

David Dickson's

Truth's Victory Over Error

Chapter XXXI. (Part 3.)

Of Synods and Councils.

Question III: May Magistrates lawfully call Synods of Ministers?

Question IV: Are Synods and Councils Infallible or Capable of Error?

QUESTION III.

M*AY Magistrates lawfully call a Synod of Ministers, and other fit persons to consult, and advise with, about matters of Religion?"*

Yes. *Isa 49.23. 1 Tim. 2.1,2. Matth. 2.4,5. Prov. 11.14.*

Well then, do not the Papists err, who maintain, that the civil Magistrate hath no right or power to convocate Synods, or Councils, but that it belongs to the Bishop to convocate Diocesan Synods; To the Metropolitan to convocate Provincial Synods; To the Primate and Patriarch to convocate National Synods: To the Pope only to convocate and call Oecumenick and general Synods?

Yes.

By what reasons are they confuted?

(1) Because, under the *Old Testament*, *Councils*, and *Synods* were appointed and called by godly *Kings*, *1 Kings 8.1. 2 Kings 23.1. 2 Chron. 29.4.* (2) Because, it is the duty of the *civil Magistrate* being born *within the church*, to take care that *Peace* and *Unity* be preserved and kept in the Church: that the *Truth* and *Word of GOD*, be entirely, and soundly Preached and obeyed: that *blasphemies* and *heresies* be kept under and suppressed; that all *corruptions* in *Worship* and *Discipline* be *reformed*: that all *GOD's Ordinances* be lawfully established, administered, and preserved. And if it should happen, that both *Church* and *State Judicatories*, should make an *universal defection* from the purity of *doctrine* and *worship* received and acknowledged, it is the duty of a *godly King*, by virtue of his *Regal Power*, and *Authority*, to set about a work of *Reformation*, and to call and command all ranks of *People* to return to the *true Worship and Service of GOD*; *Isa.*

45.23, [or 49.23.] *Psalm* 122.7-9. *Ezra* 7.23, 25-28. *Levit.* 24.16. *Deut.* 13.5, 6, 12. 1 *Chron.* 13.1-9, [or 2 *Chron.* 30.1-9.] 2 *Kings* 23, from the first verse to the 26th. (3) From the example of *Constantine*, that did convocate the first *Nicene Council*: From *Theodosius* the elder, that did call the first *council of Constantinople*: From *Theodosius* the younger, that did call the first *council at Ephesus*: From *Martianus*, that did call the *Chalcedon council*.

Quest. IV. "MAY all Synods or Councils since the Apostles' days err?"

Yes.

And have not many actually erred?

Yes.

Well then, *doth not the Popish Church err, who maintain, that councils confirmed, and solemnised by the Pope's authority, cannot err, neither in explaining Doctrines of Faith, nor in delivering Precepts, and Rules of Manners, common to the whole Church?*

Yes.

By what reasons are they confuted?

(1) Because, all the *Priests, Levites, and Prophets* of the *Jewish church*, (who had the same Promises which the *Christian church* hath now under the *New Testament*, 1 *Cor.* 10.3,4. 2 *Sam.* 7.16. *Isaiah* 49.15,16,) together with the *High Priest* have sometimes erred, as is clear from the following Scriptures: *Isaiah* 56.10,11. *Jerem.* 6.13. *Jerem.* 14.14. *Hos.* 9.7-9. *Micah* 3.9. The Lord's Prophets that were immediately guided, and inspired by him, must be excepted. (2) Because, *councils* under the *Old Testament*, lawfully called, have often-times erred; 2 *Sam.* 6.2-3. *Jer.* 26.7-9. 1 *Kings* 22.6. And under the *New Testament*; *John* 9.35. *John* 11.47,48,52. *Matth.* 26.57, 59, 65, 66. *Acts* 4.5, 6, 17, 18. (3) Because, the *Pope* cannot shew a proof of *infallibility*; *Rom.* 3.4. (4) Because, it is foretold in the *New Testament*, that many *Pastors, and Teachers shall become false Prophets, and turn Seducers*; and that *Antichrist shall sit in the Temple of GOD, shewing himself that he is God*; *Matth.* 24.11, 24. *Acts* 20.29,30. 2 *Peter* 2.1. 2 *Thes.* 2.4. (5) It is most evident, that many *councils* approven and authorized by the *Pope*, have most foully erred, and that some have openly contradicted others.

Resources for more Information:

Calvin's "Institutes," Book 4, Chapter 9. Beza's "The Christian Faith," chapter 5, sections 11-22, etc.