

Lecture 20-The Church (I)**Prayer**

Enlighten us, O God, by Your Spirit, in the understanding of Your Word, and grant us the grace to receive it in true fear and humility that we may learn to put our trust in You, to fear and honor You by glorifying Your holy name in all our life, and to yield You the love and obedience which faithful servants owe to their master and children to their fathers, seeing it has led You to call us to the number of Your servants and children. Amen.

The Church (I) (See Appendix H for an outline of Book IV.)

I. Introduction

- A. John Calvin - reformer of the church (cf. Parker, Calvin)
 - 1. Early reluctance (cf. Preface to *Psalms Commentary*)
 - 2. Strasburg and Martin Bucer
 - 3. Calvin's increasing emphasis on the church
 - a. Reform in Geneva
 - 1) Bible - "regulative principle" (*Commentary* on Hebrews 8:5; *Commentary* on Acts 8:38)
 - 2) Tradition (mode of baptism, liturgy, church government)
 - b. Doctrine
 - 1) Importance of the church (4, 1, 4)
 - 2) Purity of the church (William S. Barker, "Calvin and Ecclesiastical Separation," *Presbyterian Journal*, October 30, 1985)
 - 3) Unity of the church (*Commentary* on 1 Corinthians 1:10; Letter to Cranmer, April 1552)
- B. The relation between book IV and the first three books
 - 1. Pattern of/themes in the Apostles' Creed
 - 2. Book IV not a continuation of Books I-III, but a gathering of themes already discussed
 - 3. Book IV is a reflection of Books I-III and vice versa
- C. "The External Means or Aids by which God Invites us into the Society of Christ and Holds us Therein" (title of book 4)
 - 1. "External means..." (4, 1, 1)
 - 2. "... By which God invites us"
 - a. "Outward helps" (4, 1, 1; 4, 1, 5)
 - b. "...He has...bound us to this ordinary manner of teaching" (4, 1, 5)

II. Nature of the Church

- A. Visible and invisible church
 - 1. Invisible - object of faith (4, 1, 7)
 - 2. Visible - object of experience (4, 1, 7)
 - a. We cannot identify the visible church with the elect (4, 1, 8)
 - b. We must judge the members of the Christian church charitably (4, 1, 8)
 - 3. Two aspects of the church
 - a. Overlapping circles (4, 1, 2; *Commentary* on John 3:5)
 - b. Neither separated nor confounded (*Commentary* on Acts 3:25)

For Further Study

Walker, G. S. M. "Calvin and the Church." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 16 (1963): 371-89.