

The Christian and Civil Government (15th)

(Our lesson today is another overview as to the relevancy of our subject. Too many Christians, including ministers, have disregarded this subject too long. May the Lord awaken us before it is too late and all of our liberties and freedoms are removed from us.)

We have reviewed the Protestant and Baptist confessions overall and studied the references supplied by them and found that while the believer is to obey the laws of the land as long as they are not required to disobey the Scriptures, the Lord did not command or suggest to the congregation of God to rule over or engage in setting up civil government over society. The Catholic institutions (both Roman and Greek) maintain a strong tie with civil government. The Roman Catholics maintain that the pope is not only the head of church but that he is the king of the world. As many may, or may not know, the Vatican City is considerate to be a city-state surrounded by Rome, Italy, and many world countries recognize this city-state as an independent country. It was not until January 10, 1984, when President Ronald Reagan and congress recognized it as a country. Presidents before him sought to do this but the country's opposition prevented it. (Time does not permit us to follow this historical path.) Nevertheless, with the strong ties of Catholicism and civil government, the Protestant did not fully break with this ideology with the Reformation. This is clearly visible by studying the history at that time. Various wars and battles were fought among the Protestants, along with different heads of states and kings and emperors aligned with the causes on both sides of the Reformation. The different forms of governments throughout Europe, too, contributed to the various "church-state" relationships. These governments included such as monarchy, oligarchy, aristocracy, and various forms of democracy. The idea of a constitutional republic came to vogue with the forming of the United States of America. However, the Reformation and the religion of the reformers was defined under the ideals of a "church-state relationship" as previously taught and practiced by the Catholics, though in later times some Protestants seek to distance themselves from this idea. Allow me to impose on your patience by quoting from the "Belgic Confession" (as revised in 1618 and 1619) as printed in *The Three Forms of Unity* as published by the Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America. Though no date was supplied with this printing, originally, this confession was published in 1561. In Article XXXVI, entitled "Of Magistrates," it states, "And their office" (i.e., the office of magistrates) "is, not only to have regard unto, and watch for the welfare of the civil state; but also that they protect the sacred ministry; and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship; that the kingdom of anti-christ may be thus destroyed and the kingdom of Christ promoted." At the place of "false worship" regarding the civil magistrates removing and preventing "all idolatry and false worship," is a footnote supplied with a follow-up note which is as follows:

"This phrase, touching the office of the magistracy in its relation to the Church, proceeds on the principle of the Established Church, which was first applied by Constantine and afterwards also in many Protestant countries. History, however, does not support the principle of State domination over the Church, but rather the separation of Church and State. Moreover, it is contrary to the New Dispensation that authority be vested in the State to arbitrarily reform the Church, and to deny the Church the right of independently conducting its own affairs as a distinct territory alongside the State. The New Testament does not subject the Christian Church to the authority of the State that it should be governed and extended by political measures, but to our Lord and King only as an independent territory alongside and altogether independent of the State, that it may be governed and edified by its office-bearers and with spiritual weapons only. Practically all Reformed churches have repudiated the idea of the Established Church, and are

advocating the autonomy of the churches and personal liberty of conscience in matters pertaining to the service of God.

“The Christian Reformed Church in America, being in full accord with this view, feels constrained to declare that it does not conceive of the office of the magistracy in this sense, that it be in duty bound to also exercise political authority in the sphere of religion, by establishing and maintaining a State Church, advancing and supporting the same as the only true Church, and to oppose, to persecute and to destroy by means of the sword all the other churches as being false religions; and to also declare that it does positively hold that, within its own secular sphere, the magistracy has a divine duty towards the first table of the Law as well as towards the second; and furthermore that both State and Church as institutions of God and Christ have mutual rights and duties appointed them from on high, and therefore have a very sacred reciprocal obligation to meet through the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and Son. They may not, however, encroach upon each other’s territory. The Church has rights of sovereignty in its own sphere as well as the State.” Acta. Synod, 1910.

I might add that later in this article, along with the article on magistrates in the Christian Reformed edition of this confession in 2011 says “Wherefore we detest the Anabaptists and other seditious people, and in general all those who reject the higher powers and magistrates, and would subvert justice, introduce community of goods, and confound that decency and good order, which God hath established among men.” While some Anabaptists may have been seditious, this is not the truth of all, and the reformer and their histories to date generally infer that all Anabaptists are of this temperament. This is not the truth and is a general dispersion of our Baptist forefathers.

While the Protestants seek to distance themselves from outright persecuting those who differ with them, they continue to affirm that it is the duty of the civil magistrate that “They must therefore countenance the preaching of the Word of the gospel everywhere, that God may be honored and worshipped by every one, as He commanded in His Word.”

Many may say that this is a moot point and should not be considered in our modern times. But nothing could be further from the truth. Allow me to quote from a modern “Christian new source” as published April 16, 2020. Under the sub-title “49% of Americans say Bible should influence laws” it says the following:

“And finally, 49 percent of Americans believe the Bible should have at least ‘some’ influence on U.S. laws, while 23 percent say the Bible should have ‘a great deal’ of influence, according to Pew Research.

“The study also found 28 percent of Americans believe that the Bible should take precedence over the will of the people in terms of influencing U.S. laws.

“Wisdom says in Proverbs 8:15-16, ‘By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, all the judges of the earth.’”

https://theworldview.com/#!/news_broadcasts/doj-sides-wchristians-fined-for-drive-in-service-trump-pulls-world-health-funding-congo-muslims-kill-35-christians

Notice again that according to this research that “49 percent of Americans believe the Bible should have *some* influence on U.S. laws” and that “28 percent of Americans believe that the Bible should take precedence over the will of the people in terms of influencing U.S. laws.” The question is raised as to who is to make this judgment as to what the Bible teaches and what biblical laws are to be enforced or “take precedence over the will of the people”? This fully aligns with the teaching of the Protestants, but

sadly many Baptists, too, support this idea. One previous podcast equally showed the relevancy of this topic. We also previously published that the intrusion of the congregation of God seeking to influence and/or control civil government has caused the government to move in and seek to rule over and regulate the congregation of the Lord regarding its beliefs and practices, even as to when and how it worships.

However, our time is up for today. Please know that this is a vital subject and that we need the wisdom of God to know how to live our lives in this pluralistic society to His honor and glory.