

# THE NECESSITY OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

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## TWO REASONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

The Christian school is to be favored for two reasons. In the first place, it is important for American liberty; in the second place, it is important for the propagation of the Christian religion. These two reasons are not equally important; indeed, the latter includes the former as it includes every other legitimate human interest. But I want to speak of these two reasons in turn.

In the first place, then, the Christian school is important for the maintenance of American liberty.

We are witnessing in our day a world-wide attack upon the fundamental principles of civil and religious freedom. In some countries, such as Italy, the attack has been blatant and unashamed; Mussolini despises democracy and does not mind saying so. A similar despotism now prevails in Germany; and in Russia freedom is being crushed out by what is perhaps the most complete and systematic tyranny that the world has ever seen.

But exactly the same tendency that is manifested in extreme form in those countries, is also being

manifested, more slowly but none the less surely, in America. It has been given an enormous impetus first by the war and now by the economic depression; but aside from these external stimuli it has its roots in a fundamental deterioration of the American people. Gradually the people has come to value principle less and creature comfort more; increasingly it has come to prefer prosperity to freedom; and even in the field of prosperity it cannot be said that the effect is satisfactory.

The result of this decadence in the American people is seen in the rapid growth of a centralized bureaucracy which is the thing against which the Constitution of the United States was most clearly intended to guard.

## THE ATTACK UPON LIBERTY

In the presence of this apparent collapse of free democracy, any descendant of the liberty-loving races of mankind may well stand dismayed; and to those liberty-loving races no doubt most of my hearers tonight belong. I am of the Anglo-Saxon race; many of you belong to a race whose part in the history of human freedom is if anything still more glorious; and as we all contemplate

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the struggle of our fathers in the winning of that freedom which their descendants seem now to be so willing to give up, we are impressed anew with the fact that it is far easier to destroy than to create. It took many centuries of struggle—much blood and many tears—to establish the fundamental principles of our civil and religious liberty; but one mad generation is sufficient to throw them all away.

It is true, the attack upon liberty is nothing new. Always there have been tyrants in the world; almost always tyranny has begun by being superficially beneficent, and always it has ended by being both superficially and radically cruel.

But while tyranny itself is nothing new, the technique of tyranny has been enormously improved in our day; the tyranny of the scientific expert is the most crushing tyranny of all. That tyranny is being exercised most effectively in the field of education. A monopolistic system of education controlled by the State is far more efficient in crushing our liberty than the cruder weapons of fire and sword. Against this monopoly of education by the State the Christian school brings a salutary protest; it contends for the right of parents to bring up their children in accordance with the dictates of their conscience and not in the manner prescribed by the State.

That right has been attacked in America in recent years in the most blatant possible ways. In Oregon, a law was actually passed some years ago requiring all children to attend the public schools thus taking the children from the control of their parents and placing them under the despotic control of whatever superintendent of education might happen to be in office in the district in which they resided. In Nebraska, a law was passed forbidding the study of languages other than English, even in private schools, until the child was too old to learn them well. That was really a law making literary education a crime. In New York, one of the abominable Lusk Laws placed even private tutors under state

supervision and control.

## TEMPORARY RELIEF

It is true that no one of these measures is in force at the present time. The Lusk Laws were repealed, largely through the efforts of Governor Alfred E. Smith. The Oregon School Law and the Nebraska Language Law were declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court, and Justice McReynolds in the decision in the latter case gave expression to the great principle that in America the child is not the mere creature of the State.

Even such salutary decisions as that are not to be contemplated with unmixed feelings by the lover of American institutions. They are based, I suppose, upon the great “Bill-of-Rights” provisions of the Constitution of the United States. But the original intent of those provisions was that they should be a check upon Congress, not that they should be a check upon the states. The fundamental rights of man were to be guaranteed, it was assumed, by the constitutions of the individual states, so far as the powers reserved to the states are concerned. It is a sign of appalling deterioration when the Federal Supreme Court steps in to do what the state courts ought to do. Nevertheless we cannot help rejoicing at the result. For the present at least, such an excess of tyranny as was put into effect in Oregon and has been seriously advocated in Michigan and other states is postponed.

Yet the forces inimical to liberty have not been discouraged by these temporary checks. They are at work with great persistency just at the present time, busying themselves particularly in the advocacy of two vicious measures, both of which concern childhood and youth. . . .

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