has a message of salvation through the finished work of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross. (If you don't know what I am talking about when I speak about salvation through Jesus' cross, you should not waste another day before you find out about this.) And along with this message of salvation there is a great message that has direct bearing on education. Jesus who is the Savior from sin is also the Wisdom of God. The Bible describes Jesus as being involved in the creation of all things. For example, read how the book of Colossians in the New Testament speaks about Jesus in connection with the knowledge of creation: "By [Jesus] all things were created. . . . He is

creation: "By [Jesus] all things were created. . . . He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (1:16,17), and "In [Jesus] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3).

There are some of us, you see, who believe that the Bible, with the Lord Jesus Christ at its center, is directly related to what we do when we study. Learning is not simply the transfer of certain facts from the pages of a book into someone's mind, or some similar process; education involves values, involves choices and selection. Education makes a grand, massive, cumulative impression on the young people exposed to it. An educational system—remember we are talking about systems now—forms people and determines how they will think about themselves, about their families, about their nation and their world, and about their duty.

Now then, what happens when the children of parents who believe in the biblical viewpoint and who reject the secular viewpoint are forced to spend their time year after year in an educational system that is actually opposed to the Christian world view? Well, don't you see, these children are actually hostages of a hostile system—one might even say of a hostile government. They are hostages.

And if you feel my judgment is too harsh, consider this. First of all, in most instances government policies consistently promote the secular system and put roadblocks in the way of a Christian day school system. In America, for example, where education is frankly described as a system of social control, even those who reject the secular world view are required to pay for the secular school system, and they may establish and maintain their own Christian school system only after they have paid for the other system first. Moreover, it is well known that education on the lower levels is compulsory; since the secular system is practically everywhere and other systems exist by way of exception here and there, this means that millions of children of Christian people are being forced to receive an education that continuously declares that the Christian world view is of no value for modern man so far as thinking and learning are con-

in our culture is designed to make us all feel that the domination of the secular school is all right and that those who object to the situation are rather strange and even undemocratic.

The fact is that millions of Christian parents do not even realize what is happening to them and to their children. They are very sincere people who earnestly believe the Bible's teaching about God, the great Creator; they faithfully support their churches and at home make very clear to their children that man is the image bearer of God, required to live according to the law of God; and then when their children turn five years old, these parents dutifully send them off to school where the children will be exposed to an educational system that deliberately excludes the world view which the parents hold dear. Already in 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations included in its *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* the right of parents to have their children educated in terms of the world view which they, the parents, believe. Today the very opposite is occurring for millions of children of Christian parents in countries that pride themselves in their just treatment of their citizens.

It is a fact that the children of Christian parents are being held hostage by a mammoth educational system, and this educational system is forming them in such a way that they never learn the great power of the Christian world view. What can be done about this? If you are a Christian, you should be able to figure out some of the answers to this question.

First of all, among those who are followers of Christ, there must be a recognition of the true dimensions of this fearsome problem. A hostage situation always awakens emotions of alarm and dismay. One of the reasons the present circumstances prevail is that many true Christians do not realize that their children are hostages. They have simply accepted the theory that the state should dominate education and that the state along with a secular educational establishment should determine the kind of education their children should receive. And they have accepted the false idea that education is neutral with re-

spect to religion and that it should remain so. They do not realize that an educational system (remember, we are talking about systems) is always religious; it is rooted in a religious world view, and it promotes that world view one way or another. In terms of a free society, in terms of democracy, Christians recognize that there is a place for a secular educational system—let it serve those who have become secularized. But it is almost unbelievable that so many people have come to the conclusion that the secular school system should be the system for most of the children in the country. Yet Christian people must recognize that this has happened; they cannot expect modern secularized man to acknowledge that the secular element of our society is holding millions of children hostage.

Secondly, the Christian community should work for change—surely a situation as grievous as this cannot go unopposed and unprotected. There are some Christians I know who regularly append to their payment of school tax a letter which expresses their outrage at being forced to support a secular educational system. They call attention to the violation of conscience that results, and they point out that in the nature of the case their own children cannot use these schools and are thus deprived of benefits that are their rightful due. Such letters may seem ineffective, but they may open up the way for further action that could lead to change—perhaps the hostages will one day be released. That will happen when Christian parents can freely establish and maintain Christian school systems without penalty and without prejudice.

Thirdly, Christian parents must work diligently to rescue their hostage children. Right now I do not want to talk about precisely how this should be done. But obviously it will require the establishment and maintenance of an educational system that is built on the biblical world view. For the moment I want to stress that the achievement of such a school system will demand that Christian people have drive, enthusiasm, and the spirit of sacrifice—it will mean having great faith and exercising it. They will have to be willing to experience hardship and endure ridicule

in the accomplishment of their task. They cannot wait until the current situation is changed; it may never change. They must make use of what freedoms they presently possess and overcome the disadvantage at which they have been placed, and they must rescue their children from those who hold them hostage. There is no time to lose. Already the damage done is enormous. It is in fact so enormous that the very parents whose children are presently being held hostage have been brainwashed to the point where they do not even realize what has happened to them.

Perhaps some of you think what I have said is irrational and stupid. Maybe you would like to ask me, "What's the matter with you, do you think that children of Christian parents are special—different from other children?" To that I would reply: "The children of Christian parents are special. The Bible says they are "holy," that is, set aside for service to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:14). They do not belong to the state for the state to educate as it wills. They do not even belong to their parents. They belong to God. They carry His mark on them. They must learn to see themselves and their world in the light of the Word of God. It is intolerable when such children are forced to receive an education in which the testimony of Christ and His Word are deliberately excluded—in fact are excluded by the laws of the land. Such an education is a denial of the lordship of Christ, and is, consequently, the expression of another religion, non-Christian. It is absolutely unacceptable that God's children be held hostage by a secular school system." Yes, that would be my reply.

The rescue of these hostages is possible, and it is necessary. The truth is that our country needs more than one system of education. The secular system is not enough. Already it is sowing the bitter seeds of cynicism and despair. It has created, as Christopher Lasch puts it, "the culture of narcissism." That is a culture in which selfishness, emptiness, and finally hopelessness take over in human experience. It is indescribably bitter and grim.

Our land will not be truly free until God's precious

children are no longer held hostage. How long will you allow this circumstance to continue without your opposition?

PRAYER

Almighty God, open the eyes of the powers that be, open the eyes of our society, and open the eyes of the people who are called by your name so that many may see the true state of affairs in education today. Overcome the detrimental impact secular education is already having on the children of your kingdom. Give your people courage and determination as they gather energy to dedicate themselves to work for great change.

Lord, we hear the strong and unmistakable voice of wisdom calling to us all, asking us to gain understanding and prudence in the light of your Word. Grant that many may turn to you so that the light of your truth will flood our lives, dispelling the dismal shadows that have fallen across our modern time.

Bless those Christian schools that have already been established. May they prosper, and may they be an encouraging example to those who now begin to work for such schools in their communities. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

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The message printed in this pamphlet was heard over the Back to God Hour, which is broadcast every Sunday in co-operation with the Christian Reformed Churches of America, in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia, and by shortwave throughout the world.

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