

**A
BATTLE
FOR THE
MIND**

The CHRISTIAN *and* EDUCATION

R.C. SPROUL

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The Christian and Education

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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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The Myth of Neutral Education

HAVE YOU EVER FELT a concern for what your children are learning in school? If you haven't, it may be because you assume that the school system to which you are giving your children is the same school system of which you were a part when you were a child. Growing up, I went to the local public school, which was right in the center of our community. The same people who taught in the classroom every day were in our church on Sunday morning. Our music teacher was the choir director of our local church. There wasn't a sense of conflict between what we were learning on Sunday and what we were learning during the rest of the week. Our public school wasn't a Sunday school class by any means, but at

least there wasn't open hostility toward what we learned on Sunday.

We might assume that if that system was good enough for us, it certainly should be good enough for our children and for our grandchildren. Yet the college that I graduated from is not the same today as it was when I went there. The high school that I attended is not the same today as it was when I went there. The rules have changed, and we need to be acutely aware of that. Great controversies and debates are happening every day in Washington, D.C., with respect to education, and the subject is very much on the minds of parents in general and Christian parents in particular.

In World War II, the countries that sided with America were called the Allied Powers, while those that sided with Germany were called the Axis Powers. We usually think of Adolf Hitler as the bad guy of World War II, but he wasn't the only bad guy. In the European theater of the war, the leader of Italy was a collaborator with Hitler: Benito Mussolini.

One of the most vivid memories from my childhood was of a photograph on the front page of the Pittsburgh papers the day after Mussolini died. His body had been hung upside down in the town square, and the people came and spat on him and kicked him in the face. This mutilation of a human being was the most grotesque picture I had seen in my young life. So much hatred and venom were spilled out against

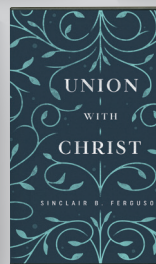
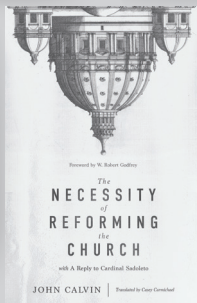
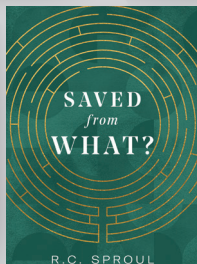
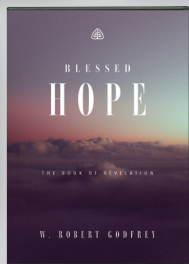
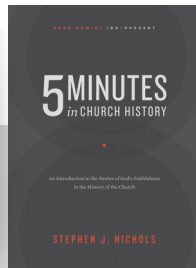
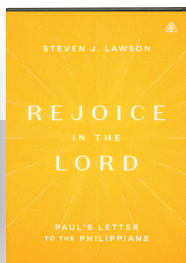
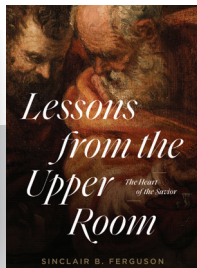
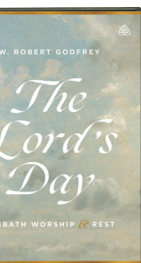
Mussolini. Yet when he rose to power, he had been revered as a great leader, and the people put great hopes in what he would do for the nation. He was given the title *Il Duce*, which means “the leader.”

Il Duce corresponded to the German *Der Führer*, with both titles carrying the idea of ultimate leadership. The Italian language is probably the closest modern language to ancient Latin, and the word *duce* comes from the Latin *ducere*, which means “to lead” or “to draw.” The prefix *e-* gives us *educere*, meaning “to draw out” or “to lead forth,” from which we get the English *educate*. Etymologically, education is concerned with some kind of leading.

Classically, education was seen as a process whereby people who possess a certain volume of knowledge share that knowledge with people who don’t have it. In the process of education, the teacher is the leader and the student is the one being led out of the darkness of ignorance into enlightenment.

This image of light and darkness as figures for knowledge and ignorance is frequently found in the Scriptures, but it was by no means limited to the Hebraic view. We find it in other ancient cultures as well, particularly in the Greek world. One of the most famous parables of the ancient world was Plato’s allegory of the cave. It tells of people who were chained up inside a cave, and the only available light was from a fire

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