

Oakland Avenue Presbyterian Church – Together on Wednesdays (TOW)

God and Politics Class Prep for Wednesday, February 1, 2012

1. Bible

Read the birth story and the Passion story in the Gospel of Matthew and notice all the politics and political titles etc. that appear in these two stories.

2. Confessions / Polity

Another example of a Confession from the (later) Reformation period is the THE SECOND HELVETIC CONFESSION.

On Page 2 you will find the section from that Confession on the Magistracy – you can note any similarities or differences from the Scots Confession or the Confession of 1967.

3. Tasks / preparation / questions for next week (February 1). Work on these questions and come ready to talk about what you learned and what you think. It will enliven and deepen the class conversation if all of us are able to spend an hour on these questions.

a. Research a couple of politicians, from different parties or perspectives. What do they say motivated or motivates them to enter the world of politics and/or seek public office?

b. To what extent do you think a politician should seek to press or impose their personal religious or philosophical views on society in the exercise of their political power?

c. If you, as a Christian, were to decide to seek public office, what would be the SIX issues that you would have as your top priorities, and what would some of the specific proposals you would have in mind in relation to these issues?

CHAPTER XXX - Of the Magistracy

5.252 THE MAGISTRACY IS FROM GOD.

Magistracy of every kind is instituted by God himself for the peace and tranquillity of the human race, and thus it should have the chief place in the world. If the magistrate is opposed to the Church, he can hinder and disturb it very much; but if he is a friend and even a member of the Church, he is a most useful and excellent member of it, who is able to benefit it greatly, and to assist it best of all.

5.253 THE DUTY OF THE MAGISTRATE.

The chief duty of the magistrate is to secure and preserve peace and public tranquillity. Doubtless he will never do this more successfully than when he is truly God-fearing and religious; that is to say, when, according to the example of the most holy kings and princes of the people of the Lord, he promotes the preaching of the truth and sincere faith, roots out lies and all superstition, together with all impiety and idolatry, and defends the Church of God. We certainly teach that the care of religion belongs especially to the holy magistrate.

5.254 Let him, therefore, hold the Word of God in his hands, and take care lest anything contrary to it is taught. Likewise let him govern the people entrusted to him by God with good laws made according to the Word of God, and let him keep them in discipline, duty and obedience. Let him exercise judgment by judging uprightly. Let him not respect any man's person or accept bribes. Let him protect widows, orphans and the afflicted. Let him punish and even banish criminals, impostors and barbarians. For he does not bear the sword in vain (Rom. 13:4).

5.255 Therefore, let him draw this sword of God against all malefactors, seditious persons, thieves, murderers, oppressors, blasphemers, perjured persons, and all those whom God has commanded him to punish and even to execute. Let him suppress stubborn heretics (who are truly heretics), who do not cease to blaspheme the majesty of God and to trouble, and even to destroy the Church of God.

5.256 WAR. And if it is necessary to preserve the safety of the people by war, let him wage war in the name of God; provided he has first sought peace by all means possible, and cannot save his people in any other way except by war. And when the magistrate does these things in faith, he serves God by those very works which are truly good, and receives a blessing from the Lord.

5.257 We condemn the Anabaptists, who, when they deny that a Christian may hold the office of a magistrate, deny also that a man may be justly put to death by the magistrate, or that the magistrate may wage war, or that oaths are to be rendered to a magistrate, and such like things.

5.258 THE DUTY OF SUBJECTS.

For as God wants to effect the safety of his people by the magistrate, whom he has given to the world to be, as it were, a father, so all subjects are commanded to acknowledge this favor of God in the magistrate. Therefore let them honor and reverence the magistrate as the minister of God; let them love him, favor him, and pray for him as their father; and let them obey all his just and fair commands. Finally, let them pay all customs and taxes, and all other such dues faithfully and willingly. And if the public safety of the country and justice require it, and the magistrate of necessity wages war, let them even lay down their life and pour out their blood for the public safety and that of the magistrate. And let them do this in the name of God willingly, bravely and cheerfully. For he who opposes the magistrate provokes the severe wrath of God against himself.

5.259 SECTS AND SEDITIONS.

We, therefore, condemn all who are contemptuous of the magistrate—rebels, enemies of the state, seditious villains, finally, all who openly or craftily refuse to perform whatever duties they owe.

5.260 We beseech God, our most merciful Father in heaven, that he will bless the rulers of the people, and us, and his whole people, through Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Savior; to whom be praise and glory and thanksgiving, for all ages. Amen.