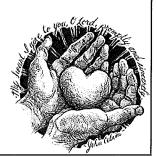


Let's Read The Institutes of the Christian Religion, class 17

Book 4: The External Means Or Aids By Which God Invites Us Into The Society Of Christ And Holds Us Therein.

Chapter 20



I. General discourse on the necessity, dignity, and use of Civil Government, in opposition to the frantic proceedings of the Anabaptists, sec. 1-3.

(Most of this chapter written for the 1536 edition – Anabaptists in Munster (1534-35), Machiavelli's <u>The Prince</u> (1532)

Also refer to Calvin's Commentaries on Daniel and Romans.

II. A special exposition of the three leading parts of which Civil Government consists, sec. 4-32.

A Two-Fold Government

- Civil (Political a positive blessing from God)
 directing persons with regard to the social responsibility and leading to civil justice and
 outward morality.
- Spiritual (Ecclesiastical)
 dealing with the conscience and leading to eternal life.

These two kingdoms are separate and distinct in jurisdiction and authority.

Two Kingdom Doctrine

Lutheranism

- God rules over the worldly kingdom by way of laws and the heavenly kingdom by way of gospel and grace.
- The church is content to allow the state to control the administration of the church (Erastianism).

Reformed

- God rules over both kingdoms by way of law and providence.
- The church must operate in cooperation with but independent of the state in matters of both law and grace.

Civil Government

- Civil Government is necessary
 - The fact of sin in the world requires it.
 - Civil govt. is a provision of God's goodness (rather than seeing it as a polluted thing to be rejected.)
 - Civil govt. is for the preservation and blessing of humanity (otherwise given to anarchy, destruction, and evil).
- A Civil Magistrate (a civilian government or individual officer) is a calling from God
 - He is God's vice-regent, vicar, deputy.
 - Implication: He is a man under divine authority.

The Civil Magistrate

- He is to enforce/encourage obedience to the commands of the 2nd table of the Moral Law
- He is to promote the true, Protestant religion (the 1st table of the Moral Law)
 - Preventing opposition from forming against the church defending piety so that "a public manifestation of religion may exist among Christians."
 - protecting the outward function of the Church
 (as opposed to micromanaging its inner workings, such as discipline.)
- Heresy, therefore, is an ecclesiastical <u>and</u> a civil crime.
 - Because the state has only one religion, heresey is tantamount to treason before the Magistrate.
 - But this is not a theocracy (union of the two); it is a distinction with cooperation.
- Right to wage war
 - War must be governed by extreme necessity rather than by angry passion or mere hatred.
 - · War must be exercised without implacable severity.

The Civil Magistrate

- Calvin does not strictly advocate one form of civil government over another, yet:
 - he proposes that "a system compounded of (meritocratic) aristocracy and democracy (among the citizenry)" would be best (pure democracy = anarchy).
 - A plurality of leaders (safety in numbers) is better than a Monarch (with a hereditary ruling class) to provide checks and balances (due to men's faults/failings).

"No kind of government is more happy than one where freedom is regulated with becoming moderation and is properly established on a durable basis."

The Civil Magistrate

- The Magistrate must be careful not to
 - dishonor and disregard proper use of civil authority (Avoid cruelest gentleness)
 - Exercise too much power unlawfully. (Avoid excessive severity)
- The Magistrate has the right
 - to make its own laws.
 - Such laws must be in conformity to the rule of justice, mercy and love.
 - Such laws need not recreate the political system of Moses.
 - to levy taxes upon its people but not out of tyrannical extortion.
 - to allow for rightly exercised lawsuits (following the Golden Rule).

A Two-Fold Government

• Civil (Political - a positive blessing from God)

directing persons with regard to the social responsibility and leading to civil justice and outward morality.

"The church does not assume what is proper to the magistrate ... "

• Spiritual (Ecclesiastical)

dealing with the conscience and leading to eternal life.

"Nor can the magistrate execute what is carried out by the church"

· These two kingdoms are separate and distinct in jurisdiction and authority.

State/Church Relation - Cooperation

- The church is to comply, obey, reverence, and esteem the Magistrate ...
 - This teaches us patience and to consider our own sin.
 - Unjust rulers are raised up by God because of our sin and to move us to implore to God for help.
- ... "As far as is possible".
 - Calvin never prescribes a program for revolution (as John Knox was prone to do).
 - It is the responsibility and right of lesser magistrates to provide protection of the people against the misuses of the king by attempting to influence or change the government if necessary.
- Sum of our duty: We must obey God rather than men.
 - Our goal is not selfish, independent.
 - Our goal is piety.