

The Necessity of A Godly Education for the Creation of A Godly Culture

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Thesis Statement: A godly education is necessary for the formation of a godly culture, and this education will consist of teaching a child a godly worldview, piety, godly desires, and how to have dominion on Earth.

Outline:

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I Godly Education Imparts a Godly Worldview

A Culture and Education Defined and Examined

B Biblical Worldview in Education

II Godly Education Imparts Piety and Godly Desires

A The Meaning and Significance of Piety

B The Meaning and Significance of Godly Feelings

III Godly Education Equips Children to Obey the Dominion Mandate

A Education that All Children Must Receive

B Education Specific to Individual Children

Conclusion

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth; He also created man, and He gave mankind a task – to fill the Earth and take dominion over it. It was a large task, but one that could be accomplished. Adam and Eve would bear children, who would bear children, who would bear children, and they would ultimately obey God’s command to fill the Earth. Each of these individuals, with their own special gifts and talents, would use their God-given abilities to take dominion over different aspects of creation, in obedience to God and for His glory. The Fall of humanity into sin corrupted the world; now, humanity hates God and is in rebellion against Him, and the curse that was justly deserved has made the task of dominion harder. Yet, God redeemed a people for Himself and has restored humanity to them. As will be seen presently, everyone creates culture, and education is what prepares a child to do this, to create culture, to have dominion, in obedience to God. A godly education is essential to the formation of a godly culture, and this education will consist of teaching a child a proper worldview, piety, godly desires, and how to have dominion on Earth.

The definition and significance of culture and education must be understood so the connection between them is recognized. Henry Van Til, nephew of Cornelius Van Til, defines culture “...as the total human effort of subduing the earth together with its total achievement in fulfilling the creative will of God” (p. 28-29). This is the task of dominion given by God! People must work as a team to “subdue” this planet, which is done in making culture, and this culture is made, as Van Til expresses, in everything man does (p.25). Because God made man in His image, people are “creative” and obey God’s will in this area when they make

beautiful things. Not only does man make culture continually, but Dr. Lee, in his lectures on culture for Whitefield College, has expressed that all cultural tasks are “religious” (Lecture 1). Therefore, if all the creations of man are cultural, and all those cultural creations are religious, then, do to sin, everything man makes will manifest one of the two religions, Christianity, or a godless religion (whatever variety that might be [Rom. 1:18-25]). Van Til says that there is an “antithesis” in this world, a distinction between Christians and non-Christians (p. 179), and this was taught by Jesus, for He said those were not for Him were against Him (Matt.12:30). Next, it is necessary to understand the purpose of education in connection to culture. As Dr. Lee expressed it, education is so that children might come to know God and take dominion in this world, which means they must be able to understand this planet (*Biblical Theory*). Since the purpose of education is to teach children concerning God and His world and how to take dominion over it, an education that fulfills this description is necessary. A non-biblical education will teach children in hostility to God and will equip them to create culture that is indeed religious, but it will be a religion that opposes Christianity. Children so taught will not come to know God through that education, nor be prepared to take godly dominion over this world for His glory, and, as has been examined, this is the opposite of education. Therefore, since culture is tangible religion, and education teaches children to know God and prepares them to take dominion on Earth, it is imperative that children receive a godly education for the creation of godly culture.

Children must be instructed in a godly worldview so they can obtain a true education, know how to serve God, and view matters correctly. The first thing a child should be taught is the fear of the Lord, for the Bible says that it is the “beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). If obtaining the fear of the Lord is how people receive knowledge, then it is essential to education. God requires that children be instructed in the knowledge of Him (Deut. 6:1-7; Rom. 10:14-15). The Lord reveals in His Word how people can come to fear Him: by obeying His commandments (Deut. 6:1-2). Thus, teachers and parents are to instruct children to fear God, for He is the fountain of wisdom and knowledge, and to do this, students must be taught to obey Him. In Deuteronomy 6:1-7, where God tells the people to fear Him by obeying His commands, He instructs them to teach His Law to the children. Children must receive instruction in truth, so that they will grow to know, love, and serve God. No education is neutral; as has been indicated, there is an “antithesis” in the present world, and all education is taught from a bias, whether that perspective be godly or ungodly. A godly or ungodly perspective on every subject exists, so, a godly education will have every subject taught in adherence to God’s Word. If the children of the godly are not taught from a Christian worldview, they will be taught from some other religious worldview, and it will not be one that is consistent with Scriptural truth. Therefore, children need to be taught about God and how they can fear Him in order to have a sound education, and all the information they receive must be taught with a godly worldview; otherwise, they will create an ungodly culture, not a godly one.

Teachers and parents must also educate children in piety and their Christian heritage. God created the world perfect and good, but when mankind fell into sin, every part of man became tainted with sin. Redemption in Christ begins a process of renewal in the believer's nature that will be completed after that person dies and is glorified. However, for the present, Christians are still sinful and must learn to adopt piety and godly feelings. This does not come naturally and must be learned and taught to our children. What is piety, and why is it important?

According to educational instructors Dr. Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, piety consists of a person's responsibility to God and any type of "authorit[y]," and it was taken very seriously in ancient cultures, including Israel (p.15, 17). They further state that piety fulfills Christ's commands to love God and neighbor (*The Liberal Arts*, p. 18-19). In Werner Jaeger's book called *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, he asserts that in education a society keeps itself alive by ingraining its culture into students (p.15), and Dr. Clark and Mr. Jain link that with piety (*The Liberal Arts*, p.22). Piety, as can be seen from the definitions above, is essential to life and culture; it is synonymous with obedience to God, which is crucial to living faithfully before Him. If believers are to have a culture that honors God, piety is a necessary characteristic of this environment. Also, as it was mentioned, a part of pious living includes teaching our culture to our children, which would mean teaching the youth Christianity's way of life. This is precisely what must be done. Students must have a godly culture shown to them, so they will understand what a godly culture looks like as they seek to continue it.

Therefore, a Christian education will instruct children in piety and pass down to them a godly culture.

Next, a child must also be taught to possess correct feelings. The renowned C.S Lewis saw the importance of defending the “chests” of children which, as he wrote in his book, *The Abolition of Man*, is the very thing that makes them human (p. 704). In this book Lewis expresses his belief, and as he states, a belief that others used to share, that people can have right or wrong “emotional reactions” to things, and he also mentions that a part of education was to teach children to have right feelings (p.699). Humanity’s nature has been corrupted in the Fall, and children must be corrected when their feelings are wrong. Ken Myers beautifully expressed that, previously, people viewed culture as the means of preparing others “to abide by the grain of the universe” (p. viii). This means that since God created the world a certain way, people must learn to live properly in it; they must learn to adhere to the laws of this world as established by God, its Creator. Feelings are not truth-informants, being what is true for individual persons; they are merely the way someone understands or feels about the world, and they could be right or wrong, as they are formulated in sinful human nature. Ken Myers points to Philippians 4:8 to show that Christians should “reflect” on what is truly “excellent” and he believes this text should not be limited to “‘spiritual’ matters” alone (*All God’s Children*, p. 98). Students must learn to dwell on excellent things. So, a godly education will help correct false feelings about the world and aim to teach children to love what is “true, good, and beautiful,” the canon of Classical Christian teaching. Of course, these three ideals are found in God

Himself, and it is to Him that a Christian education will continually point too. The feelings of children must be nurtured in adherence to God's world.

Aside from instructing children in a godly worldview, piety, Christian culture, and correct feelings, a godly education will prepare children to obey the dominion mandate by teaching them what they must know about the world and helping them develop their personal talents for that purpose as well. Henry Van Til, when he was informing his readers concerning the beliefs of John Calvin on education, expressed that the ultimate ideal of education is "...the knowledge of God and of his creation unto the service of God" (*Calvinistic Concept*, p.115). Children must be trained to know God and understand the vastly complex creation in the world around them so that they can be equipped to honor Him in their work, as has been demonstrated and examined previously. In order to understand the world around them and be ready to take dominion, there are certain lessons that all students must learn to be fully equipped for this duty. Dr. Lee, in his lectures on Christians and culture, tackled various areas of learning and analyzed them by the Word of God. He wanted others to be taught to study their surroundings and exercise dominion over that specific area with its specific qualities (Lecture 14, 16). Dr. Lee also taught the importance of "communication," and he advised that people learn to do this effectively, becoming well-versed in their own language, and that they ought to learn other languages as well, such as Latin for its many benefits (Lecture 16). There is more to learn than this, of course; but these subjects, and a number of others, such as math, science, and history, are essential to learn to thrive in God's world and will help enable children to learn more about God and

take dominion on this Earth. However, education does not pertain to academic subjects alone. According to Dr. Clark and Mr. Jain, a well-rounded education is larger than the “intellectual” but will seek to aid “the whole person” (The Liberal Arts, p.29), and they included music and physical education as a necessary aspect of schooling (The Liberal Arts, p. 26-27, 31). Therefore, children should learn all that is necessary for them to be beyond prepared to live before the Lord in obedience to Him.

Not only this, but children should also be taught to advance in their personal skills so they can perform them well for God’s glory. The Bible teaches the blessing of the Church which is made up of people with various giftings who serve the Lord as one, see Romans 12:4-8. As Dr. Lee taught, mankind is blessed with a “division of labor” (Lecture 12). Christians should strive for excellence in the performance of their gifts for the glory of God. When the Lord was directing Moses about the Tabernacle’s design, He required men who were “skilled” in their craft (Ex. 35:10). Beauty and excellence are important to the Lord (Ex. 28:2-3, Ps. 50:2; 96:6). So, although it may or may not be in a formal school setting, children ought to learn to grow in their personal giftings. If they enjoy music and are talented in that field, they should be encouraged to grow in this skill and learn music theory. If they are skilled in carving, sculpting, or painting, they should learn to use the proper tools and the various techniques to excel further in this area. If they are interested in advancing their academic knowledge beyond normal school standards, they should do so. When someone displays excellence in a skill, it blesses others and honors the Lord when He receives the glory for it. So,

everyone has a place in the dominion mandate, and education should help children find their place therein and learn to perform their skills well, unto God.

Since it is God's desire for children to learn about Him and His Law and to obey His command to have dominion on Earth, Christian parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children are educated in this manner. A godly education that entrenches students in the truth of God's Word and world and trains them to apply this knowledge with excellence will hand students the tools they need to create godly culture. Prayerfully, the Lord will save these children as they learn about Him every single day in every single subject. Children grounded in a Christ-centered education will know who Truth is and will have a godly perspective for every area of life; they will not need to unlearn what they have been taught from those who are hostile to God. These students, God-willing, will be pious Christians who will have accurate feelings that are in line with truth. The skills they individually possess will have been developed with the knowledge that they were prepared for a very important task, a task of dominion and obedience to God. Because of their godly education, these young people will now be ready to obey God's calling to go forth and have dominion over the world.

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