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John Calvin, 2 Samuel 2:8-32 and Resistance to Civil Government: Supreme Equivocation or Mastery of Contextual Exegesis?

Abstract

John Calvin, 2 Samuel 2:8-32 and resistance to civil government: supreme equivocation or mastery of contextual exegesis?

*Over the years, it has been the considered view of some scholars that John Calvin regarded popular armed resistance to duly appointed but abusive civil rulers as illegitimate. Instead, they are of the view that the legitimacy of forceful resistance to a tyrannical civil magistrate, as subsequently developed by the later Huguenots, Scottish Covenanters and English Parliamentarians, was rooted in the thought of Theodore Beza as it allegedly diverged from that of Calvin. They apparently base this view exclusively on a reading of the *Institutes* 4.20.24 - 31. This paper examines whether Calvin's sermons on 2 Samuel, preached in 1562, put to rest accusations of equivocation raised by the infamous "perhaps" of 4.20.31; and if so, whether they evidence a development in Calvin's thought which stands in irreconcilable contradiction to the position expressed in the last chapter of the *Institutes*.*

Keywords: Calvin; resistance; ruler; Protestant; France

Opsomming

Johannes Calvin, 2 Samuel 2:8-32 en weerstand teen die burgerlike owerheid: uiterste dubbelsinnigheid of beheersing van kontekstuele eksegese?

*Deur die jare was dit die oorwoë mening van kenners dat Johannes Calvyn gewapende weerstand teen die regmatige – hoewel onderdrukkende – owerheid as onwettig in die wêreld van die 16de eeu beskou het, en dat dit daarom ook onwettig vir vandag is. Daarenteen is hulle van mening dat die regmatigheid van gewelddadige weerstand teen die onderdrukkende owerheid, soos dit later deur die Hugenote, Skotse 'Covenanters' en Engelse Parlementariërs ontwikkel is, eerder in die denke van Theodore Beza gegrond was, na bewering in afwyking van Calvyn. Oënskynlik word hierdie mening uitsluitend gebaseer op 'n lesing van die *Institusie* 4.20.31.*

*Hierdie artikel ondersoek of Calvyn se preke oor 2 Samuel, gehou in 1562, die aantyging van dubbelsinnigheid wat deur die berugte " miskien " van paragraaf 31 opgeroep word, kan weerlê. En indien wel, of hierdie preke 'n ontwikkeling in Calvyn se denke aantoon, wat in 'n onversoenbare teenstrydigheid staan met die posisie wat in die laaste hoofstuk van die *Institusie* ingeneem word.*

Sleutel terme: Calvyn; weerstand; heerser; Protestant; Frankryk

1. Introduction

This paper has its origins in the inestimable benefit that I have derived from the expository preaching of John Calvin through the increasing number of his sermons that have, over recent years, been made available in the English language in the form of relatively

inexpensive and newly type-set books.

As has been expressed on more than one occasion by commentators far more erudite and qualified than I am, the beauty of Calvin's recorded thought is its timeless character: its capacity to be as relevant and vital to 21st century people in terms of how we are to understand, be reconciled with and relate to Almighty God and His creation (including ourselves and our fellow men) as it was to Calvin's original readers and hearers back in the 16th century. The reason for this lies in the fact that, irrespective of the subject under consideration, the indelible reference point of Calvin's thought is not the philosophy of man but the Word of God as revealed and presented in Holy Scripture. As in the *Institutes*, so in the sermons, it is difficult to find a single passage from which one does not take away the singular impression that we are dealing here with a man who would rather die than compromise the merest iota of God's Word.

One particular volume of Calvin's sermons that has made a significant contribution to my own personal growth in the grace, knowledge and admonition of the Lord is Douglas Kelly's translation into English of the first 43 chapters of the Genevan reformer's sermons on 2 Samuel, which were preached in St Peter's Church on weekdays throughout the months from May to September 1562.¹

Moreover, as a student and sometime practitioner of public law, my attention has been suitably arrested by those of the aforementioned messages in which Calvin uses the facts and circumstances of the biblical account to address the legality of resistance to civil authority. Of course, this is by no means the first or the only place in which Calvin deals with this issue. Indeed, at the time he was preaching his sermons on 2 Samuel, the proper nature and usefulness of civil government and the circumstances, if any, in which it can forcibly be resisted had long since been expounded on at length by the reformer in chapter 20 of the *Institutes*, the definitive Latin edition of which had been published almost three years previously in 1559.² In addition, prior even to that, Calvin had already addressed the same issue in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, published in 1539³ and in his *Commentary on the First Epistle of Peter*, published in 1551.⁴

What concerns me about Calvin's treatment of the issue in his sermons, however, is that it would at first glance appear inconsistent with the position stated in his earlier writings. With that in mind, the purpose of this paper is to answer the important question of whether certain of the sermons on 2 Samuel disclose a genuine inconsistency in this regard, or whether there is merely an impression of inconsistency that can ultimately be confined to the realms of the illusory by a careful reading of the text in its proper historical milieu.

To achieve this purpose, I will first outline as briefly as possible the key elements of Calvin's teaching on civil government as published prior to 1562. I will then proceed to identify the sermons that are relevant to the subject in hand and the specific passages of those sermons that lie at the heart of my enquiry. Finally, I will outline the contemporary events and circumstances which formed the backdrop to and are alluded to by Calvin in the sermons, before attempting to draw a conclusion as to whether the passages in issue constitute a genuine departure from Calvin's earlier writings, or merely comprise an extension of

1 J. Calvin, 1992. *Sermons on 2 Samuel, Chapters 1-13*, trans. by D. Kelly. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust. They were translated from the Hanns Rückert edition which makes up the first volume of the *Supplementa Calviniana*, 1936-1961. Neukirchen Kreis Moers: Neukirchener Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins. For more details about this edition and the process of translation, see D. Kelly's introduction, p. xi-xvii.

2 See generally Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.20.

3 Comm. on Romans 13:1-7.

4 Comm. on 1 Peter 2:13-17.

the reformer's thought which, when viewed in its proper historical context, is capable of reconciliation with his core teaching on the subject.

2. The fundamentals of Calvin's doctrine of civil magistracy

The fundamentals of Calvin's doctrine of civil government or (as he and his contemporaries would have referred to it) the civil magistracy, as described at length in chapter 20 of the *Institutes*, can be summarised in terms of five essential maxims, as follows:

2.1 Maxim 1: The civil magistracy is ordained by God

It is clear from such passages of Holy Scripture as Exodus 22:8, Psalm 82, Deuteronomy 1:16-17, 2 Chronicles 19:6 and Romans 13, that the civil ruler has a mandate from God and is invested with divine authority to the extent of being God's representative, acting as God's vice-regent in all matters that are entrusted to him under that mandate. In this regard, says Calvin: "No one ought to doubt that civil authority is a calling, not only holy and lawful before God, but also the most sacred and by far the most honourable of all callings in the whole life of mortal men" (Inst. 4.20.4).

2.2 Maxim 2: The civil magistracy is responsible before God

Quoting Jeremiah 48:10 ("Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood"), Calvin expresses the gravity of this maxim in the following terms:

For what great zeal for uprightness, for prudence, gentleness, self-control, and for innocence ought to be required of themselves by those that know they have been ordained ministers of divine justice? How will they have the brazenness to admit injustice to the judgment seat, which they are told is the throne of the living God? How will they have the boldness to pronounce an unjust sentence, by that mouth which they know has been appointed an instrument of divine truth? With what conscience will they sign wicked decrees by that hand which they know has been appointed to record the acts of God? To sum up, if they remember that they are the vicars of God, they should watch with all care, earnestness and diligence, to represent in themselves to men some image of divine providence, protection, goodness, benevolence and justice. And they should perpetually set before themselves the thought that 'if all are cursed who carry out in deceit the work of God's vengeance', much more cursed are they who deceitfully conduct themselves in a righteous calling (Inst. 4.20.6).

2.3 Maxim 3: The civil magistrate is responsible for religion

Says Calvin:

Let no man now be disturbed that I now commit to civil government the duty of rightly establishing religion....For when I approve of a civil administration that aims to prevent the true religion which is contained in God's law from being openly and with public sacrilege violated and defiled with impunity, I do not here, any more than before, allow men to make laws according to their own decision concerning religion and the worship of God (Inst. 4.20.3).

2.4 Maxim 4: The civil magistrate should exercise force within the bounds of his divine mandate

Calvin begins his analysis of this maxim by outlining the oft-repeated objections to its validity:

But here a seemingly hard and difficult question arises: if the law of God forbids

all Christians to kill [Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17; Matt. 5:21], and the prophet prophesies concerning God's holy mountain (the church) that in it men shall not afflict or hurt [Isa. 11:9; 65:25] – how can magistrates be pious men and shedders of blood at the same time? (Inst. 4.20.10.)

Easily and with a clear conscience, responds Calvin, provided that they do not overstep the parameters of their divine mandate as revealed in Scripture:

If we understand that the magistrate in administering punishments does nothing by himself, but carries out the very judgments of God, we shall not be hampered by this scruple. The law of the Lord forbids killing; but that murders may not go unpunished, the lawgiver himself puts into the hand of his ministers a sword to be drawn against all murderers... Would that this were ever before our minds – that nothing is done here from men's rashness, but all things are done on the authority of God who commands it; and while his authority goes before us, we never wander from the straight path! Unless perhaps restraint is laid upon God's justice, that it may not punish misdeeds. But if it is not right to impose any law upon him, why should we try to reproach his ministers? They do not bear the sword in vain, says Paul, for they are ministers of God to execute his wrath, avengers of wrongdoers [Rom. 13:4] (Inst. 4.20.10).

2.5 **Maxim 5: The civil magistrate has the right to wage war**

In many ways a more specific application of maxim 4, the reformer sets out maxim 5 in the following unequivocal terms:

But kings and people must sometimes take up arms to execute ... public vengeance. On this basis we may judge as lawful wars that are so undertaken. For if power has been given them to preserve the tranquillity of their dominion, to restrain the seditious stirrings of restless men, to help those forcibly oppressed, to punish evil deeds - can they use it more opportunely than to check the fury of one who disturbs both the repose of private individuals and the common tranquillity of all, who raises seditious tumults, and by whom violent oppressions and vile misdeeds are perpetrated? (Inst. 4.20.11.)

In summary, then, the divinely ordained role of the civil government as outlined by Calvin is as follows:

1. To cherish and protect the outward worship of God;
2. To defend sound doctrine and the position of Christ's Church;
3. To ensure conformity between our behaviour and the demands of civil righteousness;
4. To help reconcile us to one another; and
5. To promote general peace and tranquillity.

But what if we are dealing with an unjust magistrate who does anything but act in accordance with the above-mentioned mandate? Are we still obliged to give obedience to him? According to Calvin's doctrine of civil government as outlined in the *Institutes*, the answer is a most emphatic yes. It is clear from Scripture [Job 34:30; Hos. 13:11; Isaiah 3:4; Isaiah 10:5; Deut. 28:29; the example of Nebuchadnezzar] that the unjust and ungodly magistrate is no less the instrument of God than his righteous counterpart, having been raised up by God to punish the wickedness of the people. He is therefore not to be resisted by those whom Calvin refers to as "private individuals", who must learn to obey and suffer. (Inst. 4.20.24-29.) The same position is re-emphasised in the reformer's commentary on chapter 2 of 1 Peter, in which he states:

It may ... be objected that kings and magistrates often abuse their power, and

exercise tyrannical cruelty rather than justice. Such were almost all the magistrates when this epistle was written. To this I answer, that tyrants and those like them, do not produce such effects by their abuse, but that the ordinance of God ever remains in force, as the institution of marriage is not subverted though the wife and husband were to act in a way not becoming them. However, therefore, men go astray, yet the end fixed by God cannot be changed.

Were anyone again to object and say, that we ought not to obey princes who, as far as they can, pervert the holy ordinance of God, and thus become savage wild beasts, while magistrates ought to bear the image of God. My reply is this, that government established by God ought to be so highly valued by us, as to honour even tyrants when in power. There is yet another reply still more evident, - that there has never been a tyranny, (nor can one be imagined,) however cruel and unbridled, in which some portion of equity has not appeared; and further, some kind of government, however deformed and corrupt it may be, is still better and more beneficial than anarchy (Comm. on 1 Peter 2:14, 1963:271).

Notwithstanding this, in section 31 of chapter 20 of the *Institutes*, Book 4, Calvin makes it abundantly clear that there are times when God “raises up open avengers from among his servants, and arms them with his command to punish the wicked government and deliver his people, oppressed in unjust ways, from miserable calamity.....Thus he delivered the people of Israel from the tyranny of Pharaoh through Moses [Ex. 3:7-10]; from the violence of Chusan, king of Syria through Othniel [Judg. 3:9]”. (Inst. 4.20.30.) Indeed, says the reformer,

... if there are now any magistrates of the people, appointed to restrain the wilfulness of kings (... *perhaps*,⁵ as things now are, such powers as the three estates exercise in every realm when they hold their chief assemblies), I am so far from forbidding them to withstand, in accordance with their duty, the fierce licentiousness of kings, that if they wink at kings who violently fall upon and assault the lowly common folk, I declare that their dissimulation involves nefarious perfidy, because they dishonestly betray the freedom of the people, of which they know that they have been appointed protectors by God’s ordinance (Inst. 4.20.31, my emphasis).

3. The passages from the sermons on 2 Samuel

Having reminded ourselves of the essential principles of Calvin’s doctrine of civil government, let us now turn our attention to two fairly short yet important passages from his sermons on 2 Samuel.

The passages are contained in two sermons, the first being preached in Geneva on Thursday June 4th 1562,⁶ and the second on the following day, Friday June 5th 1562 (Sermon on 2 Samuel 2:18-32, cf. Kelly, 1992:77-91).⁷ In them Calvin takes as his text 2 Samuel 2:8-32, the historical background to which is as follows:

- King Saul has been killed in battle by the Philistines;
- In response to God’s commandment in 2 Samuel 2:1, David has moved with his forces from Philistia into Judah, and been anointed king over the house

5 Latin: *forte*. French: *possible*.

6 Sermon on 2 Samuel 2:8-17 (Kelly, 1992:63-76; p. 36-44 in Volume 1 of the *Supplementa Calviniana*. The following title has been given to this sermon in the English translation: “The Dreadful ‘Game’ of War”).

7 Volume 1 of the *Supplementa Calviniana*, pp. 44-53. Kelly added the following title to his translation: “Disunity and War”.

- of Judah in Hebron;
- Meanwhile, Abner, the chief of Saul's army, has made Saul's son Ishbosheth king over all Israel in Mahanaim;
 - Thereafter, Abner and the other servants of Ishbosheth travel from Mahanaim to Gibeon and launch an armed attack against the servants of David;
 - There follows a battle and pursuit in which 360 of Ishbosheth's men are slain by David's army.

The first passage reads:

How much more must we keep ourselves under control when we see that our enemies are exasperating us as much as they can in order to make us quarrel! Let us in no way be eager seekers of vainglory or of high position. Rather, let us humble ourselves, and although we see our enemies so addicted to evil, let us not be ashamed to seek their good as far as we can.

However, that will not prevent us from resorting to arms when it is necessary. In that case we will do all that necessity requires. But, be that as it may, let no evil proceed from us, and let us never seek to shed human blood, except to maintain the cause of God when it is necessary (Sermon on 2 Sam. 2:8-17, cf. Kelly, 1992:73).

The second and subsequent passage reads:

There is a double war in the Church because of religion, for often it is the case that swords are not unsheathed, and yet they manage to have a battle. Indeed, if there are heresies and errors, it is legitimate to kill one another, for poison, when it is widespread, does far more evil than the sword. Now this is one kind of mortal combat. When people are banded against one another in sects and when there are heresies in the Church, eventually they reach the point of action with swords. After people have waged verbal debates and have grown more stubborn so that they exercise less restraint, it becomes necessary to resort to arms. (Sermon on 2 Samuel 2:18-32, cf. Kelly, 1992:86.)

Let us not be astonished, therefore, if this takes place in our own times. For however horrible a thing it is to hear that only three hundred faithful men are dead and that they bear the name of God, we still must not conclude that Joab did wrong in fighting against Abner and his army ... And why? Because the fight was good and just and approved by God. It would have been by no means proper for David to give up his right to the crown and fail to go forward when God had given him his hand. Now then, are we to condemn those who fight not merely under a mortal man, but for the truth of God, for his service, for the pure religion, for the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Therefore, let us note well when there are wars inside the Church, that even if the matter is wrong in itself, still that does not mean that one should confuse judgement by considering both parties in the same class or as wrapped up together in the same bundle. That would be a failure to discern properly. And even when there are two opposing camps in the Church, if one is opposing the truth of God in order to overthrow it and the other holds to the good so that it may always follow what is commanded, it is certain that whoever is neutral will be disloyal and a traitor. (Sermon on 2 Samuel 2:18-32, cf. Kelly, 1992:87.)

So what are we to make of this? Contrary to all that Calvin would appear to have stated in chapter 20 of the *Institutes*, Book 4, is it now the case that if an heretical faction within the visible Church and *under the auspices of the civil magistrate* proceeds physically to persecute believers, upholders and defenders of God's revealed truth, then they, as private individuals

have not only the right, but the duty, to use physical force in defence of themselves and that truth? Bitter as it might be for us to admit, are we to be left with no option but to embrace the unsatisfactory conclusion of Robert Knecht that Calvin was indeed “a master of equivocation”? (Cf. Knecht, 2010: 23.) Upon careful reflection, it is my view that such a concession would be as unnecessary as it is premature. Instead, the key to the conundrum lies not so much in what Calvin says as in what he does not say; or, to be more accurate, in what he did not have to say to a congregation fully familiar with the current affairs of the day.

The first clue to the solution lies in one of Calvin’s opening paragraphs to his sermon on 2 Sam. 2:8-17 in which he makes the following incisive application:

We have here a mirror to show us how pride and haughtiness is a mortal plague which is bound to dissipate the Church of God, of which the reign of David was a type. We see the present state of the Church reflected in the war. Abner put on a good appearance, claiming to fight for possession of the kingdom which was once for all established; thus implying that the tribe of Judah wished to introduce innovations and to resist God. Therefore Abner, on his part, could claim that he was maintaining the law, which even in his day was of ancient date. David and his followers were accused of causing a revolution, of attempting to take the seat of authority and of spreading sedition amongst an impoverished people. In the same way today, the papists claim antiquity and establishment and custom when they want to exalt themselves. And, indeed, they make our cause odious by charging us with introducing novelties and changing the character of the Church. In this way, they wish to make us guilty of all the evil which has happened during the last forty years, and which grows and increases more and more (Sermon on 2 Samuel 2:8-17, cf. Kelly, 1992:64).

As the master exegete, Calvin was fully aware that the events described in 2 Samuel 2:18-32 embody, in the providence of God, a *telos*, a universal purpose, which goes far beyond a mere narrative account of certain historical events that occurred in the context of ancient Israel, and which is applicable to the Church of God in all generations. As a skilled preacher of the word, what we see here is Calvin identifying that *telos* and applying it to his contemporary listeners so as to inform them, edify them, comfort them and elicit a practical, biblical, Christ-centred response from them in terms of the immediate, real and personal circumstances which concerned them. It is thus only when we identify those circumstances, that the apparently anomalous passages cited above begin to take on a meaning which renders them fully cogent with Calvin’s pre-1559 teaching on the same subject.

4. The Contemporary Historical Milieu

The contemporary historical context in which Calvin preached his sermons on 2 Samuel can briefly be summarised as follows:

1. Although Pastor of the Genevan flock, in word and deed Calvin rarely makes any secret of the fact that his burden is for the French homeland from which he had been forced to flee in early 1536, in order to escape the flames of King Francis I’s bonfires kindled in the wake of the Placards Affair.
2. Since 1555, Calvin had been responsible for the theological and pastoral training in Geneva of vast numbers of missionary pastors, many of whom were refugees from the severe persecution of French Protestants at that stage being meted out by King Henry II, and all of whom ultimately travelled across the border to France with the object of ministering to the faithful and planting new congregations.
3. The result of this fervent missionary endeavour, in conjunction with the

sovereign providence of God in the outpouring of His Holy Spirit, was that by 1562 (the year of these sermons) there were, according to a survey undertaken by Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, 2150 Huguenot congregations throughout the whole of France, with the populations of a geographical area the size of roughly one-third of the country expressing voluntary submission to the authority of the French Protestant Synod which had by then been established.

4. A significant number of Calvin's hearers in June 1562 would have been French Protestant refugees from the latest wave of persecution that had commenced with the massacre of Vassy in March of the same year.
5. In terms of its substance, the foundation of the state constitution of 16th century France was avowedly Christian as opposed to specifically Roman Catholic. As has been underscored by Mack Holt:

French coronations traditionally took place in the Cathedral Church of Reims with the local archbishop officiating. With the ecclesiastical and lay peers of the realm, as well as the *eveques* (or elders) of the French church and the royal princes of the blood assembled around him, the new king was required to make explicit his duties and responsibilities to the Christian church in his coronation oath. In the first part of the oath, called the ecclesiastical oath, the king swore: 'I shall protect the canonical privilege, due law, and justice, and I shall exercise defence of each *eveque* and of each church committed to him, as much as I am able – with God's help – just as a king ought properly to do in his kingdom'. ... [This was then followed by] ... the concluding section [of the oath], called the oath of the kingdom: 'To this Christian populace subject to me, I promise in the name of Christ: First, that by our authority the whole Christian populace will preserve at all times true peace for the Church of God... Also, that in good faith to all men I shall be diligent to expel from my land and also from the jurisdiction subject to me all heretics designated by the Church. I affirm by oath all this said above' (Holt, 2005:7).

6. It is important to note that the key references in the oath are to the "Christian church", "the Church of God" and "Church", with no mention being made of Rome or the Holy See, and that the promise is made in the name of Christ, and not the "Virgin", the "Saints" or the papacy.
7. The ruler of France in June 1562 was King Charles IX, who, although he had taken the oath and been crowned, was only ten years old, and thus required to govern under the guardianship of a regent. In terms of French constitutional law the regency ought to have gone to the first prince of the blood (i.e. the adult prince who would inherit the throne in the event that all the king's younger siblings pre-deceased him without issue).
8. The first prince of the blood was Antoine de Bourbon, Prince of Navarre, a Huguenot sympathiser, but a weak character who, in return for perceived self-gain had stepped aside in favour of the boy king's mother, Catherine de Medici, instead of abdicating (as ought legally to have been the case) in favour of the second prince of the blood, Louis de Bourbon, Prince of Condé, an ardent supporter of the true Church of God and the Huguenot cause.
9. The real fly in the ointment, however, was the virulently Roman Catholic and enormously powerful Guise family, whose leader, François Duke of Guise, had effectively usurped the regency from Navarre and Condé during the preceding era of King Francis II, whose unashamed ambition was to put the entire Huguenot population to the sword and restore Roman Catholic worship to the whole of France by force, and who continued to lead such a powerful faction in the Royal Court, whilst exerting such an influence over the young king that the de Medicis were powerless to oust him.
10. The result was that when, in January 1562, de Medici enacted the Edict of St

Germain, which sanctioned a measure of toleration by allowing Huguenots to hold their services of worship in the countryside but not in the walled towns, the Roman Catholic faction under the headship of the Guise studiously ignored the new law. Instead, on 1 March 1562, the Duke of Guise ordered his arquebusiers to open fire on an unarmed Huguenot assembly in the French village of Vassy, culminating in the callous slaughter of dozens of Reformed worshippers.

11. Despite this, it must be remembered that in the previous year the provincial estates (the elected representatives of the nobility, clergy and commons in the provinces of Brittany, Burgundy, Languedoc and Provence) had displayed an aggressive anti-clericalism, called for the expulsion of the Guise from court and even envisaged a Protestant France.
12. In April 1562, the French Protestant Synod met in Orleans and requested that the Prince of Condé muster an army to protect the Reformed churches from further persecution by the Guises. This he did.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, from the perspective of Calvin in his sermons of 4th and 5th June 1562:

1. The faithful Huguenot congregations, now firmly established and dominant under the guardianship of the lesser magistrates in numerous French provinces, constituted the true Church of God under the supreme headship of the Lord Jesus Christ;
2. The Duke of Guise and his followers were clearly opponents of the truth of God, aiming to overthrow it and to retain false Roman doctrine by force, under the spurious pretext that the true Gospel of Christ, as expounded by the Reformed pastors and embraced and disseminated by the Huguenot congregations, amounted to a heretical innovation.
3. King Charles IX, heavily enthralled by the Guise faction and under the equivocal guardianship of Catherine de Medici, was being prevented by undue influence from exercising his oath of office in terms of the defence and protection of God's true Church.
4. Condé, as the only prince of the blood both qualified and willing to do so, and as a lesser magistrate called by Christ to do so through the lawful assembly of God's Church, with the full approval of the provincial estates, was not only legally entitled, but duty bound, after all peaceful means had been exhausted, to raise an army against the Guises and their papist followers, with the object of breaking their influence and guiding the monarch in the maintenance of God's cause through the faithful application and administration of his coronation oath.
5. All those private individuals who are faithful to Christ (the "we" of Calvin's exhortation) are thus equally under a duty to take up arms under the authority of the lesser magistrate and in obedience to his call.
6. To do so in such circumstances is not to resist the civil ruler, but to facilitate and lawfully assist the civil ruler in the fulfilment of his duties as outlined in the five maxims of the *Institutes*.

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