

ARTICLE 20: CHRIST AND CULTURE

Summary

We are called to love our neighbors and our neighborhoods with conviction and civility.

Detail

From the beginning, humanity has been called to be culture makers: to subdue and have dominion over the rest of creation. When sin entered the creation, the society-building project did not end; it simply changed directions. Instead of building a world meant to glorify the Father, sinful humans sought to glorify themselves. All societies have elements of good, as fallen humans are still in God's image, but nonetheless are fundamentally rebellious from the heart.

Jesus' reign is absolute and universal; every single part of creation is accountable to Jesus as Lord. Jesus, in both his miracles and his teaching, pushed back the effects of the curse on individuals, societal structures, and the natural world. Now, by his Spirit, he continues his comprehensive and redemptive work on earth; participation in the Way of Jesus cannot be contained to the private realm but implicates every arena of public life as well. Though all things will not be renewed until the final and triumphant return of Jesus, in the meantime, love requires that we seek the flourishing of our neighbors, societies, and cultures.

Rather than secluding ourselves from the world, love takes the first step as we move towards our neighbors with sobriety. We engage our world with both conviction and civility, soft hearts and steel spines because pluralism, systemic idolatry, and brokenness are our present realities. Though ultimate failure is the norm until Christ's second coming, the Spirit sometimes blesses our obedient efforts.

Key Points:

1. Humans are culture makers.
2. Systems and structures, past and present, have been shaped by the corrupt hearts of sinful humans.
3. Followers of Jesus work to influence society with convicted civility.

Questions for Reflection:

1. How does both your responsibility to love and your inability to change people make you feel about engaging with the world around us?
2. How does the tension of conviction and civility shape our public engagement?

Scripture:

- Genesis 1:28 / And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
- Genesis 11:4 / Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."
- Jeremiah 29:4-7 / Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.
- Acts 16:20-21 / And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice."