

Column on time

Church and state

The democratic constitutional state is more than “most votes carry the day”. Justice is more than the will of the majority. Should that be the case democracy becomes the majority’s dictatorship.

There is justice, and this justice protects the weak. A democracy without attention for the rights of the weak and the minorities goes under into a dictatorship which can be worse than that of an enlightened tyrant.

Populism

Therefore populism is a danger to democracy. Not because one should be afraid of the voice of the people.

Who as a ruler has no eye for the needs of the people is unsuitable for his job.

Democracy also means to listen what goes on with the man in the street. Even more so because the rulers generally live in better neighbourhoods and are reasonably sheltered against social tensions. Whoever lives in an arrears-district generally has another perception of reality than those living in the upper-class areas. For a long time the multi-cultural and religious society’s praises were sung in the upper-class-areas, but in the arrears-districts nobody sang along.

There the blows struck, there disagreement lived, and precisely there it was necessary that justice was done and injustice was opposed, inconvenience taken on and harmony actively stimulated. From these districts the realistic word of Paul becomes true that the government does not wear the ‘sword’ in vain. A government exists to combat evil and not to give unrealistic idealistic speeches.

Dangerous

And yet populism is dangerous. Then social disagreement tries to find a scape-goat. As long as this scape-goat is handled everything will turn out right. Behind populism is the illusion that once action is taken paradise on earth would commence. The populist pushes forward as the one who will make this paradise commence. He has the solution. He is the saviour and one to bring salvation. But again and again this goes wrong: it turns out into chaos, pressure or incompatibility.

Salvation

It is better to keep an eye on the separation of church and state. The state has an important task. But there is one thing the state does not and the state should not do: creating salvation. The church has limited the task of the state. Or better, Christ did that. Salvation is in Christ. He is the true king. His kingdom will bring true peace and harmony. The identity of man is in His hand. And therefore the state should be satisfied with maintaining justice and resisting injustice. No more and no less.

Democracy is fine, as long as it does not mean that ‘the people’ are the highest authority, that is still justice. Listening to the people and doing justice, that’s what it is about.

November 19th 2009

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