

Christian Education Awareness Network (CEANet)

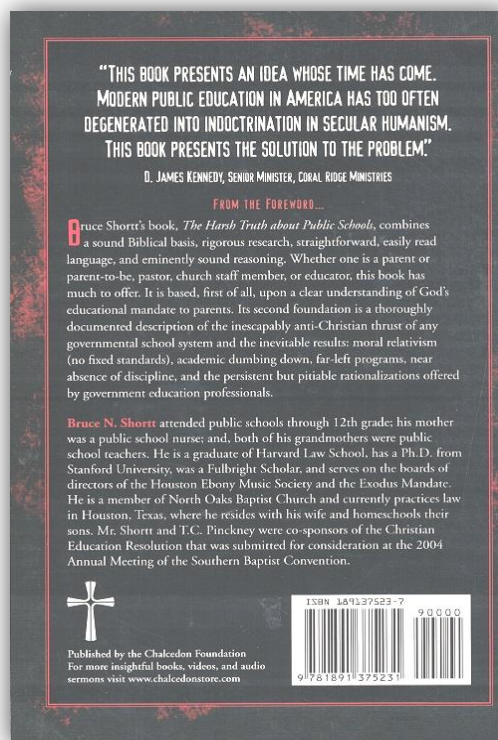
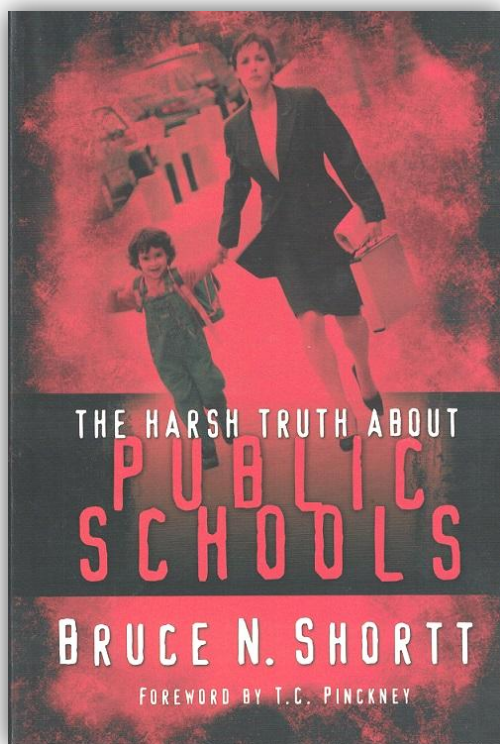
Presents a Book:

The Harsh Truth About Public Schools

by Bruce N. Shortt

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Chalcedon Foundation
Vallecito, California



Back Cover --

"This book presents an idea whose time has come. Modern public education in America has too often degenerated into indoctrination in secular humanism. This book presents the solution to the problem."
-- D. James Kennedy, Senior Minister, Coral Ridge Ministries

Foreword

T.C. Pinckney

Bruce Shortt's book, *The Harsh Truth about Public Schools*, combines a sound Biblical basis, rigorous research, straightforward, easily read language, and eminently sound reasoning. Whether one is a parent or parent-to-be, pastor, church staff member, or educator, this book has much to offer. It is based, first of all, upon a clear understanding of God's educational mandate to parents. Its second foundation is a thoroughly documented description of the inescapably anti-Christian thrust of any governmental school system and the inevitable results: moral relativism (no fixed standards), academic dumbing down, far-left programs, near absence of discipline, and the persistent but pitiable rationalizations offered by government education professionals.

Chapter 6 may prove to be especially enlightening, for it provides a brief review of education in America from Pilgrim days, through founding of the first governmental school system in Massachusetts in the 1830s, up to more recent court decisions, and ends with a demonstration of the hopelessness of even well-meant governmental "school reform" programs.

Chapter 7 effectively explodes the excuses so often given for leaving Christian children in the government's "spiritually, morally, and academically corrosive" schools. It would be helpful to read this chapter at least twice. Odds are you will want to discuss its points with more than one family member and other Christians.

The last chapter discusses the advantages and effectiveness of truly Christian schools and homeschooling, and provides numerous sources of further information, many as convenient as the Internet. By this point Shortt will have picqued your interest in alternatives to government schools, so you will really appreciate this help.

Let me close with a quote from Chapter 6: "A Christian education must impart a Christian worldview in which the sovereignty of God and the central role of Jesus Christ in human history and affairs are understood by every Christian child." Do you really think it is possible for a child to receive such an education in a governmental school?

T. C. Pinckney was raised in Charleston, SC, and graduated from The Citadel. Entering the Air Force in 1951, during his career he flew the F-94b, F-86d, F and RF-4. In Viet Nam he flew 189 combat missions. He rose to the rank of Brigadier General. After receiving an MA in International Relations, he taught Political Science at the Air Force Academy, attended the National War College, and had assignments in the Air Staff, State Department, National Security Council staff, and the staff of the Secretary of Defense.

T. C. has, since retirement, been active in Southern Baptist life having served on the SBC Executive Committee, chaired the Committee on Nominations and the Order of Business Committee, and as Second Vice President. Since 1988 he has been editor of *The Baptist Banner*, a newsletter for conservative Southern Baptists.



Bruce N. Shortt attended public schools through 12th grade; his mother was a public school nurse; and, both of his grandmothers were public school teachers. He is a graduate of Harvard Law School, has a Ph.D. from Stanford University, was a Fulbright Scholar, and serves on the boards of directors of the Houston Ebony Music Society and the Exodus Mandate. He is a member of North Oaks Baptist Church and currently practices law in Houston, Texas, where he resides with his wife and homeschooled their sons. Mr. Shortt and T.C. Pinckney were co-sponsors of the Christian Education Resolution that was submitted for consideration at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.



Dr. Bruce N. Shortt and James Boyes (CEANet Host)
Cascade/Burlington Mall, Burlington, WA -- August 19, 2004

Dedication

To my loving wife, Lan, the sons God has graciously given us, Hugh, Ian, and Owen, North Oaks Baptist Church, and Christian children and parents everywhere.

What others are saying...

"Bruce Shortt shows why the public schools are increasingly no longer suitable for Christian children -- and why they are not likely to be reformed, owing to the teachers' unions and other secularist influences. We should stop treating the public schools as ends in themselves that always have to be "preserved." They are means, not ends; and when we discover that they no longer work, we should try something else. The book is quite readable and I hope it will find the audience it deserves. The subject matter is vast; yet it covers much of the salient material in a way which should open some eyes."

-- Kenneth D. Whitehead

Assistant Secretary of Education for Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush

"*The Harsh Truth about Public Schools* by Bruce Shortt is a sad book. It is sad that the condition documented in this book actually exists in a nation founded on the principles of religious liberty, but it is even more sorrowful to know that, short of a miracle, the very Christian parents and other Christian leaders who need to read this book the most will probably pass it by. For those, however, with courage and a desire to know the truth this monograph will be an incredible blessing."

-- Paige Patterson, President

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Fort Worth, Texas

"Everyone truly interested in our children, our homes, and the future of our beloved America should read and study this book."

-- Chaplain (Col.) E. H. Jim Ammerman

U. S. Army Retired, Endorser for over 500 Chaplains representative to the U. S. Military for over 15 million independent church members.

"Bruce Shortt clearly and forcefully sets forth overwhelming evidence of the anti-Christian bias in parts of our public school system. This book is a must-read for anyone concerned with the future of the United States."

-- Judge Paul Pressler

"Bruce Shortt's new book, *The Harsh Truth About Public Schools*, is clear evidence that concern over the catastrophic meltdown of public education in the United States is being felt in every segment of American society."

-- Dr. John C. Lundt

Professor of Education, University of Montana, and coauthor of *Leaving School: Finding Education*, Matanzas Press, 2004

"All parents are ultimately responsible for how their children are educated. This book not only shows forcefully why Christian parents must revolutionize education through homeschooling and Christian

schools, it also helps guide parents on their journey into the adventure of Christian education."

-- Eric and Joyce Burge

Co-founders of the National Black Home Educators Resource Association

"Bruce Shortt has produced a devastating indictment of our public school system, which he believes is not only destroying the intelligence of our children, but is wreaking havoc with our moral and spiritual future. The book is a veritable encyclopedia of educational failure, corruption, and malfeasance by those who run the system"

-- Samuel L. Blumenfeld

Author of eight books on education, including *NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education*, *How to Tutor*, *Alpha-Phonics: A Primer for Beginning Readers*, and *Homeschooling: A Parents Guide to Teaching Children*.

"Anyone considering the possibility of placing their child in a government school should read this book first. Anyone who has already made that choice should read this book and reconsider. Bruce Shortt has exposed the proverbial elephant in the middle of the room and we can ignore it no longer."

-- Dr. Voddie Baucham, Jr.

National Bible Teacher Author of *The Ever-Loving Truth*

"Harsh truths with enough humor to make it a fun read. Presenting this compelling book in discrete chunks made it easy to start anywhere."

-- Marshall Fritz

President, Alliance for Separation of School & State
Founder, GetTheKidsOut.org

"A graphic and well-documented reference source that provides a host of compelling arguments for taking Christian kids out of public schools. Dr. Shortt casts no aspersion on the motives of most teachers, but his examples of destructive practices and curricula nevertheless illustrate that, indeed, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

-- Dr. Arnold Burron

Professor Emeritus: University of Northern Colorado

"In a readable and enjoyable fashion Bruce Shortt's book combines the best Biblical, academic, and social arguments for Christians to abandon K-12 public schools. The postscript addressed to our Christian public school teachers is a unique challenge."

-- E. Ray Moore, Jr.

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) US Army Reserve, Retired
Director and Founder, Exodusmandate.org

Introduction

"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."

-- **Martin Luther**

It's a familiar routine: Roughly 180 days a year millions of Christian families begin their day by waking their children, giving them breakfast, and helping them wash their faces, brush their teeth, get dressed, and collect their schoolbooks. They then deliver their children by car, bus, or foot to a seemingly benign, ubiquitous, and familiar institution: the government school. Today this ritual seems unexceptionable. Most of us, after all, went through it as children. The vast majority of parents do it, and, in the public's mind, attending government schools is virtually synonymous with getting an education.

Yet, this has not always been so. For most of America's history, including the colonial period, education was provided primarily by families and the church. To those earlier Americans, the notion of entrusting their children's education to strangers in a secular institution would have been unthinkable. When the government school movement began to emerge in the middle part of the 19th century, it was strongly resisted by many parents and clergy, enough so that government schools could not fully triumph over America's original educational traditions until the early part of the 20th century. We are now several generations removed from that controversy; and, unfortunately, very few even know it existed or why.

This transformation of American education has had profoundly destructive consequences. The most obvious has been the epidemic spread of ignorance and semi-literacy. Contrary to the happy-talk from the education industry and media that today's children are the best educated ever, few public school children can read or write proficiently, let alone do mathematics or science at an advanced level. Indeed, many schoolchildren would have trouble finding Chicago on a map, and by the 12th grade American children are math and science dunces by international standards.

For Christian parents, however, this is far from the most serious problem with government schools. American education is now aggressively anti-Christian, both spiritually and morally. Government schools have effectively become parochial schools for secular humanism and many varieties of New Age spirituality. Moreover, for decades the unacknowledged moral code of government schools has been moral relativism. While the general cultural toll inflicted by the social and moral values propagated through government schools is reflected in levels of violence, drug use, and sexual immorality that would have been almost unthinkable before the 1960s, the damage to American Christianity has been far more profound. That damage has occurred primarily because the vast majority of Christian parents permit government schools to "educate" their children.

Research by the Nehemiah Institute shows that children from Christian homes who attend government schools are five times more likely to adopt such anti-Christian dogmas as moral relativism than those who attend Christian schools.[1] The damage is also painfully evident from the fact that a substantial majority of children from Christian homes stop attending church within two years after graduating from public high school.[2] In fact, teenagers today are the least likely in twenty years to continue attending church once they leave home.[3] More generally, the number of Americans who identify themselves as Christians dropped from 86% to 76.5% between 1990 and 2001, and by late 2001 only 22% of Americans believed

that moral absolute truth exists, down from 38% at the beginning of 2000.[4] None of this bodes well for the future of our children and grandchildren.

At points this book may seem harsh. *If so, it is only because the truth about government schools is harsh.* As you will see, I have drawn upon the research of many authors who have carefully examined such issues as the infiltration of government schools by secular humanists and New Agers, the academic failings of government schools, how government schools have effectively become the nation's largest drug pusher, and how government schools discriminate against boys. I encourage you to go to those sources so that you can draw your own conclusions. But if you do, I think you are likely to conclude that the problems are even more acute than I have described.

The fact is that government schools are killing our children spiritually, morally, and intellectually. But most of us don't even see the problem; we simply assume that all is well with our children's education as long as our children seem untroubled and bring home "My Child is on the Honor Roll" bumper stickers. In essence, we have abdicated our responsibility to educate our children. As a consequence, we have simultaneously put our children in harm's way and have failed to notice that the "little red schoolhouse" has effectively become a pagan seminary nurturing our children in alien creeds and infusing them with false values. This, in turn, is transforming our families, our churches, our culture, and our society.

Are we doing this on purpose? Not really. Most of us attended government schools. They are what we know, and because they are familiar we tend not to think much about them, let alone closely scrutinize what they are doing. Giving our children to "experts" for their education seems to be a reasonable division of labor -- an arrangement we are also not prone to question because it is convenient. Frankly, we have been led to think that the education of our children is somehow someone else's responsibility and that, in any event, we aren't quite up to the task ourselves. And, if we are willing to be completely honest, many of us shy away from asking awkward questions about what government schools are doing because we fear the responsibility that knowing more would force upon us.

To some this picture may seem too "dark." After all, aren't there still Christian teachers and administrators in government schools? Of course. But the mere presence of some Christian teachers and administrators doesn't mean that our children are receiving a Christian education. For those who care to look carefully, it is plain that the curricula, the institutional rules, and many of those working within government schools are aggressively promoting anti-Christian values and an anti-Christian worldview. In fact, government schools have become so hostile institutionally to Christianity that Christian teachers and administrators who actively profess their faith within government schools will be dismissed or disciplined if they are "caught." Moreover, the number of good teachers and administrators, whether Christian or not, has been dwindling as a result of retirement, frustration, and an institutional structure that protects incompetence. *The problem we face is not undue pessimism, but complacency and misplaced trust.*

So what is this book about? It is about the many ways in which government schools are hazardous to children, and especially Christian children. Christian parents and grandparents need to see government schools for what they really are, not for what they claim to be or for what they once were. This book is also about why government schools are unmemorable -- why they cannot and should not be expected to provide the Christian education that the Bible enjoins Christian parents to provide to their children. Finally, this book is about restoring Christian educational traditions through Christian schools and homeschooling. In sum, this book is about the future of our children, our families, our culture, and our faith.

Endnotes:

1. Daniel J. Smithwick, "A 'World' of Difference in Public and Christian Schools," The Nehemiah Institute, Inc. (Lexington, Kentucky, 1998), p. 13.
2. T.C. Pinckney, "We are Losing Our Children," remarks to the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, Nashville, Tennessee, September 18, 2001. Pinckney states that research indicates 70% of teenagers involved in church youth groups stop attending church within two years following high school graduation. If this seems too pessimistic, the Southern Baptist Council on Family Life reported at the Southern Baptist Convention's 2002 meeting in St. Louis that "88% of the children raised in evangelical homes leave church at the age of 18, never to return." Jon Walker, "Council Says It's Time to Bring Family Back to Life," *Southern Baptist Texan*, July 1, 2002. Even if these sources overstate the extent of the problem by thirty to forty percent, it is clear there is something very wrong in the way we are discipling our children.
3. "The Year's Most Intriguing Findings, From Barna Research Studies," Barna Research, December 17, 2001, www.barna.org. One more recent and appalling finding by Barna is that only 32% of born-again adults and 9% of born-again teenagers believe that absolute truth exists. "Americans Are Most Likely to Base Truth on Feelings," February 12, 2002, Barna Research, available at <http://www.barna.org>.
4. The American Religious Identification Survey as cited in Andy Butcher, "America Losing its Christian Faith -- But Finding Others," *Charisma News Service*, December 28, 2001, available at www.charismanews.com.

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