
CHAPTER 23: OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE

1. *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 public 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 evildoers.*¹

1. Rom. 13:1-4; I Pet. 2:13-14.

Notes:

- Summary: Power of Civil Magistrates
 - Source: God
 - Purpose: For God's glory and public good
 - Extent: Defence of good, punishment of evil

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2. *It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto;² in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth;³ so, for that end, they may lawfully now under the New Testament, wage war upon just and necessary occasions.*⁴

2. Prov. 8:15-16; Rom. 13:1-2, 4.

3. Ps. 2:10-12; I Tim. 2:2; Ps. 82:3-4; II Sam. 23:3; I Pet. 2:13.

4. Luke 3:14; Rom. 13:4; Matt. 8:9-10; Acts 10:1-2; Rev. 17:14, 16.

Notes:

- Summary: Christians as Civil Magistrates
 - Lawful for Christians when called.
 - Manner of rule: piety, justice, and peace.
 - Just war is lawful.

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3. *Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments; or the power of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven;⁵ or, in the least, interfere in matters of faith. Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred*

functions, without violence or danger. And, as Jesus Christ has appointed a regular government and discipline in his Church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, let, or hinder the due exercise thereof, among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no person be suffered, either upon pretence of religion or of infidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever: and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance. ^{iv}

5. II Chron. 26:18; with Matt. 18:17; and Matt. 16:19; Eph. 4:11-12; I Cor. 4:1-2; Rom. 10:15; Heb. 5:4.

Notes:

- Summary: Distinction of Civil Magistrate and the Church
 - o No power to:
 - Administer the Word
 - Administer Sacraments
 - Spread the Gospel
 - Interfere in matters of faith
 - Interfere with Church government and discipline
 - o Power to:
 - Protect the church impartially
 - Uphold the law and order

4. *It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates,⁶ to honour their persons,⁷ to pay them tribute and other dues,⁸ to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority for conscience' sake.⁹ Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him:¹⁰ from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted,¹¹ much less hath the Pope any power or jurisdiction over them in their dominions, or over any of their people and least of all to deprive them of their dominions or lives, if he shall judge them to be heretics, or upon any other pretence whatsoever.*¹²

6. I Tim. 2:1-2.

7. I Pet. 2:17.

8. Rom. 13:6-7.

9. Rom. 13:5; Tit. 3:1.

10. I Pet. 2:13-14, 16

11. Rom. 13:1; I Kings 2:35; Acts 25:9-11; II Pet. 2:1, 10-11; Jude 8-11.

12. II Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:15-17.

Notes:

- Summary: Relation to Civil Magistrates
 - o Duty:
 - To pray

- To honour
- To pay tribute
- To obey lawful commands and be subject to authority
- Exceptions:
 - Unfaithfulness of authority is not an exception
 - Difference of religion is not an exception