

Worldly Amusement and Christianity

by Catherine Booth

Christians should separate from worldly amusements and live a holy life, as they are contrary to the Christian character.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 7:6, Isaiah 3:16, John 15:19, Acts 1:4, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 6:17, Ephesians 5:19, 1 Timothy 2:9, James 4:4, 1 Peter 3:3

Topics: "Separation From World", "Spiritual Authenticity"

Description

Catherine Booth addresses the dilemma faced by Christians regarding participation in worldly amusements, emphasizing the need for a clear separation from the world and a commitment to holiness. She explores the scriptural basis for avoiding conformity to worldly customs, highlighting the call to be separate and the incompatibility of worldliness with true discipleship. Catherine challenges the prevailing notion of compromising with the world to attract the unconverted, asserting that the power of the Gospel lies in spiritual authenticity and not in worldly expediency. She urges Christians to prioritize spiritual power over human tactics, emphasizing the necessity of living a life distinct from the world and relying on the Holy Spirit for true influence and conversion.

Transcript

WE are constantly meeting with persons in perplexity as to how far they may participate in worldly amusements without compromising their Christian profession. Many confess having been for years in controversy on the subject of attending or assisting at concerts, penny readings, and gatherings of a similar though more private and social character, and not a few have admitted having suffered spiritual loss and declension through being mixed up with such entertainments. On this question there seems to be amongst the Lord's professing people a sad indefiniteness of view. Indeed, many appear to have no settled convictions on the subject. Hence, we fear, arises much of the abounding worldliness, that prevails in the Church, and hence the extinction of the demarcation line between so many thousands of the professing Christians of our day and the ungodly throngs around them.

We propose briefly in this paper to consider, first, is it lawful, and secondly, is it expedient for CHRISTIANS either to provide or attend such entertainments as penny readings, concerts, private theatricals and the like?

I. Is it lawful? To the law and to the testimony. What saith the Scriptures? "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all the

people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. vii. 6). "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine" (Lev. xx. 26). "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. xii. 2). "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John xv. 19). "For all that is in the world, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John ii. 16). "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye SEPARATE, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. vi. 17-18). "Whosoever therefore will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James iv. 4).

We presume that all Christians attach SOME meaning to such passages as these; but one says they do not apply to this worldly custom, and another says they do not apply to that, until, as in the case of the Mahometan pig, the whole is swallowed, and every worldly-minded professor manages to get the piece he likes best, or which appears most to his interest: thus the law of Christ is frittered away, and the whole body of His professing Church given over to the god of this world. What then is the conformity to, and friendship with, the world, which these and a host of similar passages prohibit? In other words, what is worldliness?

We reply-1st. We take that to be worldly which professes to be so. Neither men nor things are, as a rule, better than they profess to be.

2nd. We take that to be worldly which, in sentiment and spirit, the children of the world love, esteem, and enjoy.

3rd. We count whatever has no reference to God, righteousness, or eternity, which "savoureth not of the things of God," as worldly.

4th. Everything that is adverse in spirit to the dignity, gravity, and usefulness of the Christian character we regard as worldly.

It seems to us that these propositions are so self-evident, that no thoughtful Christian can gainsay them. Some professors seem to regard nothing as worldly which is not absolutely devilish, such as profanity, blasphemy, or obscenity. But the Scriptures carefully and clearly distinguish between the two. They prohibit Christians conforming to the world in the habits and usages of daily life.

They are not to talk like the world, in the way of foolish jesting," "swelling words," &c. But, on the contrary, their conversation is to "be seasoned with salt," meet to "minister grace to the hearers." It is to be "Pure," proceeding from "a good" (not a doubtful) "conscience." It is to be "in heaven, from whence we look for the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Scriptures prohibit Christians dressing like the world. "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel" (1 Peter iii. 3). "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but, which becometh women professing godliness, with good works" (1 Tim. ii. 9, 10). "Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go: therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion" (Isa. iii. 16, 17). We commend this

whole chapter to the consideration of all whom it may concern, and we would suggest that as the Lord Jehovah regarded the dress of those Israelitish women as a sign of their backslidden condition, and thought it sufficiently important to be recorded by His holy prophet, it may be well for us to consider how far the same signs are manifest amongst us in our day.

The Scriptures prohibit Christians singing the songs of the world, for they expressly enjoin that when they are merry or glad they are to sing psalms and make melody in their heart UNTO THE LORD.

The Scriptures prohibit Christians from joining in the amusements of the world; forbidding any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, commanding to abstain from the very appearance of evil, and TO COME OUT FROM AMONGST THE UNGODLY AND BE SEPARATE; and our Lord declared that his real disciples were not of the world, even as he was not of the world.

Now in the light of these Scriptures, and of the propositions we have laid down, let us examine the character of some of the entertainments so popular with many professing Christians. We find that it is no uncommon thing for entertainments to be held in private drawing-rooms and in rooms connected with churches and chapels, over which ministers and leading men in churches preside, at which Shakespearian readings are given, with extracts from the works of the most popular and worldly novelists, and the same songs sung as are echoed and applauded in the public house and the dancing-room.

Now, viewed in the light of the Scriptures we have quoted and tried by the propositions we have drawn from them, how do these practices strike you, Christian reader?

1st. Are they not professedly worldly? Do they not savour of the world, all of the world, and of the world only? Were not the authors of the things said and sung at such entertainments thoroughly Christless men, and some of them professed infidels?

2nd. Are not these the songs and sentiments which worldlings have always claimed as their own? Are they not sung in their ball-rooms, theatres, and casinos? And is not this proof enough that they are congenial to their tastes, and in keeping with their spirit?

3rd. Such songs, recitations, and performances have no reference whatever to God, righteousness, or eternity. God is not only "not in all their thoughts," but he is not in any of them, therefore they must be thoroughly worldly.

4th. The spirit of such amusements is manifestly adverse to the dignity, gravity, and usefulness of the Christian character. What are its effects? Lightness, foolish jesting, a false estimate of creature delights, obtuseness to spiritual things, and frequently uproarious merriment and godless mirth.

We put it to any Christian who has ever allowed himself to take part in such amusements whether these are not their inevitable and bitter fruits, and whether he has not found their spirit to be utterly antagonistic to the spirit of Christ? We have heard many backsliders in heart attribute their declension to mingling in such scenes of folly and frivolity, and we never met with one whom we had reason to believe had been renewed in the spirit of his mind who could say he could enter into them without condemnation.

Doubtless there are thousands of professing Christians who live in perpetual strife with their consciences and with the Holy Spirit on this subject; and verily they have their reward. Trying to hold Christ in one hand and the world in the other, they lose both. They have no joy in their godless amusements, neither have they any joy in the Lord. All is darkness, condemnation, and death. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know

ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? "

The testimony of the Word is too explicit, and the voice of the Spirit too clear, for any child of God to err for want of light if he will but listen to his Divine counsellor. But, alas! Too many seek to silence His voice by vain and worldly reasoning, lowering the standard which He has given them because somebody else does so. They do not hear him saying, "What is that to thee? follow thou Me." "Love not the world, neither the things of the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him.'?"

Not only is the testimony of the Word and of the Spirit against these amusements, but the testimony and example of the most devoted and intelligent Christians, of all ages have been against them. The following are a few extracts bearing on the subject:

" There is no earthly pleasure which has not the inseparable attendance of grief--and that following it as closely as Jacob came after Esau. Yea, worldly delight is but a shadow; and when we catch after it, all that we grasp is substantial sorrow in its room. The honey should not be very delightful, when the sting is so near."--Alleine.

"If there be any sorceress upon earth it is Pleasure; which so enchanteth the minds of men, and worketh the disturbance of our peace with such secret delight, that foolish men think this want of tranquility happiness. She turneth man into swine with such sweet charms, that they would not change their brutish nature for their former reason."--Bishop Hall.

"Consider, this is not the season that should be for pleasure! The Apostle James lays it as a great charge upon many in his time, that they lived in pleasure on earth. This is the time to do the great business for which we were born."--Ambrose.

"How often shall it be protested to the Christian world, by men of the greatest seriousness and devotion, that it is vain to dream of entering the kingdom of heaven hereafter, except the kingdom of heaven enter into their souls in this life! How long shall the Son of God, who came into the world to be the most glorious example of purity, self-denial, and mortification--How long shall He be by in his word as an antiquated pattern, only cut out for the Apostolic ages, and only suited to some few morose and melancholy men? With what face can we pretend to true religion, or a feeling acquaintance with God, and the things of His kingdom, whilst the continual bleatings and lowings of our souls after creature good betray us so manifestly, and proclaim before all the world, that the beast, the brutish life, is still so powerful in us?"--Shaw.

"I would, that you should use this world as not abusing it, that you should be crucified to the world, and the world to you, that you should declare plainly that you seek a better country, which is an heavenly. Ah! my dear brethren, I beseech you carry it like pilgrims and strangers, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; FOR WHAT HAVE WE TO DO with the customs and fashions of this world, who are strangers in it? Be contented with travellers' lots; know you not that you are in a strange land?"--Joseph Alleine's Letters.

"I would dissuade thee from unnecessary society of ungodly men, and unprofitable companions, though they be not so apparently ungodly. It is not only the openly profane, the swearer, the drunkard, that will prove hurtful to us; but dead-hearted formalists, or persons merely civil and moral, or whose conference is empty, unsavory, and barren, may much divert our thoughts from heaven. As mere idleness and forgetting God will keep a soul as certainly from heaven as a profane licentious life; so also will useless company as

surely keep our hearts from heaven."--Baxter.

"In speaking of the laws and limits of recreation, observe generally, that whatever is offensive to God, whatever is injurious to others, whatever is hurtful, whether remotely or proximately to our own soul or body, is evil; to be avoided in ourselves and to be condemned in others. The principles involved in the foregoing remarks will answer the queries so frequently put. Is it right to frequent a theatre? To attend the ball-room? To sit at the card table? To mingle indiscriminately in gay and fashionable society? The study of the Bible quotations so largely made will furnish a reply. Read and you will know."--Samuel Martin.

"I bade farewell for ever,' says, Madame Guyon, 'to assemblies which I had visited, to plays and diversions, dancing, unprofitable walks, and parties of pleasure. The amusements and pleasures, so much prized and esteemed by the world, now appeared to me dull and insipid--so much so, that I wondered how I ever could have enjoyed them.'"--Madame Guyon.

"I heard also that this new clergyman preached against all my favourite diversions, such as going to plays, reading novels, attending balls, assemblies, card tables, &c.

"I asked, 'Is it true that he preaches against dancing?' I said I was resolved to take the first opportunity of conversing with him, being certain I could easily prove such amusements were not sinful. Being told what arguments he made use of, I revolved them in my mind, fully determined if I found upon reflection I could answer them, I would.

"I first considered if any Scripture example could be brought . . . but found nothing there which countenanced dancing in any measure. I then began to consider the objections urged against it. One of them was, that as it tends to lively and trifling mirth, so it enervates the mind, dissipates the thoughts, weakens if not stifles serious and good impressions, and quite indisposes the mind for prayer. I asked in my own mind, Is not this a truth? Conscience answered in the affirmative." After much controversy, consideration, and prayer, she says: "For my own part I was conscious that it led me to dress and expenses not suited to my present situation in life. These thoughts brought powerful convictions to my mind, notwithstanding my desire to resist them. I could not deny that truth, in particular, that those who habitually attend such pleasures lose all relish for spiritual things. God is shut out of their thoughts and hearts; prayer, if they use any, is full of wanderings, or perhaps, wholly neglected; and death put as far as possible out of sight, lest the thought should spoil their pleasure."--Mrs. Rogers.

Did our space permit we could give hundreds of quotations of similar bearing by such writers as Augustine, Thomas a'Kempis, Luther, Knox, Howe, Leighton, Newton, Cecil, Henry, Locke, Bunyan, Whitfield, Wesley, Clarke, Barnes, Steir, Doddridge, Young, and others. But our space prevents the calling of these witnesses. Christian reader, let those we have called suffice.

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as Re which hath called you is holy, so ye be holy in all manner of conversation."

II. We come now to the question of expediency.

The principal arguments brought forward by Christians in favour of providing and attending worldly amusements are--1st. Seeing that our young people will have amusement, it is better to provide them with that which is moral and comparatively innocent, than to drive them to that which is positively vicious.

2nd. Seeing that we cannot get hold of the unconverted by the Gospel, it is better to meet them half way, and try, as it were, to catch them by guile.

These arguments look very plausible: let us honestly consider them in the light of Scripture and actual experience.

1st. On whose behalf are they urged? Are the young people referred to the children of Christian parents, or the children of votaries of this world? If the latter, we reply that Christians are nowhere taught, either directly or indirectly, that it is any part of their duty to provide amusement for the children of this world; nay, the direct teaching and the whole tenor of Scripture go to prove that it is their duty to seek to alarm and convict them. There is not a line in the whole Bible on which an argument can be built for amusing people while yet in their sins. The Scriptures ever represent the unconverted as under condemnation, in imminent danger, ready to be destroyed, a state rendering them far more fit objects for pity, concern, and earnest Christian effort than for amusement. To keep them amused and self-satisfied is just what Satan desires) and all the better for his purpose if he can get it done by professed Christians.

Well, but, say some of our expediency friends, if by getting unconverted young people to attend our penny readings, moral concerts, and private parties, where dancing, charades, and such like pastimes are practised, we can show them that religion is not such a melancholy thing as they have Imagined, and that to become Christians need not exclude them from such recreations, may we not hope so to induce them to attend our sanctuaries, and thus get them converted by our more direct Christian instrumentalities? We answer, IF you could thus promote good by doing evil, the end would fail to justify the means, for God says, "to obey is better than sacrifice;" but there is the if still undisposed of. We ask, does this worldly policy succeed? Do your evening parties, your miniature pantomimes, dancing, and song singing, lead to the conversion of "Our young people?" Do the hotch-potch mixtures of Christ and Shakespeare, Paul and Dickens of our times, serve to fill our sanctuaries, and bring the people to Jesus? Nay, verily; the crowds who will go fast enough to hear their favourite songs and flippant rhymes piped through the instruments of the temple on the week night, remorselessly leave those who have stooped to pander to their taste to chant the songs of Zion to empty pews on the Sabbath.

But supposing that in some instances worldlings are won by these means, what of all the mischief that is done? These amusements are pleaded for on the ground that they will save our young people from those of a vicious and immoral character, but we contend that they are quite as likely, in many instances, to pave the way to the vicious, as in others to save from it. They will do this:

1st. By throwing over that which is purely sensuous and godless, and therefore sinful, the sanctity of association with Christ and religion.

2nd. By lowering the standard of the purity and sanctity of the Christian character.

3rd. By destroying the respect and awe with which many of the unconverted have been accustomed to regard Christianity and Christian Ministers.

4th. By begetting a sense of security in sin, leading them to say, 'We cannot be so very far wrong, or these Christians would not associate with us, and find pleasure in our amusements. There is not so much difference between us after all. We fear that by these and similar means, the half-awakened conscience of many a young man and woman has been silenced, and their hearts hardened; and instead of being won from vice, they have been driven faster into it. Alas, who can tell the convictions that are stifled, the

serious impressions that are lost, the good resolutions that are scattered, and the heavenly aspirations that are blasted in these religious pantomimes, these Christian-Belial festivities! Many sad stories come out, but eternity alone will reveal their full and awful consequences.

But the argument of expediency is not only urged on behalf of our unconverted young people, but (O tell it not in Gath!) also on behalf of the children of professing Christians! 'What are we to do?' say some professedly Christian parents. 'Our children must have recreation and amusement, and unless we allow them to mingle to some extent in fashionable society, and attend such parties as you refer to, we must needs keep them out of society altogether, and make recluses of them, for all our Christian friends patronise such entertainments, and consider them innocent and lawful.' If this be true, we reply, that it reveals more clearly than anything we could say, the backslidden and awful state of the professing Church, and calls loudly for some attempt to stem the tide of worldly conformity, while there remains a spark of spiritual life in her midst.

Alas, and has it come to pass that there is no strictly Christian social intercourse and enjoyment? Have the topics of our glorious Christianity become so stale and uninteresting? Have the themes of Gospel enterprise and individual effort lost all their inspiration? Have the songs of Zion lost their enchanting and inspiring influence? Has the voice of social prayer become quite silent? Has every spark of real enthusiasm in religion gone out, that when Christians want to find INTEREST and ENJOYMENT, they must seek it in themes and things peculiarly belonging to the god of this world, and his votaries? Has it come to pass that Christians have so little confidence in the God of the Bible, and the religion of Jesus, that they must seek an alliance between Christ and the world in order to interest their children and save them from open profligacy and vice? If so, how does this reflect on themselves? What sort of training does it imply? Have they trained their sons and daughters so truly in the spirit of the world, under the garb of a religious profession, that nothing but the most sensuous amusements of worldlings (who make any pretence to morality) will satisfy them? Has it come to pass that the children of CHRISTIANS must dress like harlots, dance, sing songs, read novels, attend concerts, where worldly and even comic songs are sung, evoking uproarious laughter and unseemly jests? and all this for their amusement; their parents, and even ministers, looking on, and striving by the most blind and wicked perversion of the word of God, to justify their worldliness and salve their consciences? ALAS, IT HAS COME TO THIS! "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

Well, I think I hear sortie Christian say, 'What is to be done?' Done! Let every one who has any convictions on this subject ACT ON THEM. Half the mischief has resulted from Christians turning away from the simple teachings of the Word in order to pander to one another; "measuring themselves amongst themselves," instead of measuring themselves by the standard of the Word. We have heard them say, 'Well, I never felt quite satisfied that such things were right or consistent; but then, many far higher in Christian attainments than I am allow them; and it seems like condemning others, and making one's self to be holier than they.' Thus the voice of individual conscience has been stifled, and the standard gradually lowered, until Christ and Shakespeare are openly affianced, and Paul and Dickens bracketed together as equal benefactors of their race.

'But what am I to do?' is the still recurring cry of some timid Christian mother or father. 'Must I keep my children out of society altogether?' Yes, verily, if you cannot find any truly Christian society for them. Humble yourself deeply before God for having trained your children with worldly tastes and associations, and set yourself, as far as possible, to remedy the evil. Get more spirituality, more real life, and you will

find your religion astonishingly more interesting both to yourself and to your children. I Well, but my children must have companions.' Oh, no, there is no must in the case; better live without them than have such as lead them away from God, and into friendship with the world. If you have not yet learnt this, I fear you have never realised your responsibility to God for your children's souls. Do you regard your children as your own or the Lord's? If your own, you will train them on worldly principles; but if the Lord's, you will surely train them for Him, that they may serve their generation according to HIS WILL. You have nothing to do with consequences; it is yours to obey. God will take care of His own. Act on your convictions of duty. If you stand alone in your family--your circle--your church--never mind; ACT for yourself, as you must give account for yourself Perhaps, if you make a beginning, somebody else will follow. Somebody must begin--somebody must make a stand, why not you? You say, 'I am so uninfluential--so weak--and the cross will be so heavy.' All the more blessing in carrying it; and He who chooses the weak things will bless your testimony, and use it for His glory. Only honour God, and He will honour you.

But I must hasten to consider the second argument urged in support of this expediency Christianity.

'Seeing that the Gospel fails to attract our young people, it is better to meet them half-way, and try, as it were, to catch them by guile.' We reply, lot, Is the success of the Gospel dependent on worldly expediency or on spiritual power? If on the former, we can see the force of this argument; but if on the latter, it is utterly irrelevant. There are but two kinds of influence or power in operation in the Church; the material and the spiritual. Jesus Christ utterly and continually abjured the material as being of any value in His kingdom. He systematically ignored, both by example and precept, all the influence of mere learning traditional religion-wealth-position-worldly power and policy: and steadily maintained that "His kingdom was not of this world." He solemnly abjured all other kinds of influence or power save that of the DIVINE, and laboured incessantly to imbue His disciples with the conviction that nothing short of this endowment could empower them for their work (Acts i. 4, 5; Luke xxiv. 48, 49; John xv.).

We all know how completely Paul and his fellow Apostles learnt this lesson, and how they continually gloried in the testimony that it was "not by might nor by power, but by 'the Spirit' of the Lord," that they did all their wonderful works. While the early Christians were true to the example and teaching of their Master, we never find them bemoaning their lack of ability to attract or to convert the people. So mighty was their influence, though comparatively few in number, and insignificant in social position, that wherever they went they were said to have "I turned the world upside down," and large and flourishing churches sprang up in all directions. THEY did not feel the necessity for any half-way meeting place between themselves and the world; they did not lower the tone of their Christian morality in order to meet the corrupt and heathenish notions of those around them; neither did they abjure their spirituality lest it should disgust them. On the contrary, the Apostles and early Christians seem to have had the conviction that the more complete their devotion to their Master, the more separate from the world, the more truly spiritual and divine they were, the greater would be their influence for God, and the greater their success in winning men to Christ. It never seems to have entered into their minds to descend from the high vantage ground on which their Lord had placed them, to fight the enemy with his own weapons, and to try to cast him out by a partial conformity to his darling lusts (I John ii. 16). The source of their power was DIVINE; therefore they needed no adjuncts of human policy, or of worldly expediency. They were mighty "THROUGH GOD," and could well dispense with the heathen poets and fashionable novelists of their times. Their preaching was with the "demonstration of the SPIRIT and of POWER;" consequently, multitudes listened, believed, and turned to the Lord.

It was not until the primitive Christians began to admit worldly principles of action, and to substitute the material for the spiritual, that their influence began to wane, and their testimony to lose its power. It was the gradual substitution of the human for the Divine, the material for the spiritual, that overspread Christendom for ages with papal darkness and death. During that long night of error and suffering, however, God raised up many witnesses to the sufficiency of the Holy Ghost to attract and convert men--many making long pilgrimages and suffering great privations, in order to visit and converse with those endued with this Divine Gift. And when at length the light of the Reformation broke over the nations, this one great lesson was again engraven on the hearts of God's chosen instruments: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My SPIRIT, saith the Lord of Hosts!" Thus, after the lapse of ages, we find the Gospel, when preached with the old power, the same mighty instrumentality, both for attracting the multitudes and converting the soul.

From the Reformation down to the present time, we find that wherever the same Gospel has been preached with the same accompanying power, the same results have followed, even when the preacher has been trammelled by a false creed, or beset with hosts of opposing influences from earth and hell. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there spiritual miracles are wrought, and wherever miracles are wrought, the people will congregate; be it by the riverside, in the temple, in kirk, church, chapel, theatre, meeting-house, attic or cellar. There is no quicker detective of the presence of the Spirit of Jesus than the spirit which worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience. But He has always been more than a match for would-be exorcists. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know but who are ye? "

You will perceive, Christian reader, that we regard this plea, "that the Gospel fails to attract," as a very suspicious one. We ask those who urge it, in the light of the foregoing summary of facts, to tell us WHY IT FAILS? We have no hesitation in saying ONLY for want of the HOLY GHOST. The great desideratum in connection with all our organisations, societies, churches, agencies, and instrumentalities, is LIFE! LIFE!! LIFE!!! The people want a LIVING GOSPEL, preached by LIVING SPIRIT-BAPTISED SOULS. Dare we, in the light of the past, instead of this Divine bread, give them the stone of materialism? If so, we must prepare for the consequences.

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