



C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

Reflections

May 2013 - *Our Vocation Encompasses All of Life*

Many view life as compartmentalized into two sections—the sacred and the secular. They believe and practice that work and necessary items are done Monday through Saturday, but ministry, that which really matters to God, is done on Sunday. C. S. Lewis addresses this misunderstanding in a sermon on vocation entitled, “Learning in War-Time.” He preached this message to students in Oxford in the fall of 1939 soon after Britain had been dragged into World War II. Lewis states,

“...religion cannot occupy the whole of life in the sense of excluding all our natural activities. For, of course, in some sense, it must occupy the whole of life. There is no question of a compromise between the claims of God and the claims of culture, or politics, or anything else. God's claim is infinite and inexorable. You can refuse it: or you can begin to try to grant it. There is no middle way. Yet in spite of this it is clear that Christianity does not exclude any of the ordinary human activities. St. Paul tells people to get on with their jobs. He even assumes that Christians may go to dinner parties, and, what is more, dinner parties given by pagans. Our Lord attends a wedding and provides miraculous wine. Under the aegis of His Church, and in the most Christian ages, learning and the arts flourish.



The solution of this paradox is, of course, well known to you. "Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." All our merely natural activities will be accepted, if they are offered to God, even the humblest: and all of them, even the noblest, will be sinful if they are not. Christianity does not simply replace our natural life and substitute a new one: it is rather a new organization which exploits, to its own supernatural ends, these natural materials. No doubt, in a given situation, it demands the surrender of some, or of all, our merely human pursuits: it is better to be saved with one eye, than, having two, to be cast into Gehanna. But it does this, in a sense, per accidens—because, in those special circumstances, it has ceased to be possible to practice this or that activity to the glory of God. There is no essential quarrel between the spiritual life and the human activities as such... The work of a Beethoven, and the work of a charwoman, become spiritual on precisely the same condition, that of being offered to God, of being done humbly "as to the Lord". This does not, of course, mean that it is for anyone a mere toss-up whether he should sweep rooms or compose symphonies. A mole must dig to the glory of God and a cock must crow. We are members of one body, but differentiated members, each with his own vocation. A man's upbringing, his talents, his circumstances, are usually a tolerable index of his vocation.”¹

It is encouraging to know that God has created each of us with a unique vocation. This calling encompasses not just our church and devotional life, but all of our activities, including our work, family, and social life. God just desires that we do all for His glory.

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

1 COR. 10:31 (NIV)

¹ C.S. Lewis. *The Weight of Glory*, “Learning in War-Time.” Eerdmans: Grand Rapids: 1969, pp.47-49.