

AUGUST 23, 2020

CHURCH + STATE

THE FORGOTTEN EVIL (OF CENTRALIZATION)

1 Samuel 8, Mark 10:35-45, Matthew 5:13-16, Revelation

In Canada, our government has been hit by several scandals, is shoveling money out the door (both in relief and to secure favour), and this week prorogued Parliament to pause investigations and reset the agenda. In the US, the regular presidential and lower elections are happening this fall. Policies of states affect our lives.

What does the Bible and Christian teaching have to say about governments? It turns out a lot. In part, the church is to be a kind of alternative "politics" on earth.

This week we ask some Spirit-inspired questions of what we are told to assume is just fine.

OPENING THE SCENE: 1 SAMUEL 8

NAB STATEMENT OF FAITH: In continuity with our immediate forefathers and the larger fellowship of Baptists throughout history, we seek to practice and propagate by God's grace the following convictions:

- We believe religious liberty, rooted in Scripture, is the inalienable right of all individuals to freedom of conscience with ultimate accountability to God. (*Genesis 1:27; John 8:32; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:21; Acts 5:29*).
- Church and state exist by the will of God. Each has distinctive concerns and responsibilities, free from control by the other (*Matthew 22:21*).
- Christians should pray for civil leaders, and obey and support government in matters not contrary to Scripture (*1 Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-16*).
- The state should guarantee religious liberty to all persons and groups regardless of their religious preferences, consistent with the common good.

BIG IDEA - A PATTERN IN THE BIBLE

"Most Americans still see government as a "force for good." I do not deny that good is possible from government. But calling it a force for good seems strange in this bloody era of state-sponsored violence and dark utopianism. Joseph Sobran wrote about this problem some years ago: 'In the 20th century alone, states murdered about 162 million of their own subjects. This figure doesn't include the tens of millions of foreigners they killed in war. How then can we speak at states protecting their people? No amount of private crime could claim such a toll ... The term "state" despite this bloody history doesn't disturb [most people]. Yet it would seem that an institution that can take 200 million lives within the past century needs to be replaced. As morality loses its cultural grip ... we can expect the state to show its nature nakedly. Saint Augustine took a dim view of the state, as punishment for sin. He said that the state without justice is nothing but a gang of robbers writ large'" [Subtracting Christianity pp. 55-56] (Msgr. Charles Pope).

Why We Think Centralizing Power is the Answer and Alternatives to Embrace

When you break the big laws, you do not get liberty; you do not even get anarchy. You get the small laws.
-G.K. Chesterton

A FEW MORE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- Name the impulse for control
- Politically the church is to be another power
- Advocate for policies that push power downward. The practice, the politics, the advocacy for decentralizing power - subsidiarity.

FIRST ALLEGIANCE TO KING JESUS!