

THREE DIMENSIONAL PORTRAIT OF WORLDLINESS (I JOHN 2:16)

Abstract paintings are only appreciated by stepping back from them and seeing them from a distance. They lack definition. In Vs. 16 John gives the reason why we are not to love this world. Worldliness, he says *"is not of the father."* In giving this reason John describes worldliness by three abstract ideas: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, a description with still leaves us without a precise definition. The Christian however, reading this verse is not left wondering. The fact that John does not give a lucid definition of worldliness does not in any way imply that this description is deficient. One gets from this description a sense of the heinousness of worldliness; it is inseparably linked to the sinful flesh and pride.

I believe John would have us learn by this that worldliness is formless - it lacks any single definition, any regular identification or shape. He gives us this intangible description and then he says in Vs. 17 *"The fashions of this world pass away."* This description that John gives of those things *"in the world"* is not something outside of us, but something within us. We carry it in our own bosom! **I believe John would have us learn also by this that worldliness is attractive** - it is an inward lust. This is because we are dealing with the affections of the individual. **I believe John would have us learn by this that worldliness is timeless.** By which I mean it is always in fashion in this life. It may change form but not essence.

The Lust of the flesh. This refers to all that the flesh desires, our sensual (bodily and physical) appetite. This takes everything from inordinate sexual desire to cravings of taste in food and drink.

The Lust of the eyes. It is no coincidence that the marketing industry knows what images to use and the art of strategically placing those images continually before the eyes of the public. It is not simply talking of those things that we ought not to look at, but all those things which we see that would encourage earthly mindedness.

The Pride of Life. The word 'bios' (βίος) is used here meaning the period or course of life. John is speaking here of self-superiority and arrogance, a grasping after power, influence and respect. John here is warning us against self-fulfillment and self-contentment.