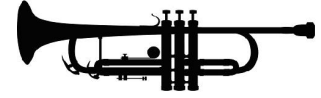


The Clarion



✿ Sounding the Call for Educational Excellence ✿

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Education and Worldliness

Some thoughts on education from Joseph White, Secondary History teacher.

What does worldliness have to do with Christian education?

The simple difference between public education and Christian education is unarguably that the former is driven by social currents. The latter is founded upon and driven by Scripture. Because of what Christian education fundamentally is, those who support it should likewise be threatened by worldliness.

The purpose of Christian education is to equip students to **learn truth** (studying Math, Science, History, Bible etc.), to **discern truth** (recognizing fallacies and thinking for themselves), and to **live out that truth** in their lives (cultivating virtue and walking in righteousness). Moreover, Christian education assumes that Scripture is the source of truth, and that everything else must be evaluated in light of its teachings. Christian education exists because we assume that there is active opposition to the reception of that truth. If there was not active opposition why would there need to be a distinctly *Christian* education? So, what is that opposition? The Bible calls that opposition “the world.”

Worldliness in its essence is directly opposed to Christianity

Worldliness can be defined as **the acceptance of the ideas and values of the world**. The usage of *the world* in scripture considers the realm of opposition to God’s purposes. In other words, it is everything that is not founded upon or filtered through Scripture. Warnings and admonitions about the world proliferate in Scripture.

I. Warnings and Admonitions about the Ruler

- We are warned that Satan has power in the world. *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one* (1 John 5:19).
- Satan is also described as the ruler of the kingdom of the air. *You formerly lived according to this world’s present path, according to the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the ruler of the spirit that is now energizing the sons of disobedience* (Ephesians 2:2).
- Christ warned us that Satan is a great deceiver, and the father of lies. *You people are from your father the devil, and you want to do what your father desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not uphold the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he lies, he speaks according to his own*

nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44).

II. Paul’s Warnings and Admonitions

- Paul’s essential work as an apostle is fighting lies. *For though we live as human beings, we do not wage war according to human standards, for the weapons of our warfare are not human weapons, but are made powerful by God for tearing down strongholds. We tear down arguments and every arrogant obstacle that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to make it obey Christ* (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).
- Paul exhorts Christians in Rome to resist worldliness. *Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God - what is good and well-pleasing and perfect* (Romans 12:1-2).
- This is why he exhorts the Philippians to meditate upon truth. *Finally brethren, whatever it true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence, or anything worthy of praise, meditate on these things* (Philippians 4:8).
- The way we avoid becoming worldly is through the transformation of the mind. In other words, Christians are to steep themselves in the truth of the scriptures in order to avoid becoming worldly.

III. John’s Warnings and Admonitions

- John commands believers to not love the world. *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world (the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the arrogance produced by material possessions) is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away with all its desires, but the person who does the will of God remains forever* (1 John 2:15-17).

- John warns that worldliness is equated with error, and he contrasts it with godliness and truth. *You are from God, little children, and have conquered them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world's perspective and the world listens to them. We are from God; the person who knows God listens to us, but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit* (1 John 4:4-6).

How then should we live?

So, how should Christians respond to the reality that we live in a world that is violently opposed to truth and righteous living? How are we to be in the world and yet not of the world?

Some in history have chosen the route of monasticism. Although its intentions to avoid the corruptions of the world were admirable, monasticism failed to obey multiple ecclesiastical commands including the Great Commission. Moreover, Monks never truly avoided the world. Even the most devout bought into worldly lies. It should also be noted that Paul's and Christ's biggest battles were against pharisaical self-righteousness. Asceticism and isolationism are just as worldly as any other lie (Colossians 2:20-23)

How does one assess appropriate exposure?

The reality of the situation is that we cannot remove ourselves from the world. So, how much of the world is appropriate for children to be exposed to? They will be exposed to it, which is something we cannot change. But, we can limit the amount of exposure, as well as the degree of it. Complete sheltering cannot be an option; it is not realistic nor possible, and it would keep them from maturing into faithful Christians. If the goal in education is to equip students to face and refute the lies of the world, they need to face their foes at some time. So, how does one assess the appropriate exposure their child should have to the world?

1) How well are your children able to discern the lies?

Children should be taught to discern the lies with which they are constantly bombarded. The lies can come from a billboard, a commercial, or a cartoon. A fun and healthy activity that might help is to ask your child what lies were being presented in the last commercial the family saw on television. This will help you assess their ability to discern.

Discernment of lies, though, is not enough. I might see a lie staring me in the face and still be overcome by temptation. I have noted the consequences of vulgarity in a song, and yet found myself unconsciously meditating on those lyrics three days later, even where it affected my speech. I saw the lie, but took the bait anyway. Another important question therefore regards the child's behavior.

2) How is their behavior being affected?

This question focuses on the outward expression of an accepted lie. Inappropriate behavior is not simply the result of original sin. Though children are infected with sin from the

time they enter the world, it does not lie dormant, but it continues to get fed. All sinful behavior finds its conception in the acceptance of a lie. If you recognize regular patterns of inappropriate behavior, first ask what is the lie they have accepted which has led to the behavior? Secondly, consider where that lie came from- a peer, television, a song?

How bad could the consequences really be?

I will risk a little vulnerability in showing how something seemingly mundane led to a major difficulty in my life. Growing up I was a big fan of love songs. Since this is the genre of music my parents listened to most, I was saturated with a worldly expectation of love. I would fall asleep every night listening to love songs. When I grew older, I bought tapes of the same genre. This might seem tame enough, until you consider the consequences. From the time I entered kindergarten I was searching for a wife, seriously searching for a wife. I was convinced that true joy was found in being in love, and that I could never be truly content until I was finally married, or at least "going out" with the right girl - a practice which I started in elementary school which meant little more than holding hands with and sitting by someone at lunch.

The mirage of romantic love appeared ever more real as I entered junior high, high school, and then college. It was like an addiction; I could not go anywhere without wondering, "Is that my wife?" As I grew, so did my idolatry of marriage, and my conviction that marriage would fill every void in my heart. When the Lord mercifully ripped me out of an immoral relationship for which I was about to sacrifice college (in the name of love, of course), I entered the darkest period of my life. Six months of severe depression were only the immediate result believing some "innocent" lies about love. Six years of spiritual rehabilitation and mind renewal were necessary before I was really ready to pursue marriage. It was the greatest struggle of my life and I can tie it all back to 80's love songs. My purpose here is not to suggest that all love songs are bad. Rather, I hope that my experience illustrates how a seemingly innocuous element of the world can have perilous consequences.

How does this effect Providence?

The lies of the world are everywhere. Christian education is fighting an uphill battle. Although there is a firm endeavor to equip students to stand in opposition to the lies of the world, we face a formidable foe. When truth learned in the classroom is firmly contradicted outside it, it is like taking one step forward and two steps back. Such a pace hardly bears the fruit one hopes to produce. Therefore, educators and parents need to form a united front in combating the lies of worldliness. The threats to your children do not simply lie in the arena of academics, but in everyday life as well. Let us not forget that a little leaven will affect the whole loaf, regardless of its source.