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*Exposing Modern Deceptions, Counterfeit Christianity, and the Church's Captivity to the
Spirit of the Age*

PART IV

INSTITUTIONS, POWER, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE MANAGED FUTURE

CHAPTER 18

Education, Media, Entertainment, and the Secular Catechesis of Society

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Abstract

This chapter examines the institutions through which modern society forms belief, desire, moral imagination, identity, aspiration, and habit while often claiming merely to inform, educate, employ, or entertain. Building upon the preceding chapters' analysis of autonomous authority, contested truth, the sovereign self, sexual revolution, consumerism, commercialised religion, manufactured spectacle, and unity without truth, it argues that schools, universities, media systems, advertising, pornography, celebrity culture, gaming, tourism, events, and workplaces frequently function as secular catechetical environments. Their formative power does not ordinarily depend upon a secret central plan or an explicit anti-Christian creed. It operates through explicit and hidden curricula, definitions of legitimate knowledge, professional incentives, narrative identification, repeated images, humour, prestige, assessment, reward, exclusion, commercial targeting, and habits of attention. The chapter distinguishes education from schooling, formation from indoctrination, public pluralism from secular establishment, cultural participation from captivity, recreation from escape, and professional excellence from career idolatry. Through sustained exposition of [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#), [Psalm 111-6](#), [Daniel 11-21](#), [Romans 12:1-2](#), and [Philippians 4:8-9](#), the chapter develops a biblical theology of education as worship, attention, memory, imitation, wisdom, vocation, and ordered love. It engages the strongest arguments for institutional neutrality, curricular inclusion, audience agency, adult sexual freedom, workplace values, credential accountability, and Christian educational restraint. Contemporary evidence concerning hidden curricula, higher-education managerialism, African educational dependency and qualification mismatch, narrative persuasion, adolescent social media, influencer marketing, pornography exposure, and professional formation is handled with explicit distinctions between fact, interpretation, correlation, causal inference, and theological judgment. The chapter also rebukes anti-intellectual Christianity, token biblical integration, parental abdication, artistic carelessness, sexual commodification, institutional dishonesty, and churches that lament cultural decline after abandoning disciplined catechesis. It concludes with a constructive programme for families, churches, educators, artists, journalists, employers, workers, and students, calling the church to recover truthful education, holy imagination, excellent work, grateful leisure, courageous witness, and readiness for the return of Jesus Christ.

Keywords: Christian education; hidden curriculum; secular catechesis; media formation; pornography; celebrity culture; theology of work; moral imagination; rapture readiness

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When the Week Becomes a School

A child may attend church for two hours on Sunday and spend the rest of the week inside other sanctuaries. On Monday, the timetable teaches what knowledge deserves authority. On Tuesday, the screen teaches which bodies deserve admiration. On Wednesday, the advertisement names a dissatisfaction and offers to sell back the cure. On Thursday, the workplace explains what kind of person receives promotion. On Friday, entertainment decides which sins are comic, which restraints are cruel, and which desires make a character authentic. On Saturday, leisure trains the soul either to receive rest as a gift or to flee from silence. By Sunday morning, the sermon enters a mind that has already heard a thousand smaller sermons.

Most of them were not announced as sermons.

No creed was recited when a teacher treated theological knowledge as private feeling while speaking of material causes as public fact. No hymn was sung when a programme ranked human worth through performance indicators. No altar call was given when a film invited the audience to sympathise with rebellion and laugh at holiness. No formal doctrine was distributed when a platform rewarded exhibition, an influencer connected luxury with significance, or a workplace required emotional conformity in the language of professionalism. Yet a vision of truth, humanity, freedom, success, sexuality, work, suffering, and the good life was being taught.

This is secular catechesis. The phrase does not mean that every school consciously imitates a church, every journalist conspires against Christianity, every employer seeks ideological control, or every artist designs propaganda. It names a deeper and more ordinary reality: human beings are formed through repeated participation in institutions, stories, practices, incentives, and communities. An institution may deny that it teaches religion while continually answering religious questions. What is ultimate? Who may define reality? What makes a life worthy? Which desires deserve obedience? What must be sacrificed for acceptance? What future should command hope? What is a person for?

Chapter 17 examined unity without truth. It showed that a society may seek religious harmony by making every confession less particular until Jesus becomes one honoured voice among many. The present chapter moves beyond formal religion. The age does not need to persuade everyone to join an interfaith ceremony if schools, media, entertainment, and workplaces already train people to regard every exclusive truth claim as socially dangerous, every inherited limit as suspect, and every inward identity as deserving institutional recognition. Counterfeit religion spreads not only by changing what happens inside a sanctuary. It spreads by forming the person who enters it.

The controlling claim of this chapter is that institutions are never merely pipes through which neutral information passes. Through explicit teaching, hidden curricula, narrative imagination, professional incentives, repeated images, assessment, prestige, reward, exclusion, and habits of attention, they direct love. When detached from the Creator and His revelation, they increasingly catechise society into autonomous selfhood, expressive individualism, consumer identity, sexual permissiveness, therapeutic morality, credential worship, productivity-based worth, and entertainment-centred existence.

The biblical alternative is not ignorance, cultural withdrawal, hostility to universities, contempt for art, fear of technology, or a romantic return to an allegedly pure past. It is education, communication, creativity, labour, and leisure brought beneath the lordship of Jesus Christ. Christians may teach, research, report, compose, film, design, manage, study, invent, travel, play, and serve in public institutions. The choice is not assimilation or disappearance. It is obedient presence.

The hour makes the choice urgent. A person is always becoming someone. The question is not whether the mind will be formed, but by whom; not whether desire will be trained, but toward what; not whether the imagination will inhabit a story, but which story will make sacrifice appear beautiful and sin appear reasonable. In the last second before midnight, the church cannot prepare the Bride merely by condemning the world outside. It must ask what its own children, students, workers, artists, teachers, and ministers are being trained to love.

The Curriculum Beneath the Curriculum

The word *education* is commonly associated with schools, lessons, teachers, examinations, and certificates. Yet education is larger than schooling. It is the deliberate and incidental process through which persons acquire knowledge, skills, habits, judgments, loyalties, and capacities for action. Schooling is the organised institutional form in which a community arranges much of that work. Training ordinarily concentrates on competence for a defined task. Socialisation introduces a person into the norms and practices of a group. Habituation forms tendencies

through repetition. Formation concerns the shaping of the whole person, including perception, affection, conscience, identity, and conduct. Discipleship is explicitly Christian formation under the authority of Jesus Christ through His Word, Spirit, and people.

Catechesis, in its proper ecclesial meaning, is ordered instruction in the faith. It teaches the content, language, habits, worship, and moral life of the Christian community. The term is used analogically in this chapter because secular institutions also transmit an account of reality and train participants to inhabit it. The analogy has limits. A university does not become a church merely because it forms students. An employment handbook is not literally a creed. A film is not a sacrament. Yet the analogy identifies functional similarities: authoritative narratives, repeated practices, moral vocabularies, exemplary figures, sanctions, promised rewards, and visions of human fulfilment.

Indoctrination must be distinguished from formation. All education forms, but not all formation is indoctrination. Indoctrination suppresses responsible inquiry, shields claims from examination, manipulates allegiance, or trains acceptance without adequate reasons. Propaganda selects and arranges communication to secure a desired response, often by reducing complexity and exploiting emotion. Faithful Christian education should reject both. It does not fear questions because truth belongs to God. It does not force a confession that the heart does not believe. It teaches clearly, reasons honestly, acknowledges evidence, distinguishes certainty from probability, and invites the learner to stand consciously beneath the Word rather than unconsciously beneath the crowd.

The explicit curriculum is what an institution formally says it teaches. The hidden curriculum consists of the norms, priorities, identities, and relations communicated through institutional life, often without appearing in a syllabus. Jackson (1968) used the phrase to describe lessons carried through classroom routines, waiting, evaluation, authority, and peer life. Giroux and Penna (1979) later examined how hidden curricula reproduce social relationships and political assumptions. Subsequent research across general, professional, and medical education has continued to show that students learn not only from declared outcomes but also from what institutions reward, tolerate, model, and silence.

A school may teach integrity in a course while rewarding grade inflation. A university may celebrate intellectual courage while making career security depend upon conformity. A Christian college may require chapel while defining success through rankings, salaries, prestige, and market share. A company may publish values of dignity while treating workers as measurable units. A church may preach holiness while giving its most visible platforms to charisma, wealth, and spectacle. The spoken curriculum and the lived curriculum may contradict one another. When they do, the lived curriculum ordinarily wins because it is reinforced through consequence.

Prof. Sangwa's curriculum work captures the issue precisely: curriculum is more than a list of topics; it is a pathway of formation that reveals beliefs about knowledge, learners, competence, truth, work, and purpose (Sangwa, n.d.). His research on educator vocation similarly argues that secular higher education is not a neutral warehouse of information but a formative environment in which truth claims, moral norms, identity, and belonging are continually negotiated (Sangwa et al., 2026). This does not mean that every educator controls the learner's conscience. It means that every educational practice answers, explicitly or implicitly, what learning is for.

The deepest curriculum is therefore teleological. It points toward an end. A student may be taught to become employable, competitive, expressive, adaptable, critical, innovative, patriotic, globally mobile, socially approved, or economically productive. Each end includes genuine goods, yet none is morally self-interpreting. Adaptable to what? Innovative toward which future? Productive for whose benefit? Critical according to which standard? Employable at what cost to conscience? A pedagogy may refine the means of learning while leaving the end to the market, the state, the self, or the institution.

Mission-Driven Learning Theory responds to this absence of purpose by placing telos at the centre of education. It orders knowledge and competence toward calling, giftedness, formation, stewardship, community confirmation, responsible contribution, and mission under God (Sangwa & Mutabazi, 2025, 2026). The insight is not that every learner already knows a complete life mission. It is that competence becomes dangerous when separated from character and direction. A technically excellent liar is not educated in the biblical sense. A highly credentialed exploiter has been trained, but not made wise.

The Myth and the Moral Burden of Neutrality

The strongest case for institutional neutrality deserves respect. In plural societies, public schools serve families of different religions and none. Universities should not coerce students into a denomination. Employers should not make promotion dependent upon religious conformity. Governments have often used education to impose nationalism, suppress minority languages, stigmatise faiths, and manufacture obedience. Religious institutions have also abused children, silenced questions, taught errors as divine certainties, and confused clerical authority with God's

authority. A fair public order should protect conscience, permit reasoned disagreement, and prevent the powerful from using institutions to compel worship.

These concerns are not enemies of Christian faith. Coerced confession is not saving faith. The gospel persuades through truth and the work of the Holy Spirit, not administrative force. Christians should defend the civil freedom of neighbours to reject Christianity, even while praying and labouring for their conversion. A teacher may explain a Christian position without manipulating a student's grade. A public institution may accommodate religious diversity without pretending that contradictory doctrines are equally true.

The problem begins when neutrality is defined as the absence of religion but not the absence of secular anthropology. A school may prohibit prayer as sectarian while treating human beings as self-defining individuals whose deepest identities require public affirmation. A curriculum may exclude creation as theology while presenting naturalistic accounts of humanity as the only intellectually serious framework. A workplace may forbid evangelism as coercive while requiring employees to affirm contested moral language. The institution has not become neutral. It has established one account of reality as ordinary and classified alternatives as private.

Every curriculum makes judgments. It decides what knowledge deserves time, which authors define a discipline, what counts as evidence, which historical injuries demand memory, what a good citizen should value, how achievement should be measured, and what kind of graduate should emerge. Even the decision to teach only methods and not ends teaches something: ultimate purposes are either private, unknowable, or irrelevant to public competence.

Neutrality is therefore best understood procedurally, not metaphysically. An institution may apply rules fairly, disclose its reasoning, protect dissent, distinguish education from coercion, and avoid granting one group unjust privilege. It cannot avoid all substantive beliefs about the human person. The honest question is not whether formation occurs, but whether the institution acknowledges its anthropology, permits it to be examined, and protects those whose consciences differ.

This distinction also guards against careless Christian accusation. Not every policy with which Christians disagree is evidence of an organised conspiracy. Institutions often converge because administrators share professional training, accreditation standards, funding incentives, legal advice, reputational fears, and moral assumptions. Coordination may be documented in some cases; in others, similar outcomes arise without a central commander. A scholarly Christian must distinguish published policy from inferred motive and systemic convergence from secret design. Suspicion is not discernment merely because it is intense.

At the same time, the absence of a single architect does not make a system morally innocent. A river can carry pollution from many tributaries. Each contributor may pursue a limited goal, yet the combined current can poison a valley. Modern educational and cultural institutions may be shaped simultaneously by market demand, therapeutic individualism, secular assumptions, political pressure, professional prestige, donor expectations, and technological design. No one actor needs to control the whole for the whole to form people away from God.

From Paideia to the Platform

Human communities have always known that education concerns the kind of person a society hopes to produce. Classical *paideia* joined intellectual instruction to moral, civic, rhetorical, and bodily formation. Its ideals were neither uniform nor fully biblical, but it did not ordinarily pretend that knowledge could be separated from character and public life. Plato ordered education toward the just city as he understood it. Aristotle linked education to virtue and the purpose of the political community. Stoic teachers sought mastery of passions through reason. Their disagreements concerned not whether education formed the soul, but what excellence was.

Biblical covenant instruction begins elsewhere. Israel did not discover its highest good by philosophical ascent. God acted, spoke, redeemed, commanded, and called His people to remember. The household, assembly, feast, song, law, testimony, land, and calendar formed one covenantal ecology. Knowledge of God was not added after practical competence had been acquired. It interpreted the whole of life.

Early Christians inherited Jewish Scripture and lived among Greco-Roman educational traditions. They used languages, rhetorical forms, and intellectual tools available in their societies while refusing the worship and moral assumptions attached to many of them. Augustine's account of disordered love remains especially important. The human problem is not simply ignorance. It is loving finite goods wrongly, either above God, apart from God, or against the good of the neighbour. Education must therefore address desire, not merely information. A clever sinner can use truth as an instrument of pride.

Medieval monastic and cathedral schools, later universities, and Reformation catechesis developed within very different institutional settings. They sometimes preserved learning with remarkable discipline and sometimes confused church authority, inherited philosophy, and social hierarchy with revelation. The Reformation's emphasis upon Scripture, literacy, preaching, and household catechesis helped enlarge educational participation. Yet Protestant communities also used schooling for confessional control, political consolidation, and social discipline. Christian history does not permit triumphalism. Institutions bearing Christ's name have formed courage and charity, but also fear, prejudice, and obedience to men.

Modern public schooling emerged through many streams: religious philanthropy, civic republicanism, industrialisation, nationalism, administrative standardisation, concern for literacy, and efforts to integrate growing populations. It widened access to knowledge and created possibilities that should be received with gratitude. It also made education increasingly available to state planning, bureaucratic measurement, labour-market sorting, and national identity formation. Durkheim understood education as society's means of reproducing its moral life. Dewey treated education as democratic social experience and rejected the idea that learners were passive vessels. These contributions corrected rote instruction and acknowledged the social nature of learning, but they also located educational ends within human community rather than divine revelation.

Twentieth-century critical theories exposed how schools could reproduce class, race, gender, and cultural power. Gramsci analysed cultural hegemony. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) examined how institutions convert dominant cultural capital into apparently neutral merit. Freire (1970) criticised the banking model of education and called learners to critical consciousness. Illich (1971) warned that schooling could monopolise learning and teach dependence upon certified institutions. These critiques identify real dangers: the powerful can define normality, credentials can conceal privilege, and institutions can train submission while speaking of opportunity.

Yet critique also requires a court of appeal. If every truth claim is merely an instrument of power, the critic's truth claim becomes another instrument. If liberation is defined by autonomy, the learner may be freed from one authority only to become captive to appetite, ideology, market, or group identity. Christian education can learn from critical questions without accepting a closed materialism or an anthropology in which salvation arrives through consciousness and restructuring alone.

Mass print, radio, film, television, advertising, and digital media widened the formative field. Ellul (1965) showed how modern propaganda works not only through isolated lies but through environments that organise perception. McLuhan's famous insistence that the medium shapes the message drew attention to form, pace, scale, and participation. Horkheimer and Adorno (1944/2002) criticised the culture industry for standardising entertainment and integrating leisure with consumption. Postman (1985) later argued that a culture organised around television risked turning serious public discourse into amusement.

These thinkers did not agree, and their analyses should not be treated as prophecy. Audiences are not empty containers. People interpret, resist, mock, combine, and reject messages. Media can expose injustice, preserve memory, distribute Scripture, educate the excluded, and strengthen communities. Nevertheless, the historical movement is clear: institutions of formation have multiplied, entered the home, and become continuous. The modern learner does not leave school at the gate. The lesson follows in the pocket.

The School as a House of Loves

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 begins not with a classroom but with a confession: "Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." The command that follows is comprehensive: love the Lord with the whole heart, soul, and strength. God's words must be upon the heart, repeated to children, discussed at home and on the road, at lying down and rising, bound upon the hand, placed before the eyes, and written at the thresholds of ordinary life.

This passage is sometimes reduced to support for family devotions or religious schools. It certainly supports intentional household instruction, but its vision is larger. Education is woven into worship, memory, movement, speech, time, body, household, and community. The child does not merely learn propositions about God. The child is taught to inhabit a world in which God is Lord everywhere.

The command to repeat the words does not celebrate mindless repetition. Biblical remembrance resists forgetfulness. Israel had been redeemed from slavery, but prosperity could produce amnesia. The household therefore rehearsed who God was, what He had done, and how His covenant ordered life. Repetition can enslave when it conceals truth; it can also preserve freedom when it keeps truth before a forgetful heart.

Modern institutions understand repetition. Brands repeat symbols. platforms repeat stimuli. Schools repeat routines. Workplaces repeat values. Entertainment repeats moral scripts. The question is not whether repetition forms but whether what is repeated is true and whether the learner is permitted to examine it.

The hand, eyes, doors, morning, evening, home, and road in [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#) show that formation is environmental. A family cannot counter an entire week of disordered formation by adding one hurried verse while every practice teaches another gospel. Parents may tell children that identity is received from God while organising family life around status. A school may teach stewardship while rewarding ruthless competition. A church may preach that Christ is treasure while presenting visible success as blessing. The environment catechises through consistency.

[Psalm 1:1-6](#) adds the formative power of counsel, position, and meditation. The blessed person does not walk in wicked advice, stand in the path of sinners, or sit among scoffers. The progression suggests increasing settlement: counsel becomes path, path becomes seat, and exposure becomes belonging. The alternative is delight in the Lord's instruction and meditation day and night.

The psalm does not require physical withdrawal from every unbeliever. Joseph served in Egypt. Daniel studied in Babylon. Jesus ate with sinners. Paul reasoned in pagan cities. The warning concerns moral participation and settled identity. A Christian may work in an institution without allowing its counsel to become the final interpretation of reality. Presence is not surrender. Listening is not enthronement.

Meditation in the psalm is sustained attention to God's instruction. It forms stability like a tree planted beside water. Modern attention economies often produce the opposite: fragmented perception, accelerated emotion, and constant transition. A person may consume thousands of words while meditating upon none. The result is not necessarily ignorance. It can be informational abundance without rooted judgment.

The contrast between tree and chaff is educational. One life becomes weighty, fruitful, and stable because it receives nourishment from God's Word. The other is carried by prevailing winds. A society may celebrate flexibility while producing persons unable to remain faithful when fashion changes. Scripture does not praise stubbornness for its own sake. It praises rootedness in truth.

Christian education must therefore ask more than whether students can retrieve content. Can they attend? Can they distinguish evidence from pressure? Can they remain truthful when dishonesty is rewarded? Can they love neighbours who disagree? Can they endure obscurity? Can they receive correction without collapse? Can they use competence in service? Can they recognise the difference between popularity and goodness? These are not optional spiritual ornaments. They concern the person into whose hands knowledge is placed.

Learning in Babylon Without Becoming Babylonian

[Daniel 1:1-21](#) provides one of Scripture's clearest accounts of faithful learning inside a powerful foreign institution. Babylon did not merely conquer territory. It selected promising young men, relocated them, taught them the language and literature of the Chaldeans, renamed them, fed them from the royal table, and prepared them for imperial service. Education, identity, patronage, and political incorporation were joined.

The programme contained genuine learning. Daniel and his friends did not become intellectually useless in order to remain holy. They learned the literature and language of the empire. God gave them knowledge and understanding in every kind of literature and wisdom. At the end of their training, the king found them exceptionally capable.

Yet they discerned a boundary. Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's food and wine. Interpreters debate the precise source of defilement, whether dietary law, idolatrous association, royal dependence, or a combination. The narrative's moral point is clear: Daniel participated in education without granting the institution final authority over obedience to God.

His resistance was neither theatrical nor cowardly. He sought permission, proposed a test, accepted evaluation, and trusted God. He did not insult Babylonian scholarship, refuse all language instruction, or declare every administrator demonic. Nor did he reason that excellence required complete assimilation. He practised what may be called faithful differentiation: learning what was true, serving with competence, maintaining respect, and refusing what would violate covenant allegiance.

The renaming of the young men also exposes the struggle over identity. Babylon could assign names, but it could not finally define the servants of God. Modern institutions similarly classify persons through enrolment categories, employment grades, professional titles, diagnostic labels, performance scores, demographic identities, and public profiles. Some classifications are useful. They organise care, record competence, and expose inequality. None can carry

the full weight of personhood. The Christian's deepest name is received in relation to the Creator and, in redemption, in union with Christ.

Daniel also corrects two opposite Christian errors. The first is assimilation. Some believers accept every institutional assumption because they fear losing opportunity. They call cowardice wisdom and treat promotion as providential permission. The second is anti-intellectual withdrawal. Others condemn institutions wholesale, neglect disciplined learning, circulate weak evidence, and then mistake exclusion for persecution. Daniel permits neither. He was more competent than his peers and more faithful than the empire required.

This model is especially important for Christian academics and students. Sangwa et al. (2026) argue that educator ministry in secular higher education should avoid both privatised faith and coercive religiosity. Christian witness is expressed through intellectual honesty, relational care, excellent teaching, moral courage, and a Christ-centred vocation that does not manipulate students. The educator serves the learner, the discipline, the institution's lawful mission, and ultimately Christ.

The same pattern applies to the workplace, newsroom, studio, laboratory, and public service. Learn the language. Understand the system. Do not caricature colleagues. Produce work that can withstand examination. Refuse falsehood. Accept lawful consequence. Seek peace where possible. Do not surrender the conscience purchased by Christ.

Universities, Credentials, and the Manufacture of Legitimate Knowledge

Universities have produced extraordinary goods. They preserve texts, train physicians, test medicines, study languages, develop technologies, clarify law, record history, and create communities of inquiry across borders. Christians should not describe the academy as though every lecture were apostasy. Such rhetoric is false and self-defeating. It also insults faithful scholars who labour within difficult institutions.

The problem is jurisdiction. A university becomes idolatrous when it treats its methods, credentials, and consensus as final judges of realities that exceed their proper competence. Expertise deserves respect because disciplined knowledge is real. It does not confer moral infallibility, omniscience, or authority to redefine creation.

Credentialism emerges when certification becomes not merely evidence of preparation but a substitute for wisdom, character, and demonstrated competence. Degrees can protect the public by confirming training. They can also become gates through which institutions control access, reproduce prestige, and inflate requirements unrelated to the work. Illich's criticism of credential dependence remains relevant, though complete deschooling would create new inequalities. The answer is not to abolish standards but to ensure that credentials serve competence and the common good rather than institutional monopoly.

Assessment carries a hidden theology of the person. What is measured becomes visible; what is visible often becomes valuable. Grades, rankings, citations, completion rates, student satisfaction, employment outcomes, and revenue may assist stewardship. Each becomes corrupt when it is treated as a complete account of educational quality. A university can improve its position while weakening intellectual courage. A lecturer can receive high evaluations by reducing difficulty. A student can obtain distinction without learning patience, honesty, or service.

Managerialism intensifies this risk by importing organisational techniques as governing definitions of academic life. Strategic planning, budgeting, quality assurance, and data are not enemies of education. Institutions need order. The danger appears when what cannot be easily counted is treated as unreal, when scholars become content producers, students become customers, and the institution's public image becomes more protected than truth.

Funding also forms. Grants can enable work that poor institutions could never undertake. Donor partnerships may expand laboratories, scholarships, libraries, and public service. Yet funding priorities can determine which questions are researchable, which moral vocabularies are employable, and which conclusions are institutionally safe. A conflict of interest does not prove corruption, but it creates a duty of disclosure, methodological independence, and plural scrutiny.

Academic gatekeeping is similarly ambivalent. Peer review can detect error and improve argument. Editorial standards prevent evidence-free claims from circulating as scholarship. Gatekeeping becomes abusive when ideological agreement substitutes for methodological quality, when dissenting research is excluded without fair review, or when prestige networks protect weak work from criticism. The church should not respond by romanticising every rejected claim. Many rejected manuscripts are simply poor. The proper response is transparent standards, methodological seriousness, and courage to follow evidence.

Sangwa's study of learner-centred pedagogy argues that educational theories carry moral assumptions and that practices centred upon autonomy, skill, and secularised epistemology may correlate with wider individualistic and relativistic values (Sangwa, 2025a). That analysis should not be exaggerated into a single causal story. Cross-national associations cannot prove that pedagogy alone produced cultural change. Media, law, family, economy, urbanisation, and religious decline interact. The stronger conclusion is that pedagogy is not morally empty. The way authority, knowledge, choice, and competence are organised contributes to a wider formative environment.

Africa: Education Between Inheritance, Aspiration, and Dependency

African education cannot be treated as a delayed copy of Europe or North America. The continent contains ancient intellectual traditions, Islamic and Christian educational histories, indigenous systems of apprenticeship, colonial school legacies, rapidly expanding universities, large informal economies, multilingual societies, and profound national differences. Any single statement about “African education” requires qualification.

Colonial schooling often combined literacy and professional training with administrative control, cultural hierarchy, linguistic displacement, and the formation of intermediaries useful to empire. Mission schools produced mixed legacies. Many expanded literacy, health care, women's education, biblical translation, and social mobility. Some also confused the gospel with foreign cultural superiority or failed to honour local knowledge. Postcolonial governments inherited systems designed for different political and economic purposes, then expanded them under severe resource constraints.

The contemporary aspiration for education is morally understandable. Families sacrifice because credentials appear to offer dignity, mobility, and protection from poverty. Yet when qualification expands faster than meaningful work, education can become a costly promise that the labour market cannot fulfil. The International Labour Organization's *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024* reports persistent qualification mismatch and insecurity across developing economies, with especially serious pressures in parts of Africa (International Labour Organization, 2024). The problem is not that young Africans are overeducated in any simple sense. Many remain excluded from quality education, while others hold certificates without the practical opportunities, networks, or productive systems through which learning can serve society.

Credential inflation can therefore coexist with skill scarcity. Employers demand degrees for work that once required apprenticeship. Students pursue programmes because titles carry status rather than because the curriculum answers a social need. Institutions multiply courses while laboratories, libraries, supervision, and industry connections remain weak. Graduates may be trained to seek scarce formal employment while agriculture, trades, local enterprise, care work, and community problem-solving are treated as lesser callings.

External funding and accreditation can strengthen standards and international recognition. They can also create epistemic dependency when institutions adopt imported priorities without sufficient local examination. A donor may fund a genuine public good while also carrying assumptions about sexuality, family, identity, governance, or development. The existence of influence does not prove malicious intent. It requires intellectual maturity: receive resources lawfully, disclose conditions, preserve institutional mission, and refuse any partnership that purchases the conscience.

Language is another formative question. Education in a global language may open scientific and economic opportunity. It may also estrange learners from local communities when knowledge cannot return home. Christian scholarship should not idolise either the colonial language or the vernacular. Pentecost did not sanctify one imperial tongue. It made the works of God intelligible across languages. Excellent African education should cultivate international competence and local responsibility.

The African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2026–2035 emphasises relevance, quality, inclusion, skills, digital capacity, and lifelong learning (African Union, 2025). These are legitimate aims. The Christian question is what vision of the person governs them. A continent does not need only workers who can enter global systems. It needs truthful leaders, responsible entrepreneurs, faithful parents, competent professionals, courageous scholars, skilled artisans, honest public servants, and churches able to discern the moral terms attached to development.

The opposite danger is romantic reaction. Some Christian communities dismiss universities as corrupt, circulate unverified claims, resist science because it is “Western,” or treat pastoral confidence as a substitute for study. Such anti-intellectualism does not decolonise the mind. It abandons the field to those who have done the work. A biblical worldview must produce better scholarship, not excuses for poor scholarship.

Christian Education with a Secular Soul

A school may place a cross on its gate, begin the day with prayer, require chapel, and remain secular in its operating imagination. The Bible is present, but the curriculum's deepest questions are answered elsewhere. Human beings are treated as autonomous competitors. Knowledge is valued principally for income. Leadership means influence. Technology means efficiency. Psychology defines wellbeing. Economics defines success. Marketing defines relevance. Institutional prestige becomes glory.

This is Christian education with a secular soul.

Biblical integration is not achieved by attaching a verse to an unchanged lesson. A finance course becomes Christian not because [Proverbs 3:9](#) appears on the first slide, but because ownership, stewardship, justice, risk, debt, generosity, labour, poverty, and accountability are examined beneath God's lordship. A science course becomes Christian not by inserting a prayer before the laboratory, but by treating creation as intelligible, evidence as morally binding, human beings as image-bearers, and technical power as accountable. A leadership programme becomes Christian when authority is understood as service under judgment, not when secular executive ambition is baptised with the language of destiny.

Christian education must also reject incompetence disguised as faithfulness. Inaccurate history does not glorify the God of truth. Poorly designed assessments do not become spiritual because students pray. Scientific ignorance is not holiness. A Christian institution that protects plagiarism, appoints unqualified teachers, inflates grades, or suppresses questions contradicts the worldview it claims to defend.

C. S. Lewis (1943) warned that education which dismisses objective value may produce persons skilled in technique but impoverished in moral judgment. James K. A. Smith (2009) later emphasised that institutions function through liturgies that train love. These insights converge with Sangwa and Mutabazi's Mission-Driven Learning Theory: education must unite knowledge, competence, calling, formation, community, and responsible contribution rather than leaving telos to chance (Sangwa & Mutabazi, 2025).

A Christ-centred institution does not require every discipline to become a sermon. It requires coherence. Faculty should be able to explain how their field relates to creation, fall, common grace, human limitation, vocation, neighbour-love, and accountability. Students should learn to recognise both genuine knowledge and disciplinary overreach. They should encounter opposing arguments in their strongest form. They should be protected from spiritual manipulation and ideological coercion alike.

Such an institution also receives non-Christian scholarship with discernment rather than fear. All truth is God's truth in the sense that whatever is genuinely true corresponds to the reality He made. An unbelieving researcher may discover a medical treatment. A secular historian may expose a church's injustice. A non-Christian artist may portray grief with honesty. Common grace permits real insight. Discernment asks what is true, what is partial, what assumptions guide interpretation, and what ends the knowledge serves.

The aim is not a Christian enclosure where students never meet disagreement. It is the formation of believers who can enter Babylon without becoming Babylonian, Athens without worshipping its idols, and the marketplace without selling their souls. Protection is necessary in childhood. Mature discipleship requires tested judgment.

The Screen as Stained Glass

A stained-glass window does not merely let light through. It gives the light a shape, colour, sequence, and story. The modern screen often performs a similar function. It does not create all reality, but it frames what is visible, whose suffering becomes urgent, which body becomes desirable, what kind of life looks normal, and which moral response feels natural.

Media effects are neither magical nor uniform. People do not receive messages identically. Prior belief, age, community, personality, context, and media literacy matter. Audiences interpret and resist. A film can produce opposite responses in different viewers. Correlation between media use and social outcomes does not by itself prove causation.

Yet the rejection of simplistic effects should not become the denial of formation. Experimental research on narrative entertainment has found measurable persuasive effects across beliefs, attitudes, intentions, norms, and behaviour, although effect sizes vary and narrative is not always more persuasive than non-narrative communication (Rahmani et al., 2025). The significance of stories may lie partly in reach and identification. A proposition asks to be judged. A story invites the audience to inhabit a moral world before the judgment becomes explicit.

Characters teach sympathy. Plot assigns consequence. Camera work directs attention. Music interprets emotion. Humour determines what can be dismissed without argument. Repetition makes the unfamiliar ordinary. Villains reveal which beliefs the story considers dangerous. Heroes reveal what it calls courage. None of this makes fiction inherently manipulative. All art selects. The moral question is whether the selection serves truth or trains false desire.

Christians often respond poorly in two opposite ways. Some consume without examination, treating entertainment as morally empty because it is “only a movie.” Others condemn art merely because it contains sinners, darkness, conflict, or ambiguity. Scripture itself contains war, betrayal, sexual sin, lament, political intrigue, and human contradiction. The presence of evil in a story does not mean approval. The decisive questions concern moral framing, consequence, sympathy, truthfulness, and the imagination of the good.

A biblical theology of art begins with the Creator. Beauty, rhythm, skill, story, humour, music, craft, celebration, and play are gifts. The tabernacle involved artistic excellence. The Psalms give language to joy, grief, fear, anger, memory, and hope. Jesus taught through parables that entered ordinary imagination. Christian artists need not produce propaganda with predictable endings. They should create truthfully beneath holiness.

News media carry a different responsibility. Chapter 3 examined truth, framing, gatekeeping, and propaganda. The present concern is formation through habitual attention. A person who consumes constant crisis may develop fear as a default posture. A person who receives every issue through partisan conflict may lose the ability to see neighbours except as categories. Media literacy therefore requires more than fact-checking. It requires discernment of pace, proportion, omission, emotional reward, and the business model through which attention is sold.

[Philippians 4:8-9](#) does not command believers to deny evil or avoid hard news. Paul knew imprisonment, persecution, false teachers, and conflict. He commands disciplined attention to what is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy, followed by practice. The passage opposes both naïveté and contamination. To expose darkness faithfully, the mind must not become fascinated by it.

Advertising and the Sale of Restlessness

Advertising can perform a lawful service. A producer informs possible customers that a useful good exists. A charity explains a need. A university announces a programme. A publisher introduces a book. Information helps exchange.

Consumer advertising often goes further. It attaches products to identity, maturity, attractiveness, security, romance, belonging, status, and transcendence. The object is not merely shown. A lack is narrated. The viewer is told who he might become if he purchases and what others may think if he does not.

Chapter 5 examined consumerism as a system in which goods carry the weight of identity and salvation. The new question is institutional: how is that desire taught? Advertising learns aspiration, identifies insecurity, constructs comparison, and repeats an image until it feels like a personal longing. Veblen's account of conspicuous consumption remains relevant because goods communicate rank. Influencer marketing intensifies the process by merging friendship language, lifestyle display, and commercial endorsement. A 2024 meta-analysis found that influencer effectiveness varies with source, content, platform, and audience factors, confirming that persuasion is contextual rather than automatic (Pan et al., 2025).

Children are especially vulnerable because commercial messages can arrive before mature understanding of persuasive intent. The child is not merely a future buyer. He becomes an advocate inside the household, a source of family pressure, and a participant in brand culture. Responsible societies should therefore ask whether every profitable method is morally permissible when directed toward developing attention.

Experience consumption creates a subtler curriculum. Travel, restaurants, weddings, graduations, conferences, and leisure can be genuine goods. The distortion begins when an event is valued principally as proof of status, when the photograph becomes more important than the person present, or when debt is accepted to stage a life for spectators. A family can spend years repaying one day designed to look prosperous.

The advertisement often sells restlessness before selling the product. Your body is unfinished. Your home is outdated. Your children are behind. Your career is invisible. Your holiday is ordinary. Your ministry is small. Your device is embarrassing. The market does not merely answer desire. It can manufacture the condition under which desire returns.

Christian enterprise should be different. Marketing must tell the truth. It should not exploit fear, sexualise attention, conceal material conditions, manufacture false scarcity, or promise identity through purchase. Profit is lawful when joined to real value, just exchange, honest labour, and responsibility for consequence. A business becomes catechetically corrupt when it must keep customers insecure in order to keep them buying.

Celebrity and the Curriculum of Visibility

Celebrity culture teaches through aspiration. The celebrity is not merely a person known by many. Fame can follow public service, artistic skill, athletic excellence, scholarship, or courage. Celebrity becomes a formative system when recognisability, curated intimacy, luxury display, access, follower counts, and emotional attachment are converted into authority and economic value.

Parasocial relationships are one-sided bonds in which audiences experience familiarity with a media figure who does not know them personally. Horton and Wohl (1956) identified the phenomenon in broadcast media. Digital platforms intensify it because the influencer speaks directly into the private space, shares routines, responds selectively, and presents commercial promotion as personal recommendation. Research on adolescent health-related influencer exposure shows a mixed field containing both beneficial communication and risks involving unhealthy products, body ideals, and misleading claims (Engel et al., 2024).

The moral curriculum is powerful. A life matters when it is watched. A meal matters when it is posted. A body matters when it is admired. An opinion becomes credible when it attracts engagement. Ordinary service appears small. Private fidelity becomes invisible. Family duty is content. Vulnerability becomes branding. Even “authenticity” can be monetised.

This system does not enslave only audiences. The celebrated person is trained by metrics. Attention rewards one style, controversy another, intimacy another. The self becomes a product requiring continuous maintenance. Scandal threatens revenue. Silence threatens relevance. The person may possess millions of followers and no place where performance can stop.

The church has imitated this curriculum, as Chapters 12 and 15 showed. The present point is broader: churches learned celebrity logic from a culture that had already turned attention into status. A pastor becomes a brand because the congregation has also been taught to recognise importance through visibility.

Jesus' kingdom honours hidden faithfulness. The Father sees in secret ([Matthew 6:1-6](#)). The widow's small offering receives divine attention while impressive gifts attract public notice ([Mark 12:41-44](#)). Paul describes believers whose honour appears weak in the eyes of the world but is known to God ([2 Corinthians 6:4-10](#)).

Public influence may be stewarded faithfully. The Christian creator should not pretend that reach is irrelevant. Reach can distribute truth and sustain work. But metrics must remain servants. The question at judgment will not be how many people watched, but whether the servant was faithful with what Christ entrusted.

Pornography as Industrial Sexual Catechesis

Pornography is often discussed as though it were only a private choice made by an adult in front of a screen. That description is incomplete. Pornography is also an industry of production, distribution, recommendation, payment, data, labour, performance, and audience formation. It turns sexual acts and bodies into consumable representations, then places those representations inside systems designed to secure repeated attention.

The moral argument in Chapters 9 and 10 established that sexuality possesses created meaning. It belongs within the covenantal union of husband and wife, where bodily intimacy is joined to fidelity, mutual self-giving, exclusivity, and the possibility of family. Pornography detaches sexual sight from covenant, the body from personal communion, arousal from responsibility, and intimacy from the presence of the whole person.

It therefore catechises. It teaches the viewer how to look. It frames bodies as available, novelty as necessary, privacy as opportunity, and arousal as sufficient justification. It trains sexual scripts concerning what acts are normal, what bodies are desirable, what partners should provide, and what consent appears to mean. The lesson is often received through repetition before it is articulated as belief.

Research must be handled carefully. A 2023 systematic review of adolescent pornography exposure and sexual behaviour found associations with earlier sexual initiation in several studies, but the literature was largely cross-sectional, measures varied, and causal inference was limited. Evidence for several other outcomes remained conflicting or insufficient (Pathmendra et al., 2023). A separate meta-analysis found an association between exposure to sexual content and problematic sexual behaviours among children and adolescents, while also acknowledging variation in study quality and content types (Mori et al., 2023). Reviews of pornography and sexual or relationship satisfaction likewise report average negative associations in some populations but substantial heterogeneity, making universal claims irresponsible (Abdi et al., 2025).

These limitations do not make the matter morally neutral. Theology does not require a clinical effect size before it can judge lust, objectification, infidelity of the heart, or exploitation. At the same time, Christians must not exaggerate neuroscience, label every user “addicted,” or attribute every marriage problem to one cause. Compulsive sexual behaviour disorder is recognised in the World Health Organization’s ICD-11, but it is not synonymous with all pornography use, and moral distress alone does not establish a clinical disorder (World Health Organization, 2024).

The category of consent also requires depth. Adults may consent to participate in production, but the industry contains unequal power, economic pressure, deception, coercion, and content circulated beyond agreed limits. Some performers exercise agency; others are exploited. Trafficking and child sexual abuse material are criminal realities, but it would be false to claim that every pornographic production is trafficking. Ethical judgment must distinguish evidence without using complexity to excuse commodification.

The consumer’s responsibility remains. A viewer cannot ordinarily know whether the displayed consent was free, informed, continuing, or respected in distribution. The product conceals the conditions of production while inviting the audience to treat the image as available. This uncertainty should deepen restraint, not reduce it.

Children require special protection. Exposure may occur deliberately, accidentally, through peers, or through sexualised material that gradually leads toward explicit content. Shame-based silence leaves children without language to report what they have seen. Age-appropriate education should teach bodily dignity, privacy, consent, the meaning of sexual images, and how to seek help without panic. Parents cannot guarantee perfect protection, but they can create truthful relationships in which disclosure is safer than secrecy.

The industry also forms through commercial design. Free access is often financed by advertising, premium conversion, data, and repeated engagement. Novelty and escalation can be profitable even when not every user follows the same path. The moral economy rewards appetite without covenant and secrecy without accountability.

The church must speak differently to different people. The deliberate producer who exploits another must stop, repent, and make restitution where possible. The distributor of illegal material must be reported to lawful authorities. The viewer who hides repeated use must come into the light. The spouse who has been betrayed requires truth, safety, time, and care, not pressure to offer instant trust. The person caught in compulsive patterns may need pastoral discipleship, practical barriers, qualified clinical support, and long-term accountability. The former performer is not permanently defiled. The blood of Christ is sufficient for the guilty and the exploited.

Repentance is more than deleting files. It is the re-education of sight. [Job 31:1](#) speaks of a covenant with the eyes. Jesus locates adultery within the lustful gaze ([Matthew 5:27-30](#)). Paul commands believers to flee sexual immorality because the body belongs to the Lord ([1 Corinthians 6:12-20](#)). Freedom therefore requires not only restraint but a restored vision of the person. The image on the screen is not a product first. It is the representation of an image-bearer.

Leisure, Gaming, Sport, Events, and the Economy of Escape

Human beings need rest. God created time with rhythm. Israel received Sabbath as gift and command. Jesus withdrew from crowds. Scripture celebrates feasts, music, friendship, physical strength, and the goodness of created places. A Christianity unable to rejoice has misunderstood holiness.

The distinction is between recreation and escape. Recreation restores the person for faithful life. Escape seeks temporary disappearance from a life one refuses to face. The same activity may function differently in different people. A game may exercise skill, imagination, cooperation, and enjoyment. It may also displace sleep, work, worship, family, and embodied friendship. Sport may cultivate discipline and community. It may also become tribal idolatry, gambling, violent identity, or an economy that consumes athletes and fans. Tourism may enlarge gratitude and knowledge. It may also become status performance financed by debt.

Gaming deserves careful treatment. Games are structured worlds of goals, feedback, skill, narrative, failure, reward, and community. Their educational power can be significant. They can simulate systems, develop persistence, and create shared experiences. Harm is not established by the existence of competition or fantasy. Christians should ask about content, time, financial design, social environment, bodily consequence, and whether the activity strengthens or weakens ordinary responsibilities.

The word “addiction” should not be used casually. Gaming disorder appears in ICD-11, but diagnosis requires a persistent pattern of impaired control and significant functional impairment, not merely enthusiasm or long hours during a season (World Health Organization, 2024). Moral wisdom can still require limits before clinical criteria are met.

Spectator sport carries its own catechesis. It can honour excellence, perseverance, teamwork, and embodied skill. It can also train a society to invest enormous emotion in outcomes that do not alter its moral condition. The fan may know every statistic and not know his neighbour. The athlete may be celebrated as a symbol while being treated as an asset.

Concerts, festivals, conferences, and motivational events can create genuine community and learning. They can also produce temporary intensity mistaken for transformation. The event economy sells access, atmosphere, identity, and memory. Chapter 15 showed how churches imitate this logic. The broader cultural pattern teaches people to expect change through an experience rather than through patient obedience.

Tourism and travel can become an education in wonder. They may expose the traveller to histories and communities that correct narrowness. Yet constant travel can also become refusal of place. The person collects landscapes while neglecting local duty. The image proves movement, but the soul remains unrooted.

The test is not austerity for its own sake. [1 Corinthians 10:23-33](#) joins liberty to benefit, conscience, neighbour-love, and the glory of God. A lawful pleasure becomes an idol when it must be protected from examination, when absence produces moral collapse, or when it consumes resources owed to worship, family, mercy, work, or debt repayment.

The ability to be silent is one test of freedom. A person who cannot remain alone with God without immediate stimulation may be entertained but not at rest. Biblical rest is not emptiness. It is creaturely trust. The world continues because God sustains it, not because the worker remains online, the traveller keeps moving, or the audience keeps applauding.

The Workplace Creed

A workplace does more than purchase labour. It shapes time, speech, ambition, relationship, dress, emotional display, and moral compromise. Recruitment communicates what kind of person belongs. Induction names corporate virtues. Metrics identify valued conduct. Promotion rewards a model of success. Dismissal reveals boundaries. The workplace creed may never be recited, yet employees learn it through consequence.

Organisational culture can serve genuine goods. Clear expectations reduce confusion. Codes of conduct may protect workers from harassment, discrimination, fraud, and unsafe practice. Performance measures can expose neglect. Training can improve competence. Employee wellbeing is a legitimate concern. A Christian critique must not treat every rule as ideological control.

The problem arises when professional identity claims the whole person. The employee is expected not merely to perform lawful work but to adopt a moral vocabulary, display approved emotions, celebrate contested beliefs, and interpret disagreement as harm. Conscience becomes a human-resources problem. Alternatively, the workplace may proclaim neutrality while requiring practical dishonesty: manipulate the customer, hide defects, inflate results, flatter leadership, ignore exploitation, or sacrifice family continuously for career.

Metrics create another hidden curriculum. What is counted becomes urgent. A salesperson may be rewarded for volume rather than truthful advice. A lecturer for satisfaction rather than learning. A clinician for throughput rather than attentive care. A manager for short-term savings rather than human sustainability. Measures are not false because they are numerical. They become false when a partial indicator is treated as the whole good.

Workplace surveillance, considered here only in general terms, can improve safety and protect assets. It can also erode trust when every movement, keystroke, location, or emotional signal is treated as managerial property. Systematic research indicates that electronic monitoring can alter stress, autonomy, trust, and performance depending upon transparency, purpose, proportionality, and worker participation. Detailed technological analysis belongs to Chapter 20. The theological principle is already clear: efficiency does not cancel personhood.

The biblical doctrine of work begins before the fall. Humanity receives cultivation and stewardship in [Genesis 1:26-28](#) and [Genesis 2:15](#). Work is not merely a commodity exchanged for salary. It is participation in the ordering, care, and fruitful development of creation. After the fall, work becomes frustrated, but it remains meaningful.

The New Testament deepens this vocation. Believers are to work wholeheartedly as for the Lord ([Colossians 3:22-24](#)), provide honestly, and have something to share ([Ephesians 4:28](#)). Masters are judged by the same Lord ([Colossians 4:1](#)). Wages must not be withheld ([James 5:1-6](#)).

Career idolatry and careless incompetence are opposite errors. One sacrifices the soul for advancement. The other performs poorly and calls accountability persecution. Christian workers should be trustworthy, skilled, punctual,

teachable, courageous, and unwilling to lie. Christian employers should not use “calling” to justify unpaid labour, unreasonable demands, or spiritual manipulation.

Conscience conflict requires wisdom. Not every disliked assignment violates Scripture. Employees cannot demand complete institutional agreement with their beliefs. Yet no employer owns worship. When required conduct directly contradicts God’s command, the believer must obey God rather than men ([Acts 5:29](#)). The response should be truthful, respectful, documented, legally informed, and prepared for consequence. Daniel did not confuse civility with surrender.

The Strongest Case Against This Chapter

A serious argument must hear its critics before answering them.

The defender of public neutrality may say that common institutions cannot operate if each religious community demands curricular control. Science, mathematics, law, and professional training require shared standards. Protecting students from sectarian coercion is not secularism but fairness.

The defender of learner autonomy may argue that older educational systems humiliated children, privileged rote obedience, and reproduced hierarchy. Critical pedagogy gave marginalised people language to question injustice. Inclusion policies protect students who have been bullied or excluded.

The media scholar may object that audiences are active interpreters. Culture shapes media as much as media shapes culture. Moral panics about novels, cinema, music, games, and screens have repeatedly exaggerated danger and ignored creative agency.

The civil libertarian may argue that consenting adults have a right to produce and consume sexual expression, that religious morality should not govern private choice, and that censorship can endanger minorities and artistic freedom.

The employer may insist that corporate values and training are necessary for safety, cooperation, lawful compliance, brand integrity, and global teams. Metrics provide accountability. Credentials protect clients. Rankings reveal performance. Without common standards, favouritism and incompetence flourish.

The critic of Christian education may point to creationism taught carelessly, abuse concealed by schools, coercive chapel attendance, anti-intellectualism, poor science, patriarchal control, and institutions where questioning leadership is treated as rebellion. Why should a secular society trust religious formation?

These objections contain truth. Shared standards are necessary. Children have been harmed by authoritarian education. Inclusion can protect vulnerable people. Audiences possess agency. Art cannot be reduced to effect. Credentials and metrics can serve accountability. Christian institutions have sinned grievously.

The response is not to deny these goods. It is to expose the false conclusion drawn from them. The fact that shared inquiry requires procedural fairness does not prove that naturalism, expressive individualism, or therapeutic morality is neutral. The fact that old authorities abused power does not make the inner self infallible. The fact that audiences interpret does not mean repeated narratives have no formative effect. The fact that consenting adults possess civil liberties does not establish that commodified sexual sight is morally good or socially consequence-free. The fact that metrics reveal something does not mean they reveal the whole.

Christian education deserves no exemption from evidence, safeguarding, transparency, or law. It should be judged more strictly because it invokes God’s name. Its failures refute hypocrisy, not revelation. The cure for religious coercion is truthful, accountable Christian formation, not an institution that hides its own creed behind the word neutral.

The deepest disagreement concerns anthropology. Are human beings autonomous choosers whose desires become authoritative when freely expressed, or creatures whose freedom flourishes within truth, holiness, and responsibility before God? No institution can avoid answering. Even the rule “let each person decide” assumes a person capable of decision, a definition of harm, a boundary of consent, and a vision of what institutions must recognise.

The Christian claim is not that believers alone possess every fact. It is that every fact belongs within a reality created and judged by God. Secular institutions may discover much truth through common grace. They become untruthful when they present their philosophical exclusions as the inevitable conclusion of evidence.

Five Biblical Texts for a Formed People

The governing texts of this chapter do not supply a modern theory of media or higher education. They do something more fundamental. They reveal what a human being is, how love is formed, how truth is remembered, how believers may live within alien institutions, how conformity operates, and how attention must be disciplined.

Deuteronomy 6: Education Begins with the Lord

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 stands within Moses' covenant instruction to a people preparing to enter the land. The command follows the rehearsal of God's law and precedes warnings against forgetting Him in prosperity. Its educational logic has six movements.

First, reality is theocentric: "The LORD our God, the LORD is one." Education does not begin with the learner's preference, the state's need, or the market's demand. It begins with the God who is.

Second, knowledge seeks love. The command is not merely to recognise God's existence but to love Him wholly. Biblical education cannot be satisfied with orthodox vocabulary in an unchanged heart.

Third, the Word must first be upon the adult's heart. Parents cannot faithfully repeat what they do not cherish. Teachers cannot form students in truth through techniques alone. The instructor is part of the curriculum.

Fourth, instruction is diligent and conversational. It occurs in movement and rest, routine and transition. The family does not wait for a crisis before speaking about God.

Fifth, formation is embodied and environmental. Hand, forehead, doorpost, and gate locate God's Word within action, perception, home, and public threshold. Whether the commands refer literally to physical signs, as later Jewish practice expressed them, or also symbolically to comprehensive obedience, the text rejects a faith confined to one sacred corner.

Sixth, remembrance protects freedom. Israel's greatest educational danger was not lack of information but forgetfulness after blessing. A prosperous people could inhabit houses they had not built and slowly imagine that their life came from themselves (**Deuteronomy 6:10-12**). The modern credential can perform the same deception: "My intelligence, network, and effort produced this life." Education beneath Scripture teaches gratitude and stewardship.

Psalms 1: Counsel Becomes a Path

Psalms 1:1-6 opens the Psalter by setting two ways before the worshipper. The blessed life is defined negatively by refused counsel and positively by delighted meditation. The verbs walk, stand, and sit describe more than accidental contact. They portray moral settlement.

Counsel is interpretive. It tells the person what events mean and what response is wise. Media commentary, peer norms, institutional policy, entertainment, and professional training all provide counsel. The believer may hear them, but must not let them become the unquestioned frame through which God's Word is judged.

Meditation is the counter-practice. It is not emptying the mind or repeating a phrase to manipulate reality. It is sustained engagement with God's instruction until perception and action are ordered by it. The tree's fruit appears "in its season." Formation is patient. A generation trained by rapid response may despise slow roots, yet biblical maturity cannot be downloaded.

The wicked are compared to chaff. Chaff is light, mobile, and governed by wind. Cultural adaptability may be valuable, but a person with no settled moral weight becomes highly governable. The stronger the wind of professional pressure, public shame, economic fear, or popular desire, the farther the chaff travels.

Daniel 1: Excellence Without Assimilation

Daniel 1:1-21 refuses the false choice between intellectual excellence and covenant fidelity. The young men learn the empire's language and literature. Their knowledge is not portrayed as contamination in itself. God gives learning. Yet they establish a boundary where participation would mean defilement.

Daniel's method matters. He determines inwardly, speaks respectfully, proposes an accountable alternative, and accepts testing. His courage is neither performative outrage nor silent compliance. He does not need Babylon's approval to know God's will, but he seeks peaceful accommodation before confrontation.

The story also teaches providence. The Lord had already delivered Judah into Babylonian hands (**Daniel 1:2**), gave Daniel favour (**Daniel 1:9**), and gave the young men knowledge (**Daniel 1:17**). The empire is powerful but not

sovereign. Christians in secular institutions need not behave as though faithfulness depends entirely upon institutional control.

Romans 12: Conformity Is Formation

Romans 12:1-2 follows eleven chapters of God's mercy in creation, judgment, justification, union with Christ, the Spirit, Israel, and divine purpose. Paul therefore appeals "by the mercies of God." Christian transformation is not self-improvement purchased through discipline. It is the embodied response of those who have received mercy.

The body is presented as a living sacrifice. Worship includes ordinary embodied life. What the eyes watch, the hands produce, the mouth repeats, the mind rehearses, and the worker performs belong to worship. There is no neutral zone in which entertainment or employment lies beyond discipleship.

"Do not be conformed to this age" identifies pressure toward a pattern. Conformity may occur through law and threat, but also through aspiration, imitation, repetition, and convenience. The age does not need to argue every person into rebellion. It can make rebellion feel normal and obedience feel socially unintelligible.

Transformation occurs through the renewing of the mind, enabling believers to discern God's good, pleasing, and perfect will. Renewal is not anti-rational. It restores reason beneath revelation and through the Spirit. Discernment is learned judgment, not mere instinct. The renewed person can enter complex institutions, recognise partial goods, reject false ultimates, and act faithfully where no simplistic rule answers every detail.

Philippians 4: Attention Must Be Governed

Philippians 4:8-9 appears in a letter shaped by imprisonment, gospel conflict, suffering, partnership, and joy. Paul's command to dwell upon what is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, morally excellent, and praiseworthy is not therapeutic avoidance. It is disciplined moral attention within a dangerous world.

The list is neither permission to call attractive falsehood lovely nor an invitation to consume only pleasant material. Truth governs the other qualities. A documentary exposing abuse may be painful yet honourable and just. A beautiful film may be morally corrupt. A Christian must judge the whole.

Paul joins thought to imitation: "Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me." Formation is personal. The credibility of a teacher's life matters. The church cannot answer the age merely with content. It needs visible communities in which truth has become practice.

Together, these five passages establish a biblical account of formation. God is the centre. Love is the aim. Memory resists forgetfulness. Attention is stewarded. Institutions are inhabited without worshipping them. The body participates in worship. Wisdom appears in practice. This is a far richer account of education than information transfer.

What Secular Catechesis Produces

The consequences of institutional formation are not uniform or inevitable. People resist, convert, mature, and learn from contradictions. Yet repeated patterns have consequences.

The first is fragmentation of authority. A person may confess biblical faith while allowing the university to define knowledge, therapy to define the self, entertainment to define love, advertising to define success, and the workplace to define worth. Christ remains Lord in language but governs no integrated domain.

The second is the privatisation of conviction. Faith is permitted as inward meaning but not as knowledge capable of evaluating public assumptions. The believer learns to translate moral truth into acceptable therapeutic or managerial language. Over time, the translation becomes the belief.

The third is weakened attention. Constant stimulation makes sustained reading, prayer, listening, and contemplation difficult. The issue is not simply reduced concentration. A distracted person becomes dependent upon whoever controls interruption.

The fourth is moral habituation without conscious decision. What once caused shame becomes comic, then familiar, then expected, then required for social belonging. The process does not prove that every change is wrong. It shows why moral revolutions often occur through representation and routine before formal argument catches up.

The fifth is credential worship. Persons learn to trust titles without examining truth, and to distrust wisdom that lacks institutional recognition. Expertise is either idolised or, after betrayal, rejected completely. Both responses are immature. The faithful posture honours competence while testing every claim.

The sixth is productivity-based worth. Workers, students, athletes, and creators internalise the belief that rest must be earned, failure erases dignity, and visibility proves significance. The weak, disabled, elderly, unemployed, or academically unsuccessful are treated as diminished persons. This contradicts creation in God's image.

The seventh is sexual commodification. Desire is separated from covenant and directed through images, markets, and identities. Persons become bodies to evaluate, products to purchase, or audiences to attract. Shame and loneliness may deepen even where explicit liberation is proclaimed.

The eighth is family abdication. Parents assume schools will teach values, platforms will entertain safely, experts will interpret development, and churches will repair whatever remains. Institutions then receive formative authority without the relational knowledge or covenant responsibility of a household.

The ninth is ecclesial imitation. Churches borrow audience logic, therapeutic speech, celebrity aspiration, customer retention, and event intensity from the culture. They complain about secular catechesis while reproducing its liturgies.

The tenth is eschatological sleep. A person occupied continuously by career, consumption, controversy, sexuality, entertainment, and self-display may affirm Christ's return while living as though history ends in the next upgrade. The lamp is not empty because the believer lacked information about prophecy. It is empty because love was trained elsewhere.

A Christian Counter-Catechesis

The church cannot answer formation only with denunciation. It must build practices through which truth becomes believable, lovely, habitual, embodied, and communal. Counter-catechesis does not mean counter-propaganda. It refuses manipulation and trains discernment.

Families as Communities of Truth

Households should recover regular Scripture reading, prayer, conversation, hospitality, work, rest, confession, and service. The goal is not a perfect religious performance. It is a life in which children see that God's Word interprets money, conflict, sexuality, failure, study, suffering, and joy.

Parents should explain persuasion. Children can learn why advertisements connect products to identity, why stories invite sympathy, why influencers disclose sponsorship, why photographs are curated, and why a recommendation system repeats certain content. Media literacy is not cynicism. It is disciplined understanding.

Protection must be age-appropriate. Devices should not be placed in children's private spaces without accountability. Filters may help but cannot replace relationship. Rules should be explained, consistent, and modelled by adults. A parent who demands device restraint while remaining continuously distracted teaches hypocrisy.

Single parents and economically pressured families should not be shamed by ideals designed for households with abundant time. Churches can provide shared meals, mentoring, reading programmes, safe childcare, libraries, tutoring, and intergenerational support. The command to disciple children belongs to families, but the covenant community bears burdens together.

Churches as Schools of Holy Attention

The gathered church should recover substantial Scripture reading, expository preaching, doctrinal instruction, prayer, singing rich in truth, the Lord's Supper, testimony that can be examined, church discipline, mercy, and intergenerational fellowship. These are not entertainment alternatives. They are Spirit-given practices through which Christ forms His body.

Catechesis must include adults. Many believers possess strong opinions and weak doctrine. Churches should teach creation, fall, covenant, Christ, atonement, resurrection, the Spirit, church, work, sexuality, suffering, death, judgment, and hope as one coherent story. A verse attached to a motivational message cannot withstand a rival worldview that speaks every day.

Silence and attention should be recovered. Not every moment of worship needs sound. Not every sermon needs visual stimulation. Not every ministry needs a platform. The congregation must learn again that God is present when no spectacle occurs.

Churches should support educators, artists, journalists, scholars, entrepreneurs, and workers as missionaries in vocation without turning every job into a preaching opportunity. They need theological formation, ethical counsel, prayer, and communities where conscience conflicts can be discussed without panic.

Schools and Universities Under the Word

Christian institutions should articulate a clear philosophy of education. What is truth? What is the human person? What is knowledge for? What virtues should the institution cultivate? How does each discipline relate to creation and neighbour-love? How are dissent and evidence handled? How are leaders held accountable?

Curricula should unite intellectual rigour, practical competence, moral formation, and vocation. Mission-Driven Learning Theory offers one constructive framework by ordering competence toward calling, formation, stewardship, and responsible contribution (Sangwa & Mutabazi, 2026). Such teleology must remain under Scripture so that “mission” does not become self-invented ambition.

Assessment should measure what it can without pretending to measure the whole person. Institutions should resist grade inflation, plagiarism, token biblical integration, and customer logic. Student voice matters, but satisfaction cannot become the final judge of truth.

Faculty development should include both disciplinary excellence and Christian worldview formation. A lecturer cannot integrate what he has never examined. Institutions should also welcome external scrutiny, publish standards, protect complainants, and refuse to use spiritual language to conceal academic or financial weakness.

Artists, Journalists, and Creators as Stewards of Imagination

Christian creators should pursue excellence rather than imitation with religious labels. They may portray darkness honestly, but should not eroticise evil, reward cruelty, or make nihilism appear profound merely because it is fashionable. Beauty should not become sentimentality. Truth can be severe and still be beautiful.

Journalists should verify, distinguish report from commentary, correct errors publicly, protect vulnerable sources, and resist the pressure to convert every event into outrage. Christian media should not answer mainstream distortion with rumours, anonymous claims, or manipulated images. False witness remains sin when it serves a righteous cause.

Influencers and public teachers should disclose commercial relationships, avoid manufactured intimacy, respect privacy, and keep metrics under judgment. A platform is a stewardship, not proof of anointing.

Workplaces Ordered Toward Human Service

Christian employers should design systems that honour persons, pay justly, explain metrics, protect rest, welcome truthful dissent, and distinguish genuine inclusion from compelled ideological affirmation. Workers should not be treated as families when the language of family is used to demand unlimited sacrifice. An employment relationship has real duties and boundaries.

Christian workers should perform with excellence, avoid gossip, refuse corruption, honour lawful authority, and resist career idolatry. They should develop competence so that conscience is not used to excuse poor work. When conflict becomes unavoidable, they should speak truthfully and accept cost without hatred.

Leisure as Gratitude

Believers should receive recreation as gift. Establish rhythms in which devices stop, bodies move, meals are shared, creation is observed, books are read, and relationships are not converted into content. The aim is not puritan suspicion of pleasure. It is freedom to enjoy a gift without being mastered by it.

Repentance in the Institutions of Formation

To the educator: Your task is larger than covering content. Students learn what you love, what you fear, how you handle evidence, and whether truth matters when it costs. Do not manipulate them toward your politics, denomination, or personality. Teach with intellectual honesty. Protect questions. Refuse both relativism and coercion. Let competence become service.

To the scholar: A citation count cannot bear your soul. Do not edit evidence to please a funder, flatter a theory, or secure promotion. Retract error. Acknowledge uncertainty. Read opponents fairly. The God of truth is not honoured by impressive fraud.

To the institutional leader: The hidden curriculum is often written in what you reward. Do not publish values that your promotion systems contradict. Protect the vulnerable before the brand. Treat data as a servant. Funding that purchases silence is too expensive.

To the Christian school or university: A cross on the wall will not sanctify a secular telos. Repent of token integration, academic weakness, spiritual intimidation, and prestige worship. Form people who can serve because they know whose world they inhabit.

To the artist and entertainer: Imagination is not morally weightless. You may awaken compassion or train appetite; expose evil or make it attractive; honour the body or commodify it. Skill increases responsibility. Place the gift beneath the Giver.

To the journalist and media worker: Do not make fear your business model. Do not conceal complexity because outrage travels faster. Tell the truth when your audience dislikes it. Correct publicly what you published publicly.

To the advertiser and entrepreneur: Do not study insecurity only to exploit it. Sell real value honestly. Children are not markets first. Customers are neighbours. A profitable lie remains a lie.

To the celebrity and influencer: You are not the person your audience imagines, and they are not merely engagement. Stop selling intimacy you cannot give. Do not sacrifice family, conscience, or truth to remain visible. Obscurity under Christ is safer than fame without Him.

To the person using pornography: Secrecy is teaching you to live divided. The shame that says “hide” is not the voice of the Saviour who says “come into the light.” Confess to God, seek wise accountability, remove access, honour those harmed, and receive qualified care where compulsion is present. Christ does not merely forgive the gaze. He can teach the eyes to see persons again.

To the person exploited in sexual media: What was done to you, or what you entered and now regret, does not remove your dignity. You are not reducible to an image in circulation. Seek safety, lawful help where crime occurred, trustworthy pastoral care, and patient healing. The church must not consume your story as another spectacle.

To the worker under pressure: Do not confuse every discomfort with persecution, but do not sell conscience for salary. Learn the policy. Seek counsel. Speak respectfully. Document carefully. Pray for those who oppose you. Christ remains Lord when opportunity closes.

To the employer: Workers are not instruments of your ambition. Pay what is owed. Do not baptise overwork as commitment. Do not demand loyalty you have not earned. Your authority is temporary and judged.

To parents: You cannot outsource the soul of your child. Schools, platforms, peers, and entertainment will teach. Begin early, remain present, admit your own failures, and make home a place where difficult questions can be spoken. Do not require children to perform a faith they have never seen embodied.

To churches: Stop blaming schools for forming children you rarely disciple. Stop condemning entertainment while building services around spectacle. Stop preaching against the world while rewarding the same fame, wealth, and emotional intensity. Recover the Word, prayer, holiness, the Lord's Table, accountable shepherding, and patient formation.

To the faithful educator, artist, parent, worker, and student who feels alone: Your quiet obedience is not wasted. Daniel served before kings, but much of faithfulness occurs without public recognition. Christ sees the lesson prepared honestly, the image refused, the child heard patiently, the report corrected, the bribe rejected, and the prayer offered before work. Hidden faithfulness belongs to the kingdom that cannot be shaken.

The Last Lesson Before Midnight

The last second before midnight is a moral and spiritual image, not a timetable. No one knows the day or hour ([Matthew 24:36](#)). Yet Scripture commands watchfulness because Christ's return is certain and because every generation can be overtaken by sleep.

Readiness is not achieved by consuming more alarming content. A person may identify every institutional agenda and remain unready because he lies, watches impurity, neglects his family, exploits workers, loves money, and refuses forgiveness. Discernment without repentance becomes another form of pride.

The parable of the ten virgins places preparation before the sudden arrival of the bridegroom ([Matthew 25:1-13](#)). The oil is not purchased through visibility, credentials, entertainment, or institutional acceptance. The Bride is made ready through union with Christ, faith in His finished work, repentance, the indwelling Spirit, holiness, truth, love, and perseverance.

Secular catechesis matters eschatologically because habits become loyalties. The person who repeatedly learns that comfort is highest will find costly obedience unreasonable. The person trained to require public approval will find faithful exclusion unbearable. The person taught that the institution defines reality will struggle when the institution calls darkness light. The person trained by pornography to consume bodies will not suddenly understand covenant love through prophetic information. The person who cannot surrender a device may overestimate his readiness to surrender status, income, or safety.

Rapture readiness therefore reaches the ordinary week. It concerns what the family repeats, what the student admires, what the worker refuses, what the artist makes lovely, what the church rewards, and what the mind dwells upon when no one is watching.

Christ does not call His people to panic. He calls them to wakefulness. The One who is coming is the same Lord who died for sinners and rose bodily from the grave. His return is terror to unrepentant rebellion and hope to those who love His appearing. The answer to captivity is not fear of institutions but freedom in the Son.

Conclusion: When Formation Becomes Policy

Chapter 17 showed that unity becomes counterfeit when truth is silenced so that incompatible religions may appear spiritually equivalent. This chapter has shown how the person is prepared for that silence long before entering an interfaith gathering. Schools define legitimate knowledge. Media frame sympathy. Entertainment trains desire. Advertising names success. Pornography schools the gaze. Celebrity teaches aspiration. Workplaces reward approved performances. None of these institutions is uniformly evil, and no single hidden committee is required for their influence to converge.

The Christian response is neither surrender nor withdrawal. It is a people formed by the Word, excellent in learning, honest in evidence, courageous in conscience, creative in culture, faithful in work, grateful in leisure, protective of children, and ready for Christ.

Yet formation does not remain private. The categories learned in classrooms, screens, workplaces, and cultural institutions become the vocabulary through which power speaks. Definitions of dignity, justice, harm, identity, freedom, rights, development, and progress eventually enter law, government, policy, funding, and international cooperation. A population formed to receive those categories will experience political enforcement not as a new religion but as common sense.

The next chapter therefore turns from the institutions that train consciousness to the powers that organise society through moral and political claims. Chapter 19 examines political religion, human-rights ideology, identity-based justice, nationalism, donor conditionality, development systems, and global institutional pressure. The school teaches the grammar. The screen gives it emotional force. The workplace rewards its performance. Political power then writes the lesson into public order.

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