

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines
 Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24
 28 | Vocations

APPLYING OUR UNION WITH CHRIST: A WORLDVIEW OF VOCATION IN GOD'S INSTITUTIONS

Another aspect of the Extent and Limits of the Church: Liberty of Conscience

20.2 - "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, **contrary** to his Word; or **beside it**, in matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also."

- Notice the higher standard when it comes to matters of faith and worship.
- Notice also the implications for how the church engages with politics. If something is "beside" the Word, then we need not obey it or believe it, no matter how good it may seem to our reason; and the church cannot bind a believer's conscience toward it.

WCF 23 - Of the Civil Magistrate

1. God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates, to be, under him, over the people, for his own glory, and the public good: and, to this end, hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defense and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evildoers.
2. It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto: in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth; so, for that end, they may lawfully, now under the new testament, wage war, upon just and necessary occasion.
3. Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments; or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; or, in the least, interfere in matters of faith. Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a

manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. And, as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, let, or hinder, the due exercise thereof, among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no person be suffered, either upon pretense of religion or of infidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever: and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance.

4. It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honor their persons, to pay them tribute or other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience' sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to them: from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted, much less hath the pope any power and jurisdiction over them in their dominions, or over any of their people; and, least of all, to deprive them of their dominions, or lives, if he shall judge them to be heretics, or upon any other pretense whatsoever.

Purposes of God in Creation: The Three Spheres of Family, Church, and State **Two Types of Callings:**

1. **Christians all share the same first calling!** - God "calls" us to salvation, godliness and discipleship (1Tim. 6.12; 1Cor. 1.9; 2Thess. 2.13-4; 1Pet. 2.9)
 1. This calling defines the *how* of the second calling - for the glory of God and under our desire to be disciples of Christ.
2. **Vocational/Occupational Callings - "Called while in a calling"**
 1. **1 Cor. 7:17, 20** - "Let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has *called* him... Every one should remain in the state in which he was *called*." (cf. Heb.5:4)
 2. God's providence has already been working in your life before, during, and after your conversion; rather than only once we are converted.

3. Note: the first calling makes every Christian a “minister” in a general sense, but some are also called to be a “vocational minister” in the second sense, with additional qualifications and callings on top of the first calling.
 1. So a vocational minister blends his state vocation and church vocation, just as a stay-at-home Mom, for example, blends her family and state vocations.
 2. Everyone is called to each three sphere, but some are more dominant than others in different seasons of life and for different people.

"Calling" Applied to Work:

1. *God is in charge*- “God is the general, appointing to every man (sic) his particular calling and as it were his standing... God himself is the author and beginning of callings.” (William Perkins)
2. *Calling makes work a service to God and Society*
 1. *Psalm 90:16-17* - “Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!”
 2. William Perkins - “A vocation or calling is a certain kind of life, ordained and imposed on man by God, for the common good... Every person of every degree, state, sex or condition without exception, must have some personal and particular calling to walk in.”
 3. *Richard Baxter* - “Choose that employment or calling in which you may be most serviceable to God. Choose not that in which you may be most rich or honorable in the world; but that in which you may do most good, and best escape sinning.”
3. *Moderation in Work*
 1. All of life is a career of service to God, not only one’s salaried job. Work is seen in relation to all of life as a career.
 2. Life consists of many important elements, all of which must be balanced toward the obedient service of God and community.
 3. In all three spheres and in various communities we serve and represent God:
 1. Job: Serves common grace community

2. Church: Serves special grace community
3. Spouse/Parent/Child: Serves family community

4. *Work as a "Mask of God" in Providing for His Creation*

1. Luther - "God's blessings at times come to us through our labors and at times without our labors, but never because of our labors; for God always gives them because of His undeserved mercy... He uses our labor as a sort of mask, under the cover of which he blesses us and grants us what is His, so that there is room for faith."

5. *Redefining Work according to the Sabbath Principle*

1. Work as a moral duty: "Six days you shall labor, and do all your work" (Exod.20:9; Ps. 104:22-23)
2. Condemnation of Idleness (Prov.6:6-11; 13:4; 19:15; 21:25)
3. Work is to provide for basic human needs (Prov.28:19; 16:26)
4. ***Stamp of Identity*** - "It is commonly agreed that Sabbath... becomes decisive for Israel's faith in the exile. The imperial pressure of Babylon was endlessly demanding of productivity but this counter-provision for regular rest was a visible, public assertion that people of faith would not have their lives defined by [economic] expectation. Thus Sabbath is an act of refusal and resistance, a vigorous assertion of a different identity grounded in God's freedom and enacted as socio economic freedom from every production system and every commodity ideology." – Walter Brueggemann