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## ***Why Education?* An Essay on American Education, with Applications for Christian Educators of All Nations**

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American Christians of the Twenty-First Century are coming to the sober realization that America's biblical foundations for law, civil government, and education have been replaced. Eighty years of public secularization through education has been enormously successful.

A prominent American theologian, A. A. Hodge, gave this solemn warning about the development of public education in the late 1800's: *"It is self evident that on this scheme, if it is consistently and persistently carried out in all parts of the country, the United States system of national, popular education will be the most efficient and widespread [means] for the propagation of Atheism which the world has ever seen."*<sup>1</sup>

Some will balk at Hodge's words, insisting that public education is "neutral." But this matter of not mixing faith with public schools needs to be carefully reexamined. The question is not whether faith *will* be allowed to mix with our schools, but *which faith* will be allowed to mix? The fact is, faith is being mixed with public education daily. It's just a *different faith* than the one previously mixed with American education for 200 years.

Think about it. If it is *not* allowable to teach kids that the world was created by God, and yet it *is* allowable to teach them that the world came into being on its own, is it not equally a *faith* position to teach that God did *not* create the world as it is to teach that He *did*? If it is a *faith* statement to say, "God created the world," is it not also a *faith* statement to say, in so many words or lack thereof, "God did not create the world"? Are not *both* statements assertions of faith?

To teach kids that God did not create the world can be done effectively without actually saying those specific words. A teacher does not have to stand in front of a class of students and tell them "the Bible is irrelevant to the discussion" in order to effectively communicate that it is.

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<sup>1</sup> A.A. Hodge, *Popular Lectures on Theological Themes* (Presbyterian Board of Publications, Philadelphia, 1887), p. 283.

If it is *not allowable* to teach kids that God has spoken to us through the Bible, and that His Word is the universal standard for morality, and yet it *is* allowable to teach that moral values are "clarified" by society itself, based on human notions and desire, then is it not an equally *religious* position to teach that God's Word is *not* the standard of morality as it is to teach that it *is*? Are not both positions faith positions? If it is a religious statement to say, "The Bible is our common standard for morality," is it not also a religious statement to say, in so many words or lack thereof, "The Bible is *not* our common standard for morality?"

This has been the message for decades.

So if we think our system of national, public education is religiously neutral, we must think again. Very hard. Of course, if the public schools were overtly indoctrinating children in Buddhism, or Native American Animism, many Christian parents would hit the ceiling. Maybe. But when it comes to the indoctrination of children into John Dewey's "Common Faith," which he clearly affirmed as a "non-theistic faith," Christian parents are curiously passive.

Apparently enough Christians think secularism is "neutral," and if kids can learn to read and write well enough to enter a university, they'll give secularized education a pass. Apparently enough feel that if teachers don't stand up in front of a class and say, "The Bible is a fairy tale," things are tolerable. Yet when teachers don't connect the Word of God seriously to a single academic subject over a period of thirteen to seventeen years, are those teachers really being "neutral?"<sup>2</sup>

My biggest concern about young Christians being indoctrinated into secularism via public education, however, is *not* that they will become atheists. My biggest concern is that they will become *dualists*.

A dualist is one who reads the Bible, prays, goes to Church on Sunday, maybe teaches Sunday School, and yet doesn't make any substantive connections between God's Word and what goes on in the workplace for 40-60 hours Monday through Friday, because he or she thinks "faith" is a personal matter, and the workplace is "public," and therefore "secular." The Christian dualist doesn't mix the Word of God with work at the Boeing

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<sup>2</sup> I am not suggesting government-run schools try to "be all things to all people" by allowing Christian teachers to teach from a Christian base while atheist teachers teach from an atheistic base and animist teachers teach from an animistic base, etc. This would be chaos. But the fact is, America is no longer a nation that largely desires or even recognizes biblically-based underpinnings for its laws and government, as it once did. Our public schools reflect this reality. Yes, the tide could turn. Let's pray it does. But in the meantime, I suggest a "voucher" system be put into play whereby parents in any economic condition could send their children to *the school of their choice*, whether Christian-based or otherwise, tuition free. If we are going to have compulsory education, let's have an approach whereby that compulsion recognizes the fundamental rights of parents to have their children educated in a way that reinforces the beliefs they want reinforced. Let Christian schools "compete" on a level playing field, in a free market. Then let the cream rise to the top.

Company because he or she never mixed the Word of God with math, science or economics over thirteen to seventeen years in school, so why mix it now with the workplace? Building airplanes is a "secular" endeavor, isn't it?

*Really?* Where exactly *is* this "secular" world, anyway? See <http://bit.ly/secularworld><sup>3</sup>

After a thirteen year dose of secularism (even via the best Christian teachers who would never speak badly of the Bible), a young Christian is very likely to come out the other end as a dyed-in-the-wool dualist, thinking the Bible is relevant to Church life and to personal life, but not relevant to business, law, politics, medicine, or driving a bus, *because it wasn't relevant to language arts, history, social studies or sports.*

Many Christian parents who attended secularized schools themselves don't see a problem with their children attending them, because *they* "turned out OK." But my question is: *Did* they?

*Did we?*

To one degree or another we have all been infected by SSD, the "Sacred-Secular Divide." But whether a person *realizes* he or she has been infected by SSD is quite another matter, and this is what makes SSD so difficult to cure. Whereas atheism is easy to spot, dualism is much more subtle, like an unrealized parasite in the gut. While atheism is viewed by Christians as an enemy, dualism is our bedfellow, as common as a twenty-dollar bill. Kids don't just catch it in public schools. They often catch it in church, and in unwatchful Christian schools.

### **The Lost Idea of "The Whole"**

Let me present my case, starting with the disappearance of "wholism." I'm starting here because to understand the bane of dualism, we must understand the wane of wholism.

Allan Bloom, who was not a Christian, wrote a book in the '80s, titled, *The Closing of the American Mind*. Bloom taught at Cornell University, the University of Toronto, Yale University, and the University of Chicago. In his book, Bloom observed the following:

*"In the United States, practically speaking, the Bible was the only common culture, one that united the simple and the sophisticated, rich and poor, young and old, and—as the very model for a vision of the order of the whole of things, as well as the key to the rest of Western art, the greatest works of which were in one way or another responsive to the Bible—provided access to the seriousness of books. With its gradual and inevitable disappearance, the very idea of such a*

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<sup>3</sup> Hyperlinks are included in the electronic version of this document. If you are not reading an electronic version, you may request one through Worldview Matters at [info@worldviewmatters.com](mailto:info@worldviewmatters.com).

*total book is disappearing. And fathers and mothers have lost the idea that the highest aspiration they might have for their children is for them to be wise—as priests, prophets or philosophers are wise. Specialized competence and success are all that they can imagine. Contrary to what is commonly thought, without the book even the idea of the whole is lost.”<sup>4</sup>*

I would be hard pressed to come up with one paragraph that explains the problem better than this one. We have lost the very *idea* of the *whole of things*. As Bloom observed, with the wane of the "total book," [the Bible] *the idea of the whole* is lost. Dualism is the bane of that wane.

Biblical wholism, on the other hand, is the “breath of life” for academics, sports, arts, and auto shop. But without this “soul,” formal education has little meaning beyond “a gateway to a good-paying job.” And that notion is fading!

But rather than expound upon why dualism is bad, I’d like to focus on why wholism is good, and show how truly meaningful education is dependent upon Biblical wholism for its very lifeblood.

As mentioned, the late Alan Bloom, a non-Christian University of Chicago professor, noted that the United States was once unified by a “vision for the order of the whole of things” which came from the “common culture” of the Bible. While one can question Bloom’s idea that it was “inevitable,” the biblical vision for the “order of the whole of things” is now gone from the public square, being confined to the four walls of certain churches, and the private lives of certain individuals.

Why does this matter? *Because we are all affected by its loss.* As I write this paper, some Americans have been shooting bystanders in shopping malls, strangers in movie theaters, and little kids in classrooms. In recent years, retirement savings have vanished because of toxic securities and shadowy dealings by graduates from Ivy League schools. On top of this, we now live in a deeply divided nation. Could this possibly be related to the loss of a Biblical vision for the order of the whole of things?

There I go again, talking about the negative effects of dualism! But before I proceed with “why wholism is good,” let me say a word about its spelling.

Not long ago, I received an e-mail from someone informing me that the word *wholistic* is not spelled with a “w.” In the past, I was regularly informed of this by my computer spellchecker, too. But I fixed this pesky problem by adding *wholistic* to my computer’s dictionary. So now it is spelled with a “w.”

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students* (NY: Simon & Shuster, 1987), 58.

Credit for its coining goes to Darrow Miller and Bob Moffitt co-founders of Disciple Nations Alliance. In Miller's book, *Lifework*, he writes: "Wholism speaks of the whole of God's Word to the whole man in the whole world. We [Miller and Moffitt] recognize that *wholism* is a coined word. But we prefer it to the word more commonly used, *holism*, which has been co-opted by the New Age movement..."

I'm following suit. But let me expound here on the meaning of "wholism," as I see it. Don't blame Miller and Moffitt for the following exposé. They may or may not agree with every thought I'm presenting here.

### Wholism 101

There is no better place to start a discussion about *wholism* than Hebrews 1:3, which tells us Christ is "...upholding *all* things by the word of His power." *All things!*

Creation [a much better word than "nature"] originally came into being through the premeditated act of God. Yet the very fact that all of creation *continues* to exist today is as much of a wonder as its first appearance. Creation is not a one-time *act* of the past, but a continuing *deed* of the present. It is not as though God made it all at some point in the past, and now it functions quite well all on its own, running according to so-called "natural" laws. Look out your window once again! The present is as magnificent as the beginning, the very continuing existence of the universe as awesome as its first appearance. And Christ perpetuates the *whole show* as we gaze and gawk, by the on-going power of His sustaining "voice."

If it were not for the continuing supernatural action of the creation-sustaining God holding it all together, "nature" would be no more. In terms of how most people think about the "natural" and the "supernatural," the "natural" has come to mean "the normal operation of a self-governing system," while the "supernatural" refers to "the interference of God in that system." Yet Colossians 1:16-17 tells us: "For by Him [Christ] *all* things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. *All* things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before *all* things, and *in Him all things consist* [or, 'hold together']" [Emphasis added].

Sometimes the Lord does things in an out-of-the-ordinary way, such as raising Lazarus from the dead. We call this a "miracle." But we must not draw the faulty conclusion that God is present in the miracle but stands on the sidelines during the ordinary times. *He is equally present in both.*

The fact that God *created* all matter in the beginning is just as awesome as the fact He is *right now holding* it all together. Right now! He is sustaining our very breath. Apart from His continuing to hold the very atoms of our bodies together, we would fall in a heap on the floor and disappear. In fact, we would disappear before we hit the floor. Both we

and the floor are *wholly* [please allow me to spell it that way just once] dependent on Him.

That's wholism 101.

## Wholism 102

Another awesome aspect of wholism is that Christ, the Creator-Sustainer of the universe, *owns* the whole kit 'n caboodle. Always did, always will. It's all His.

The significance of this cannot be overstated. That's because if we get the issue of "ownership" wrong, it makes a huge difference in the way we view everything! My friend and mentor, Dr. Albert Greene, now with the Lord, touched on the problem when he wrote, *"There is a subtle derailment which often occurs in Christian thought at the point of the Fall. We tend to think that when man sinned, God simply relinquished the whole creation as a botched job and left Satan to do what he wanted with it. Nothing could be further from the truth."*

Did he say, "subtle derailment?" Al was never prone to overstating. The fact is, it's a *huge* derailment!

The world and *all it contains* is as much God's stuff *after* the Fall as it was *before* the Fall. The Fall did not change God's ownership status. He not only made it in the beginning and holds it together as you read these words, but He *owns* it all, and this has enormous ramifications for all human beings. When we mow the lawn, it's His grass we're cutting. When we pound a nail, it's His metal we're pounding. When we examine a drop of water under a microscope, it's His creation we're looking at.

In Psalm 50:10-12 God says, "For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all it contains." (NASB) Even after the Fall, when sin entered the world through Adam and Eve's disobedience, the earth and all it contains *remains His*. The whole lot of it! That's wholism 102.

This is what makes the Fall such a tragic event. It is *His* creation that is fallen, and it remains His in its fallen condition. It is critically important to understand that the Earth and all it contains does not belong to Satan. "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it." (Psalm 24:1)

Although the devil may act like he owns the place, he simply does not. Never did, never will. None of it is his. He has never created anything in his life. He only distorts and destroys what God has made.

For more of Dr. Albert Greene, go [here](#).

### Wholism 103

When I say that Satan doesn't own Planet Earth or anything in it, I wonder if some readers might be saying to themselves, "Satan may not *own* it, but he sure does *run* it!"

But does he?

In John 14:30, Jesus referred to Satan as "the ruler of this world." But what "world" was Christ talking about? Was He saying Satan is the ruler of Planet Earth?

The English word "world," translated from the Greek, *kosmos*, has several different meanings in Scripture, depending on the context. It can mean: 1) *the physical realm of creation*, as in Romans 1:20 "For since the creation of the world (*kosmos*) His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made..."; or, 2) *populated regions*, as in Romans 1:8: "...your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world (*kosmos*);" or, 3) *the human race in general*, as in John 1:29: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (*kosmos*)!"

But *kosmos* ("world") may also mean: 4) *a system of thought and behavior that is contrary to the will and ways of God*, as in I John 2:15: "Do not love the world (*kosmos*) or the things of the world (*kosmos*). If anyone loves the world (*kosmos*), the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world (*kosmos*)—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world (*kosmos*)."

Here John defines "the world" as a system of thought and action governed by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. It is *this* "world" we are not to love. It is *this* "world" Satan rules. It is this "world" that Jesus was not "of" (John 8:23), and it is this "world" His followers are also not to be "of" (John 17:14-16). This is not the world God "so loved" in John 3:16.

I humbly submit to the reader that Satan is not the ruler of Planet Earth. Yes, he is the ruler of the "world system" that is contrary to the will and ways of God, and he acts like he owns the place. But there is only one Lord.

The Devil is the "prince of the power of the air." But this *prince* is no *King*! The universe has but one King, and that is Christ Jesus, Lord of all. There's not room on the throne for two. Christ's authority rests over the *whole* of heaven and the *whole* of earth, all at once. Right now.

That's wholism 103.

### Wholism 201

God's rulership is over all. The King's domain [His *King-dom*] knows no bounds or limitations. Christ is Lord of all, all the time, everywhere at once, both in Heaven and on Earth. But does this mean that everything happening on Earth is His will?

When I hear Christians say "God is in control," I have to ask myself what is meant by this statement. Do we mean to say God *causes* everything to happen that happens? Is *everything* that happens, God's will? I can't read my Bible and draw this conclusion.

So how do I reconcile the all-encompassing rule of God with the "stuff" that happens on Earth? This works for me: *God is in absolute control, but He does not control all things absolutely.*

What does this mean? It means God has the power and authority to do whatever He pleases, whenever He pleases, including causing whatever He wants to have happen on Planet Earth happen. He can make donkeys talk, if He wants. But I do not see the God of the Bible controlling all things absolutely all the time. People can and do violate His will. People can and do reject His authority. We all disregard His Word at times, and we have all violated His commands. That's what sin is about.

Yet, whether people acknowledge His authority or not, this does not change the fact that Christ is Lord of all, all the time, everywhere. We don't *make* Christ Lord, *He is* Lord! It's our place to acknowledge His authority, accept and embrace it.

Yet even if people don't embrace it, Christ's authority still applies to everyone, all the time. His authority is omnipresent and non-selective. It applies as much to personal life as to public life. It applies as much to what goes on in local churches as it does to what goes on in local civil governments. It applies as much to what goes on in families as it does to what goes on at workplaces. It applies to non-Christians as much as Christians. ("Thou shalt not steal," is not for believers only.)

The universal rule of God applies to the *whole* of human activity. There is no public/private split, no church/state difference, and no Christian/non-Christian distinction when it comes to the jurisdiction of Christ's authority. His jurisdiction covers the whole gamut. No one "forces" or "imposes" it on anybody. It simply *is*.

That's wholism 201.

## **Wholism 202**

In Genesis 1:26-28, we read what God had in mind for human beings when He created us in His likeness and image, and placed us on the Blue Planet. Let me say that again, so you can savor the full weight of what Genesis 1:26-28 actually tells us: *We see what God had in mind for humans when He made us.*



What did God have in mind for us? "Let Us make man in Our likeness and image, *and let them rule...over all the earth.*"

Dr. Albert Wolters, in his essay, "The Foundational Command: 'Subdue the Earth,'" says it is "almost impossible to overemphasize the importance of this first and fundamental command of God to humans." He calls it, "the first and fundamental law of history."

This first mention of purpose, which Wolters says "all subsequent revelation presupposes," is called, "The Cultural Mandate," or, "The Dominion Mandate." I call it, *The First Commission*.

What purpose did God have in mind for humans when He created Adam and Eve? What purpose did He have in mind for your parents? For you? For your children? Wonder no more! The Bible tells us human beings were created with this astounding purpose in mind: *to rule [have dominion] over Planet Earth!*

This is probably why Wolters says it is almost impossible to overemphasize the importance of this command. It has profound implications for all human *work*, and all human *learning*.

Dr. Wolters says: "...man is to be fruitful *in order to* multiply, he must multiply *in order to* fill the earth, and he must fill the earth *in order to* subdue it." And then he adds that we were created in God's likeness and image *in order that* we may have dominion.

Selah. Think about this! We were created to rule over all the Earth! This includes water (both salty and fresh varieties), air, electricity, sound waves, light, lead, uranium, silver, rubber, maple trees, money, fish, birds, cows, carrots, copper, fingers, thumbs, arms, feet, real estate, sweet potatoes, soybeans and every derivative thereof you can think of, including plastic and dyes [thank you, George Washington Carver], as well as digital images, smart phones, e-books, ships, cars, airplanes, glue, paper, antifreeze, pencils, ice cream and cake!

We were made to rule over whole *systems*, too. Because without *systems*, rulership cannot happen: civil systems, domestic systems and economic systems. To be an Earth-Ruler includes city-making! Let me be clear here. I am not advocating Theocracy, nor am I advocating Dominionism. But the fact remains, God created human beings with the intention that we rule over *the whole Earth*.

That's wholism 202.

### **Wholism 203**

Genesis 1:26-28 tells us the purpose God has in mind for us is to rule over Planet Earth. But I can hear someone saying, "That command came *before the Fall!* The world has been

messed up by sin, and God can't possibly have the same purpose in mind for us that He had in the beginning! Why should we concern ourselves with ruling over a broken world, creating culture that's destined to be burnt to a crisp? Our purpose *now* is to get as many souls saved as possible. For Heaven! There's no sense polishing brass on a sinking ship. It's going to be *The Late Great Planet Earth* someday. Didn't you read that book?"

Indeed, I read that book. My wife and I were young married students attending the University of Washington when it came out. After reading it, we dropped out of school. There was no reason to pursue a degree, or to even look down the road more than five years into the future. I spent my days reading the Bible, working just part-time to feed the two of us and keep a cheap roof over our heads. That was 1970.

Later, in another Book, I read about a New Earth with a great city. I read about an Earth containing fruit trees, and pruning hooks. Lions and lambs. I read of a city having commerce. A city where God's raw material is not *all* there is, but the "*kings of the earth*" will "*bring their glory into it.*" (Revelation 21:24)

What is *this*? Could the "glory and honor of the nations" *brought into that city* (Rev. 21:26) be cultural "goods" made by human Earth-Rulers in years prior? Could this "glory" be works of art? Technological wonders? Could such things pass through the fire Peter writes about? Could the fervent heat he described be a purging, cleansing fire, rather than a total crisp-job? Could the second great purge, with fire, be like the first great purge, with water, that "destroyed the world" but did not wash the planet away? See II Peter 3. Revelation 21 and Isaiah 65-66 give us cause for pause.

I look forward to a *whole* planet, purged *wholly* of rot and junk, and to a *whole city* containing "the glory and the honor of the nations." If this is human culture, let's add to it now. And trust God to purge what needs purging, and preserve what is to His glory.

That's wholism 203.

### **Wholism 301**

I suggested above that the "glory and honor of the kings of the earth" that will be brought into the New Jerusalem [Revelation 21] might be products of human culture, made by Earth-Rulers. This is not a theological hill I'm going to die on. But as my friend Jack Fennema put it, it's a hill worth climbing.

Yet even if *nothing* produced by human hands were to survive the melting heat mentioned in II Peter 3, this should not make a difference in our attitude toward creating culture in this fallen, temporal world. That's because it's *God's world*, even in its fallen condition. It's *God's creation* we're surrounded by, and it's *God's stuff* we're taking into our hands when we form and shape anything.

Image-Bearers are to engage in ruling over matter even if what we create doesn't survive past Wednesday. A good chef creates works of culinary art that don't usually last more than a day. This glorifies God *innately*, because a good meal is an outworking of the chef's image-bearing likeness as "Creator in Miniature," ruling well over salmon, rice pilaf and blue cheese. In this act of imitation God is glorified, and chefs fulfill *their God-designed glory and honor*: to rule well over God's stuff. (Check out [Psalm 8](#).)

Earth-Rulers fulfill God's purpose for their *own* creation when they mow the lawn. Cut hair. Fix an automobile. Or negotiate the sale of a house. We fulfill God's purpose for our creation when we create good legislation, or write something worth reading, or bake a loaf of bread. It's all God's stuff, and it's our God-given glory and honor to govern well over it. And in this imitation, He is glorified.

I have a definition of "work" taped to the top of my computer monitor that goes like this: *"Work worth doing is any expenditure of energy, mental or physical, for pay or not, that rightly manages God's stuff, and employs my God-given abilities to benefit others, or prepares me to do so."*

This definition covers the *whole* of God's creation. It includes all legitimate forms of royal work done by Earth-Rulers: making cars, light bulbs, computers. Building roads, skyscrapers, furniture. Playing the piano. Washing clothes. Feeding the kids...and the dog. Ruling over all the glory of God. Today. That's wholism 301.

### **Wholism 302**

If Earth is "God's creation—now displaced," and Satan is "lord of the planet," then we might see our sole purpose on Earth as telling others how they can go to Heaven when they die. Yes, evangelism is essential! But when we see the *whole* of God's Kingdom "in the light of His glory and grace," the things of Earth will *not* grow "strangely dim." Quite the opposite. If Earth as God's broken creation He wants to restore, then the Gospel is more than a Gospel of Personal Salvation. It is the Gospel of The Kingdom, and that is the fuller biblical description. Yes, it is Good News that my soul is saved from Hell. But that's not *all* there is to the Good News. The Good News of The Kingdom is that Christ came to restore *things* as well as *souls*. What kind of "things?" *Earth things!*

I'm not suggesting all things will be fully restored before the second coming of Christ. But it is clear from Scripture that the "ministry of reconciliation" Christ gave us in this present life (II Cor. 5:17-20) is not limited to souls. His Kingdom isn't just about "religious life" and "spiritual things." His Kingdom is all-encompassing and as broad as creation is wide. The scope of Christ's work of reconciliation goes far beyond the human soul.

Colossians 1:16-20 sums it up well: *"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or*

*powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross."*

To reconcile *all things*? Business things? Legal things? Artistic things? Civil things? Yes, "...that in *all things* He may have the preeminence...." This is what The Kingdom of God is about, and that's wholism 302.

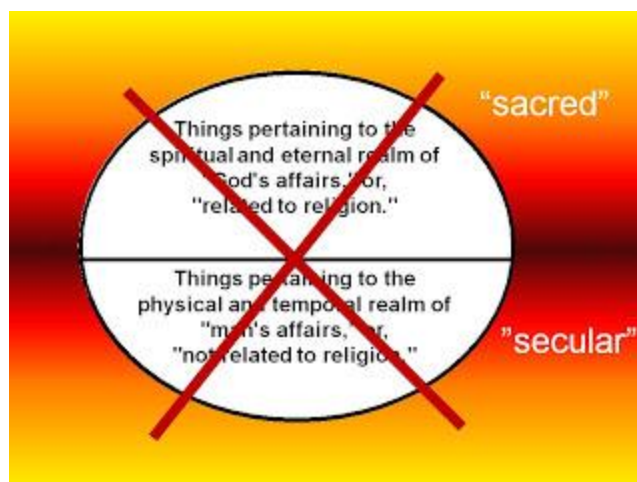
But regrettably, many Christians today view the world like this:



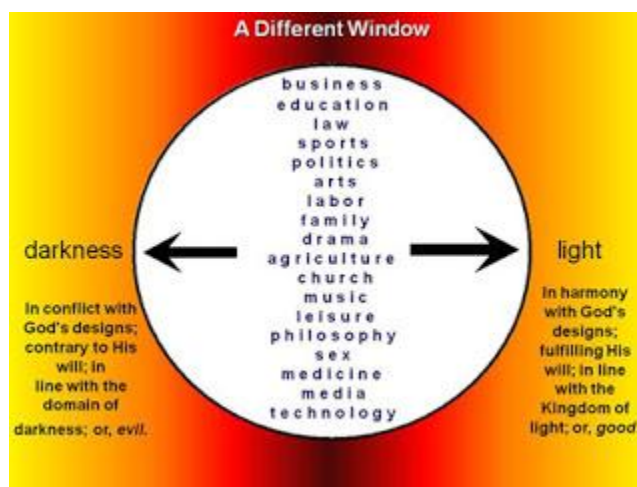
The "sacred" activities of life include things like Sunday morning worship, Bible study, prayer, witnessing, volunteering at the homeless shelter, and going on mission trips. These activities have *real* significance, because they *truly* matter to God. They have to do with the "things above," which we should be "setting our minds upon."

"Secular" activities don't have as much significance. They include things like mowing the grass, earning money to keep a roof overhead, and paying electric bills. These things simply aren't as important to God. They may be necessary, but they fall under the category of "things of earth" that should "grow strangely dim" with each passing day.

Here is what to do with that way of thinking:



I suggest we substitute this:



Any sphere of human activity may be done in *harmony* with God or in conflict with Him; in *alignment* with Him, or in opposition to Him. God's game plan is to reconcile not only *people* but *things* to Him.

*Things! Things on Earth!* (See Colossians 1:16-20.) Business things! Legal things! Artistic things! Civil things! Yes, "that in *all things* He may have the preeminence...." (v. 18)!

As I wrote in [Assumptions That Affect Our Lives](#): "...since there is nothing which stands outside of His authority, He is as relevant to what goes on in civil government as He is to the way business functions, to the way family members relate to one another...to the way a local church functions. In short, He is Lord of all, and no less relevant to one area of human endeavor than another..."

So let's resist withdrawing from God's physical, here-and-now world. It's all His! (Psalm 24:1) We have a privileged responsibility for it. By God's grace, let's engage with it rightly. Let's celebrate the dance!

Let me sum it up: God's game plan is to reconcile not only people but *things* to Him. And according to II Cor. 5:17-20 and Col. 1:17-20, followers of Christ have been given "the message of reconciliation." Christians have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation between people, things, and God. Indeed, God is out to reconcile "all *things*" to Himself. Things in heaven and things *on earth* (Col. 1:20).

### **Wholism 303**

#### *Why education?*

With the responsible role of rulership over the earth given to human beings, created in the image and likeness of God *so that* we can fulfill this grand purpose (Gen. 1:26-28), and since Planet Earth was not given over to Satan at the Fall, but remains God's full possession in its fallen condition (Ps. 24:1), and since Christ continues to hold all the atoms of the material world together "by the word of His power," thus the realm of creation is more than a one-time act of the past but a continuous "voice" of the present (Heb. 1:3), and since Jesus' authority presently resides over all things, including *earth* things, such as legal things, artistic things, agricultural things, industrial things, and civil things, not limited to "spiritual things," and "church things" (Acts 10:36), and since God is now working in the Earth through His Redeemed People to reconcile all things to Himself, not just the things of the soul, but whole systems (II Cor. 5:17-20 and Col. 1:16-20), then perhaps Dallas Willard was on to something when he wrote:

*There is truly no division between sacred and secular except what we have created. And that is why the division of the legitimate roles and functions of human life into the sacred and secular does incalculable damage to our individual lives and to the cause of Christ. Holy people must...take up holy orders in farming, industry, law, education, banking, and journalism with the same zeal previously given to evangelism or to pastor and missionary work.*

That's wholism 303. It gives no place to SSD, that false "Sacred-Secular Divide" which we Christians have talked about so long we think is really there. But where exactly *is* this place? We certainly do live in a secularized world, where Christ is marginalized, ignored, or completely denied. But this is a fantasy-world people create.

#### *Why education?*

So humans can be equipped to do well in reconciling the things of Earth to the living God, and rule well over the *whole* of God's creation, *especially* in its fallen, broken

condition. It's about bringing farming, business, law, economics and journalism into alignment with the Lord's vision for this great Blue Planet. *This is Kingdom-centered work.*

Is this the *only* reason for kids to go to school? No. But it's a very *big* reason! And it's a reason that rarely gets mentioned these days. It's a reason that stands a chance of catching the imagination of students who currently are floundering in school, seeing little purpose or meaning for learning.

Proverbs 29:18 says, "*If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves...*" [The Message]. The King James translation puts it this way: "*Where there is no vision, people perish...*" This includes students! Without *meaning*, many "just get by." And some not even that!

When it comes to school, there's no shortage of *what* to learn. The shortage, is *why*! For many students, it's *meaning* that's missing. The kind of meaning that motivates. Beyond grades, future paychecks, and accolades.

### **The Missing Curriculum**

For many years, I thought only pastors and missionaries did "Kingdom-centered work." I failed to make any connection between selling shoes (which I did part-time as a college student) and the Kingdom of God.

What does selling shoes have to do with the Kingdom of God? If we separate the two, we will never understand what the one has to do with the other. But as the English Puritan Pastor George Swinnock put it, "*The pious tradesman will know that his shop as well as his chapel is holy ground.*"

This is a teaching we need to revive. When was the last time you heard a sermon along the lines that "your shop as well as your chapel is holy ground?" But if God created Earth-Rulers in His likeness and image for the purpose of ruling well over the Earth and all it contains, then all legitimate work on Planet Earth can be a response to God Himself! If this isn't "holy ground," my friend, I don't know what is.

*Work*, at its core, is an act of governance. Governance over wood, metal, cows, cotton and carrots. Governance over sound waves, electrical currents and wind. Governance over computer keyboards, fiber optics and digital images. Governance over people. Governance over things. Governance over ideas.

"*Then God said, 'Let Us make man in our likeness an image, and let them rule...over all the earth.'*" This profoundly important piece is missing from the mission statements of most Christian schools.

### **God's Vice-Regents**

Earth-Ruling (or, "Creation-Tending"), is a very big job! Ruling over all the planet entails a responsibility as broad as the world is wide, and requires many varied occupations, including carpentry, civil service, high-tech work and homemaking. It involves physical work (as with Adam the landscaper, tending and keeping the Garden), and mental work (as with Adam the zoologist, naming the animals). Both kinds of work occurred before the Fall.

Work is not a curse. It is our great and awesome responsibility as vice-regents over this remarkable world. Our God is a working God! And we were made in His likeness and image so that we could carry out this function well. The curse, proclaimed by God after humanity brought sin into the world, has made our work much more difficult, for sure. But it was the *ground* that was cursed. Not work.

Some people think that when Adam and Eve sinned, they forfeited their role as governors over all the Earth. Like ambassadors caught in an act of treason, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden and removed from their positions as God's vice-regents over the planet. In this scenario, Earth-tending could no longer be the job description of human beings. If *this* is the case, then we are prisoners on a cursed planet, sent out to wander, spending our days toiling for food, and keeping a roof overhead. Our work, then, would no longer be a way of fulfilling the role God clearly had in mind for us when He created Adam and Eve: "*Let Us make man...and let them rule...over all the earth.*" Beyond providing for our own subsistence, work, then, could no longer have any truly significant purpose.

Yes, in a certain sense, we are exiles and strangers in this fallen world, because this place just isn't the way God originally made it to be. The very fact that it is in need of restoration underscores the reality that it is currently "foreign" to God's original design. Yes, we sometimes get beat up along the way because we're seriously "out of sync" with its brokenness (see Hebrews 11), but we're in "the race set before us" nonetheless (see Hebrews 12), and the ground we're running on is His, even in its fallen condition.

If we embrace the notion that our original job description (the First Commission of Genesis 1:26-28) was rescinded at the Fall, then we will have a very difficult time seeing how one's shop as well as one's chapel can be "holy ground." But "the earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world and those who dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1), and God is still the owner of every pair of shoes in every shoe store in the world. And He claims rights to every customer who walks through the door, as well.

And because Jesus is Lord of all (including all shoes and the selling thereof), we dare not divide the world into "sacred" and "secular" compartments. We dare not see some work as "secular," and other work as "sacred." There simply is no "secular" world. Is there any place that lies outside the realm of God's affairs? Is there any sphere of life's activity that exists independently of God, on its own, in a vacuum, somehow separated from His



ownership, interest and involvement? Hardly! Let's teach students that they will never have a "secular" job, because there truly is no "secular" world.

### **Connecting the First Commission with the Great**

Christ's last earthly words ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)) are an injunction to teach others to observe all that He commanded. Where is this observation to happen? It's safe to say Christ had Earth in mind, because He says: "*...I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" Presumably that's an Earth age.

Where exactly is the observation of all Christ commanded to take place? In church? Yes. At home? Yes. In our personal lives? Yes. Few would contest this. But what about beyond the church, beyond the home, and beyond our personal lives?

This is what got the early Christians into trouble. Some were burned alive, and others were thrown to lions. But this also caused early Christians to be admired, and eventually Christianity to be embraced. Early Christians actually *observed* what Christ commanded *in the world*. If followers of Christ were to observe all He commanded between the hours of 9 to 5 in today's "Rome," it could "turn the world upside down" *again*.

Christians are already sprinkled like salt throughout the full spectrum of society *in the workplace*. And it is in the workplace where we have prime opportunities to "observe all that Christ commanded." I'm not referring here to telling co-workers how to get to Heaven when they die. I'm talking here about living out the implications of Christ's commands in the context of marketing, salary and benefit issues, work conditions, decision-making policies, products, production, pricing, contacts, customer service, employee-employer relationships, co-worker relationships, hiring and firing policy, accounting, management, strategic planning, profit distribution and community service. Does the Gospel of The Kingdom have anything to say about *these things*? Yes, alignment with Christ in some of these areas might mean getting fired. But not like the early Christians in Rome were "fired."

Of course this does not exclude sharing the message of faith in Jesus for forgiveness of sins and salvation. But if Christians don't also see legitimate value in work beyond openings to evangelize, we miss great opportunities to glorify God through our work. Yet, teaching Christians how to make intentional connections between the biblical worldview and all forms of legitimate work is no longer commonly practiced in this country, either in the home or the church. I know these are strong words. Notice I said, *commonly* practiced. My intention is not to be critical. My intention is to foster fundamental changes in this state of affairs.

Yet, teaching Christians to make intentional connections between the biblical worldview and all forms of legitimate work is no longer commonly practiced in this country, either in the home, the school, or the church. I know these are strong words. Notice I said,

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### **A Call to Headmasters**

The commitment to intentionally and systematically train young people in the “art of Kingdom-centered work” has disappeared from the Christian curriculum. The custom of teaching students how to make connections between the biblical work-and-life view and all forms of legitimate work is no longer customary, as it was when Jonathan Edwards graduated from Yale. This subject has gone the way of men's powdered wigs and women's bustles.

But the art of Kingdom-centered work *can* be restored to the Christian curriculum. I believe we can once again train our young people to see “their shop as well as their chapel as holy ground.” If you are a Christian school headmaster, I invite you to contact me at [biblicalworldview.com](http://biblicalworldview.com).

Let's have a conversation about how “theology of work” can be restored to the standard curriculum, from earliest grades through the senior year. The white powdered wigs can go. So can the bustles. But to equip our sons and daughters with the ability to engage in their everyday work as the work of God is long overdue for a comeback.

I leave you with [a very short video clip](#) to ponder.



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