

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 23.-*Of the Civil Magistrate.*

I. God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath Ordained Civil Magistrates, to be, under him, over the People, for his own Glory, and the Publique good: and, to this end hath armed them with the Power of the Sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil doers¹.

Question 1.—*Has God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, ordained civil magistrates?*

Answer.—Yes. Rom. 13:1,2. Magistracy or civil government is the ordinance of God. Those who are qualified and act according to the word of God, are honoured with the appellation of “gods,” Ps. 82, as representing God, whose image they bear, as the moral Governor of the world;—are called God’s ministers, Rom. 13:4,6, as acting by his authority, for his honour, and the interests of his church in the world, Isa. 49:23; 60:12. And the office itself is designed the ordinance of God, Rom. 13:2, because ordained or appointed by him in the volume of his word.

In 1 Pet. 2:13, it is called the ordinance of man. By this we understand that God has not specified the particular form of government, that shall always and in all places be observed; but has left it to society to institute what particular form they find most suitable to their circumstances, *cf.* Tit. 3:1.

Question 2.—*Are these magistrates to be, under him, over the people, for his own glory, and the public good?*

Answer.—Yes. Rom. 13:3,4; 1 Pet. 2:13. Thus, the Anabaptists do err, maintaining that in the kingdom of Christ civil magistrates are absolutely useless. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Magistrates are expressly called “ministers of God for good,” Rom. 13:4. We thereby understand that he was so ordained of God, that, being defended by his hand and aid against the dishonesty and injustice of wicked men, we may live quiet and secure, 1 Tim. 2:1, 2. But if he would have been appointed over us in vain, unless we were to use his aid, it is plain that it cannot be wrong to appeal to it and implore it, *cf.* Rom. 13:4. 2.) Kings are said to reign by the Wisdom of the Lord, Prov. 8:15,16—which is Christ, *cf.* 1 Cor. 1:24. It is just as if it had been said, that it is not owing to human perverseness that supreme power on earth is lodged in kings and other governors, but by Divine Providence, and the holy decree of Him to whom it has seemed good so to govern the affairs of men, since he is present, and also presides in enacting laws and exercising judicial equity, Dan. 2:21. 3.) It was a great blessing shown to Israel that God ruled them by giving them his laws and statutes, Ps. 147:19,20. 4.) The saints of God are to praise God in the execution of righteous judgments, Ps. 149:6-9. 5.) Kings are commanded to be nursing fathers unto the people of God, Isa. 49:23. Isaiah does not bid them abdicate their authority; he rather gives them the honourable appellation of patrons of the pious worshippers of God; for the prophecy refers to the advent of Christ, Ps. 2:10, 11.

¹Rom. 13:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:13,14.

Question 3.—*Has God armed the civil magistrate with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil-doers?*

Answer.—Yes. Rom. 13:3,4; 1 Pet. 2:13,14. Thus, the Socinians and other hereticks err, maintaining that it is not the duty of the magistrate to punish the guilty with death. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because God has expressly commanded, that transgressing idolaters be put to death, Deut. 17:7; 19:21. 2.) Because it appertains to the office and duty of the magistrate, to punish the guilty with death, Rom. 13:4; 1 Pet. 2:14. 3.) Because the capital punishment of evil-doers makes others stand in awe, and fear to offend, Deut. 13:11; 19:20. 4.) Because, if the magistrate shall neglect to inflict due punishment, the Lord himself will be avenged on that magistrate, 1 Kings 20:42; Num. 25:4. 5.) Because he that smiteth a man so that he die, shall be surely put to death, Ex. 21:12. 6.) Because all that take the sword shall perish by the sword, Matt. 26:52. Namely, without a lawful call, or order for it. They shall perish by order and command of the magistrate to whom the Lord has given the sword for this very same end, to punish evil-doers with death, Gen. 9:6; Rom. 13:4.