

The Broken Paradigm--Christian Education in Crisis

Dear Friend,

The times in which we live demand change.

Days of abundance have passed. Personal income is on the decline, attitudes have made a dramatic shift, and consumer (and donor) confidence has diminished. Adjustments are being made everywhere.

We're in the middle of a revolution; and the world that we have known will look dramatically different than the one we will see in ten years. Change is inevitable. Old paradigms aren't working in the new economy.

We are at risk of losing the impact of Christian elementary and secondary education in America. The next 2-3 years will define the future.

Enrollments are declining. Costs are increasing. Endowments are virtually non-existent. *The idea of reducing expenses and increasing income as the solution to economic crisis isn't working; cuts have been to the bone and costs have accelerated to the point that they are quickly moving beyond the reach of most cautious consumers.*

Add to this the less expensive alternatives of home schooling and charter schools and you have all the ingredients of crisis. Christian elementary and secondary schools will need to expand their market and adjust costs if they are going to remain viable.

Here's what I believe Christian education will look like in ten years.

Christian schools will position themselves as the Christian Educational Resource Center in their community. They will be the "go to" place for parents who long for their children to have an educational opportunity rooted in the Word of God. *They will conscientiously work to expand their market to include home school families as well as those students currently enrolled in public education.*

The majority of secondary schools will have few if any full-time faculty members; adjunct faculty will be contracted to teach the majority of courses. Teachers will become specialists. Great teachers will excel, mediocre performers will not have contracts renewed. Quality instruction will be the new norm. Test scores will begin to climb again.

These schools will take more of a university look with block courses offered at specific times throughout the year. The educational day will start at 8:00 AM and end at 10 PM. Costs will be based on an hourly fee.

The Christian school of the future will have no athletic programs. They will focus on providing the best educational experience available using the most qualified and experienced

faculty members the community can offer. Club programs will be established throughout the country to accommodate young athletes and the programs they offer will be better. Entire new “industries” will emerge to provide specialized training in music and the performing arts.

Education is going to look more like what exists in Asia where students get specialized instruction after the official school day is over.

Courses in elementary schools will be taught in blocks as well; certain courses taught on particular days of the week will allow additional options for home school parents. There will be a move towards adjunct teachers here as well, especially for certain “specialty” courses as languages, etc.

New Christian secondary schools will pop up in different environments. Look for more office suites that provide classroom settings showing up in strategic places around cities. Overhead costs will drop.

There will be an increase in Advanced Placement courses. Students will be able to pick and choose from a wide range of courses. Expect to see kids from public schools, charter schools, and home environments learning together.

The new Christian school will have more excellence from which to choose. Retired and certified faculty from major institutions will be anxious to pick up extra money by teaching a few courses. Schools will end up with more experienced faculty; lots of practitioners with more than just head knowledge will be featured in the classroom.

The new paradigm will end up producing more qualified graduates. The focus will be upon education; expensive programs like athletics and the arts will be relegated to other groups. We’ll become an educational society of specialists; things will be done better.

There will be more meeting places available for young people showing up in communities; places for kids and other young adults to “hang out.” Look for an emergence of Service Stations (www.theservicestation.org) throughout the United States. There kids can get hands-on experience of working in a micro business while earning money for a college scholarship.

As in most of times, there will be winners and losers. In the elementary and secondary arena, the losers will be those who have concluded that everything is going to be OK.

Very cordially yours,

Gerald H. Twombly, President

BGW/Development Group