

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 31.-Of Synods and Councils.

II. As Magistrates may lawfully call a Synod of Ministers, and other fit Persons, to consult and advise with, about matters of Religion¹; So, if Magistrates be open Enemies to the Church, the ministers of Christ of themselves, by vertue of their Office; or, they, with other fit persons, upon delegation from their Churches, may meet together in such Assemblies².

Question 1.—*May magistrates lawfully call a synod of ministers, and other fit persons to consult, and advise with, about matters of religion?*

Answer.—Yes. Isa. 49:23; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2; Matt. 2:4, 5; Prov. 11:14. Thus do the Papists err maintaining that the civil magistrate has 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 ecumenical and general synods. Likewise, do they err who maintain that the magistrate may not seek the consultation and advice of such a synod. Such are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because the custody of the divine law was committed to the magistrate by divine command, Deut. 17:18, 19. Now, this command is repeated in Joshua, 1:8. Also, in the solemn inauguration of Jehoash the book of the law is given to him by Jehoiada that he may understand that the guardianship of it has been committed to him, 2 Kings 11:12. This command is confirmed from other passages which suppose that the magistrate ought to have a special care for religion, Ps. 2:11, 12; 72:10, 11; 1 Tim. 2:2. 2.) 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. 3.) Because of the titles given to magistrates in Scripture, Isa. 49:23; 60:10; Ps. 82:6; Isa. 44:28; 1 Sam. 24:11. 4.) From the approved examples of kings and magistrates, Moses administering the office of a king over the people, Deut. 33:5; David takes care that the ark be brought back, and appoints singers and distributes the duties of Levites, 1 Chron. 15:16; 23:6. Also, David prepares all things necessary for the building of the temple, 1 Chron. 22:2. Solomon removes Abiathar from office and puts Zadok in his place, 1 Kings 2:27; builds the temple, 1 Kings 6:1. Asa overthrows the altars and statues of foreign worship and cuts down groves, 1 Kings 15:12, 15; 2 Chron. 14:4. Jehoshaphat brings about a reformation and ordains an ecclesiastical and political senate, 2 Chron. 19. Joash restores the temple, 2 Kings 12:4, 5. Hezekiah takes away the high places and destroys the false worship, 2 Kings 18:4; and repairs and opens the house of the Lord, reforms worship and enters into covenant with the Lord, 2 Chron. 29:10. Josiah publishes the book of the law found by Hilkiyah the priest, 2 Kings 23:2; 2 Chron. 34:30. 5.) 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

¹ Isa. 49:23; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2; 2 Chron. 19:8-11; 2 Chron. 29, 30, *chapters*; Matt. 2:4, 5; Prov. 11:14.

² Acts 15:2, 4, 22, 23, 25.

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; Ps. 122:7-9; Ezra 7:23, 25-28; Lev. 24:16; Deut. 13:5, 6, 12; 1 Chron. 13:1-9; 2 Kings 23:1-25. 6.) 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.

Question 2.—May not ministers of the church, of themselves, by virtue of their office, meet in assemblies, with other fit persons, upon delegation from their churches, when magistrates are open enemies to the Christian religion?

Answer.—Yes. Acts 15:2, 4, 22, 23, 25. Thus do the Erastians err maintaining that the ministers of the Gospel have no right or power in themselves, or by virtue of their office, to meet in a synod or council. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because the church of God in the primitive times had power in themselves to convocate their own assemblies, for worship and government, not without, but against the consent of the civil magistrate, as is evident from the Acts of the Apostles, 5:27-29; and church histories. 2.) Though the power and right of meeting in church assemblies is visible in the constitution and exercise, yet it is intrinsic, and within the church, as well as the power of preaching, Acts 15:2; Tit. 1:5.