What does it mean to be a Christian Lawyer?

Talbot June 2018

To do justice by all good means, and not to win at all costs

Righteousness and **justice** are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you. Psalm 89:14

For the LORD is a God of **justice**. Blessed are all who wait for him!

Isaiah 30:18

This is what the LORD says:

“Maintain **justice** and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed.”

Isaiah 56:1

- Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with **justice**.
  Psalm 112:5
- Learn to do right; seek **justice**. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.
  Isaiah 1:15

Allegretti's CODE: SECULAR PRACTICE

The Code is the 'standard vision' of ethics for lawyers: ***Zealously represent*** the interests of your clients, and Win at all costs; a Hired Gun.

S/he is a "neutral partisan" and champion of the client; amoral: morals are irrelevant, just get them what they want, a 'win,' that's your job.

Some even argue its okay to acquit the guilty, violating Proverbs 17:5.

It's a secular vision, and the basic pattern today.

Zeal Isn't Good Enough! It must have KNOWLEDGE and be JUST!

- The Code, "win at all costs" attitude is not biblical, and it seldom works in experience.
- **Romans 10:2:** For I can testify about them that they are *zealous* for God, but their *zeal* is not based on *knowledge*.
- **Galatians 4:18:** It is fine to be *zealous*, provided the *purpose is good*, and to be so always, not just when I am with you.

A Natural Check in the Secular Vision:

- Good and reputable firms, even secular ones, know winning at all costs and serving any unjust interests on behalf of their clients is ultimately ***not*** how to succeed.
- They become good and reputable, and attractive firms in the community, OVER TIME, ***because*** they are straight up with their clients and with the law.

(compare: beginner's 'zealous' mistakes, misleading clients, and jokes about lawyers' lacking integrity)

Is it Doable?:
Can a Christian Actually Practice Law?

- YES, including in litigation, but it cannot be according to the Secular Code, Allegretti identifies.

- How should Christians respond to the call to practice law?: ALLEGRETTI SEES FOUR RESPONSES among Christians, and recommends only the Last choice.
- Which of these 4 next, best illustrates you?

4 Christian Responses (Allegretti)

1. AGAINST the standard vision. Saying, you can't be a lawyer, and a good Christian. So quit, or at least stay away from any litigation.

4 Christian Responses (Allegretti)

2. HARMONY, EMBRACING the standard, secular vision: This says a good testimony is winning: just win. It doesn't really matter how, even if sometimes a little unethical.

   It's a good witness to Jesus if people see you as a winner, and so that's 'Christian' enough.

4 Christian Responses (Allegretti)

3. TENSION with the standard vision. Your life becomes compartmentalized, dualistic, (schizophrenic?). Live 2 lives: Your Christian one, and your Law one.

- The problem with this approach is it's not sustainable. You will either revert back to Justification of some misconduct in approach 2, or you will go to another approach.

4 Christian Responses (Allegretti)

3. TENSION with the standard vision (continued).

A similar, and perhaps more common (or less harmful?) mistake that is still *inconsistent*, *incorrect and dualistic*: It's trying to act ethically at work, yet still separating your work and life into two separate CATEGORIES of the SECULAR and SPIRITUAL.

This has a tendency to promote compromise in work ethics because of the separation.

INTEGRATION

A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE SHOULD BE <u>INTEGRATED</u>

(It should not be separated into *Spiritual Work* (like at church), and *Secular Work* (like your law job)

Scriptures

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

  1 Cor. 10:31

- And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

  Colossians 3:17

Christian Responses (Allegretti)

4. INTEGRATION/VOCATION. Here You Are Seeking Transformation and Calling in the Legal Profession.

- This is what you are aiming for as the correct, Biblical Response. HOW, is the challenge.

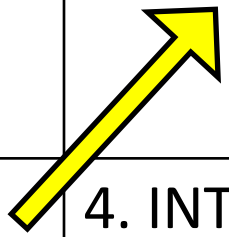
  For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10

Scriptures on Law in Society, as a Good Gift of God – Common Grace

- “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” James 1:17
- “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater.” Isaiah 55:10 (see Matt 5:45)
- Even justice and law and good order are good gifts to man from God. (1Kings 10:9, Ezra 7:25)

Summary
The 4 Responses

1. AGAINST the standard vision. (You can't even *be* a lawyer, and a good Christian, so quit)	2. HARMONY, EMBRACE of the standard vision. (A Good Christian lawyer Wins! – *not so important ethically how*)
3. TENSION with the standard vision: a. (Compartmentalized, not Integrated, schizophrenic) b. A more subtle dualism: a sacred vs. secular distinction (the experience of so many)	4. INTEGRATION/VOCATION (Serving God in Good Work) **The right way to go**



MY TESTIMONY: I Was In . . .

3. TENSION with the standard vision (compartmentalizing)

It's that subtle separating: In my case, it was not about acting one way at work and serving God on Sundays. But, *I often saw my job as just a job*, and my real service to Christ outside of it. It wasn't integrated, and I didn't see my job as God's work. This is one thing I would revisit and change if I could. I didn't see the real service to Christ and neighbor in good legal work (as love), and I certainly wanted to win.

I BELIEVE many Christians are living in this stage.

SUM

At some level, any of these attitudes can characterize a person's vision of his or her practice at a given time. In other people, perhaps only one characteristic response stands out (s/he's at stage 1, or 2, or 3).

But the goal is to see the lawyer's work as good work, part of the work of **justice**, something good that God is providing to His creation through you. (Eph 2:10)

It's Doable

It CAN be done: *A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold*. (Prov. 22:1)

Being a Christian Lawyer is about pursuing justice by all good means, not winning at all costs, and so having that good name; it's about who you really represent.