

Introduction

We now turn our attention to the northwest and embark on a tour of our fifth social sphere: *Labor*. By the time this tour is finished, we will have made a number of striking discoveries about this system. We will have found that creative labor is a vital element of God’s plan for the social realm; that work is *not* a “curse,” as it is often represented today, but an essential element of our humanity; that it is, in fact, rooted in the nature of God Himself, the Original Worker. We will also learn that the structure of this sphere parallels that of the others we have already visited in that it also appears triune in design. And we will begin to see that the importance of work is closely related to our divinely given responsibility to care for the poor.

Themes

“What is work?” Present that question to a cross-section of the population and you’ll probably receive a wide variety of answers. Unfortunately, within the context of contemporary culture it’s increasingly likely that a preponderance of these responses will be negative in tone. Many people use phrases such as “a bummer,” “what I have to do for money,” or “the only way to get to Friday” to describe their feelings about work. Even Christians sometimes reference the fall as support of their view that labor is nothing but a *curse*.

In this Lesson, Dr. Tackett makes the case that these disparaging attitudes toward work are completely at odds with the scriptural worldview. He even goes so far as to argue that they can be interpreted as yet another manifestation of the *Cosmic Battle* – in other words, that they are destructive *lies*. Far from being a curse, creative labor is a glorious privilege. It flows out of the heart of God Himself, who labored six days to bring the world into existence, stamped His inventive and energetic image upon mankind, and placed Adam in the garden to tend it, beautify it, and increase its productivity. The creativity of man, then, while subject to the effects of the fall, is nevertheless a mirror-image of the creativity of God. It is designed to be a source of joy so fulfilling and wonderful that the Lord deemed it necessary to give us the fourth commandment in order to insure that we would set our work aside and rest at least one day a week!

This sphere, like that of the family, the church, and the state, is founded upon *relationships*. These relationships, which are ordered according to scriptural principles (see, e.g., Ephesians 6:5-9), fit the general triune pattern we have observed in other areas. God has granted the stewardship of His *material goods* to *owners*; and these *owners* are in turn accountable to Him for the use of His “stuff” and responsible for the welfare and productivity of the *workers* who operate under their direction and authority. Within this sphere, which Dr. Tackett calls the “engine room of culture,” wealth is generated that has the potential to meet the physical needs of mankind; and the responsibility for the compassionate use of this wealth, he argues, falls primarily upon the shoulders of those who are engaged in the field of Labor.

As a special sub-heading of this topic, we will also consider the implications of this discussion for media and the creative arts. Here, too, says Dr. Tackett, there is a fundamental “truth issue” at stake; for under the sovereignty of God and His eternal ethical standard, *beauty* in the arts should be consistent with *goodness* and *truth*. This is a subject of special concern in a time like ours when, as Dr. Francis Schaeffer averred, “Whoever controls the media controls culture.” Within this context, it is imperative that Christians begin to make their influence felt in the field of creative art.

Points to Watch For

Dr. Tackett’s ideas about compassion and relief for the poor – namely, that labor needs to create job opportunities for the needy rather than leaving this area of concern solely to the state – may become the occasion of some lively political and social debate.