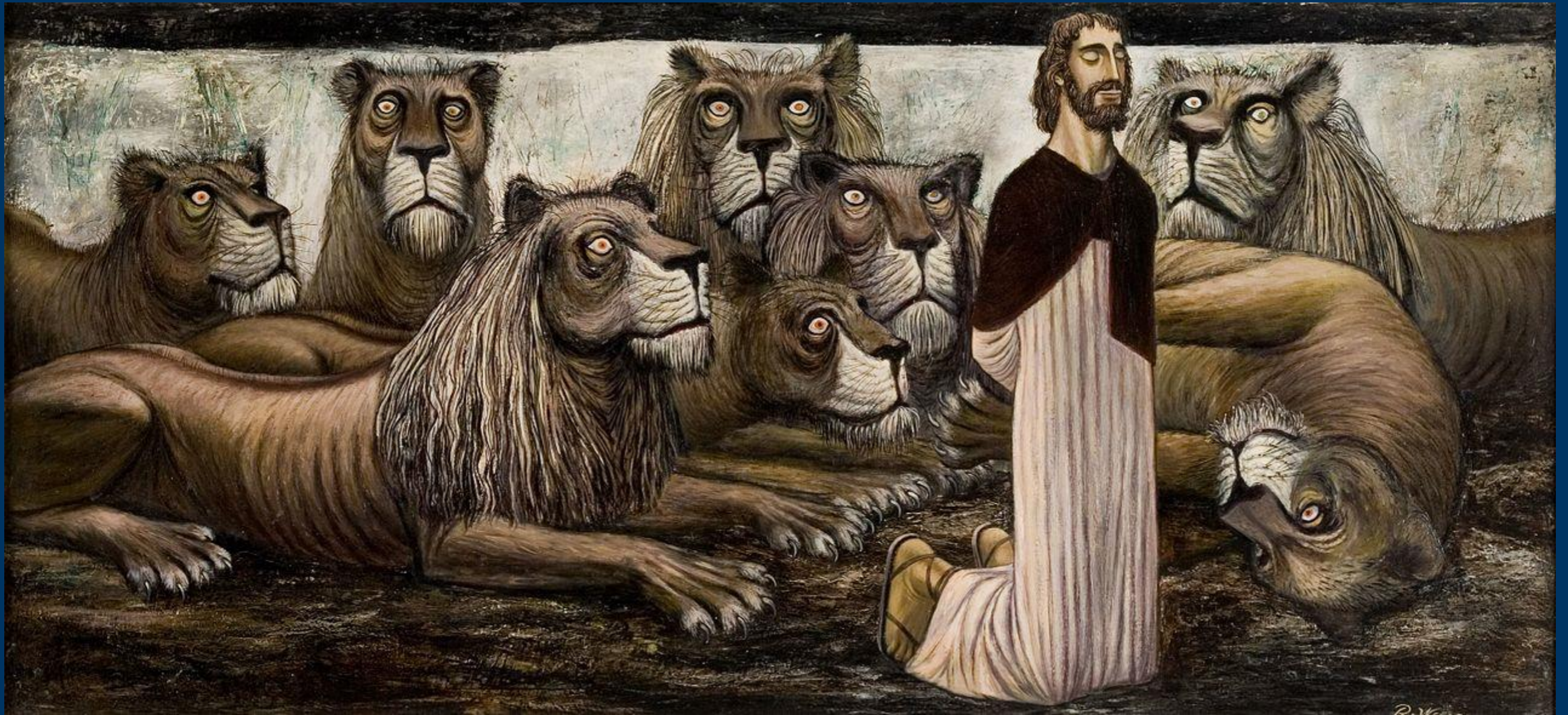


Living with lions: framing legal threats to gospel ministry theologically



"Daniel In the Lion's Den" (c. 1952)
By Robert Edward Weaver (1913-91)

Our “new” situation

- cultural suspicion and criticism of Christianity
- anti-discrimination , anti-vilification and anti-conversion legislation as legal limitations to “ordinary” Christian ministry
- expanding regulatory state
- “required” agreement with ideological ‘moral’ stance; rejection of conscientious objections; discipline for faith / moral expressions

Moral Vision



Church and civil authorities

- submit to civil authorities (Rom 13:1; Tit 3:1; 1Pe 2:13, 14)
- pray for civil authorities, for Christian life and mission (1 Tim 2:1-4)



Classic Reformed position

The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed.

WCF 32.3

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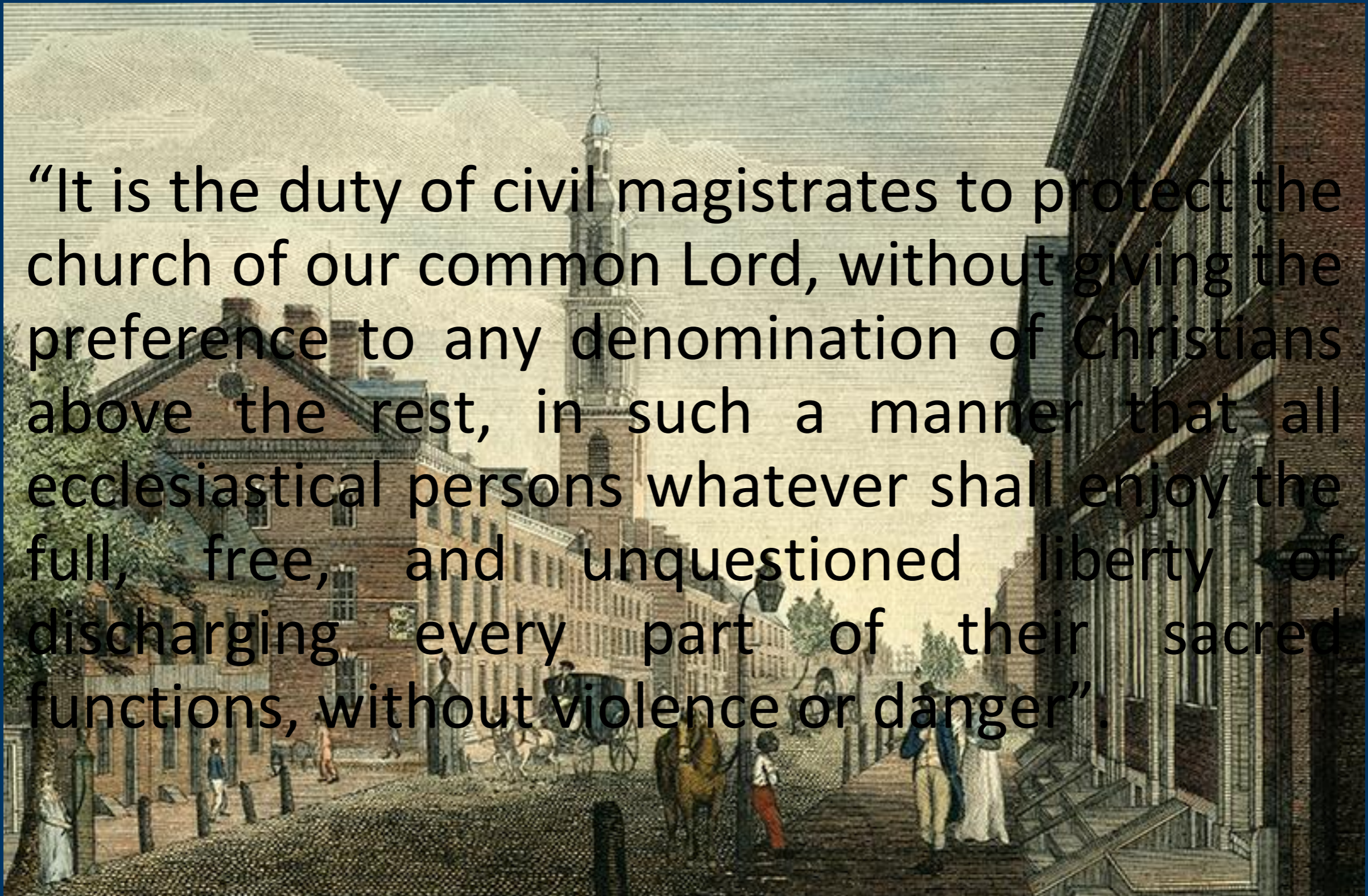
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WCF 32.3

The magistrate should establish and protect true religion.

The church exercises independent authority in matters of the doctrine, worship, discipline and government.

Civil power is circa sacra not in sacris



“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”.

1788 Philadelphia Assembly

FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY



GREAT TOWN HALL MEETING, SYDNEY

Voluntarism

PCA “disclaims, accordingly, intolerant or persecuting principles and does not consider its office-bearers, in subscribing the Confession, as committed to any principles inconsistent with the liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment” (1901)

spiritual freedom of the church (PCA 1912-14)

circa sacra

in sacris

doctrine, worship,
discipline and
government

Remember

- God is sovereign and Christ is Lord
- expect opposition (John 15:18-19; 17:14; 1 Pet 2:11; 2:20; 3:14; 4:4; 1 Jn 3:13)
- opposition is an aspect of spiritual struggle (Rev 12:17; Eph 6:12, 19-20)
- blessing from suffering (Matt. 5:12; Acts 5:41; Col. 1:24; James 1:2; 1 Pet. 4:13, 16; Rev 2:10)
- suffering matures the church and furthers the gospel

Respond

- resist with faithfulness and strategic protest
- seek legal protections and appeal
- face penalties
- witness

Body of Christ

- mutual suffering (Rom 12:15; Phil 1:7; Heb 10:34; 13:3; Rev 1:9)
- stand with those facing trial (2 Tim. 1:8, 16; 4:16-19)

Conclusion

