

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 23.-*Of the Civil Magistrate.*

III. The Civil Magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and Sacraments, or the power of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven¹: yet, he hath Authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that Unity and Peace be preserved in the Church, that the Truth of God be kept pure, and intire; that all Blasphemies and Heresies be suppressed; all corruptions and abuses in Worship and Discipline prevented, or reformed; and all the Ordinances of God duly settled, administred, and observed². For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call Synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them, be according to the minde of God³.

Question 1.—*May the civil magistrate assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven?*

Answer.—No. 2 Chron. 26:18; 1 Cor. 12:28, 29; Rom. 10:15; Heb. 5:4. Thus do the Erastians err, maintaining that the civil magistrate has in himself all church power; and so may administer the sacraments, and preach the word, and may exercise the power of the kingdom of heaven. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because Christ has given no such power to magistrates. This is made evident from all those places of Scripture, where mention is made of the keys. There is not in them one syllable of the civil magistrate, Matt. 18:17; 16:15, 19. 2.) If the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven agree to the magistrate, as a magistrate, then it ought to agree to every magistrate, though the magistrate were an infidel, or a woman, which is absurd. 3.) A magistrate as a magistrate, is not a minister of the church, as is evident from all the catalogues of the ministers of the church. For in them, you will not find any mention of the magistrate, Eph. 4:11; Rom. 12:7, 8; 1 Cor. 12:8-10. 4.) Because before ever there was a Christian magistrate in the world, the church exercised all acts of church jurisdiction and government. The church ordained ministers and pastors, 1 Tim. 4:14. And inflicted the censure of excommunication, 1 Cor. 5:5. And relaxed the penitent from censure; called a synod and stigmatized heretics, Acts 15. 5.) Because God has put a difference between the church government and the civil, and has appointed distinct governors to them, 2 Chron. 19:8-11. 6.) Because God did severely punish Saul and Uzziah, for presuming to offer sacrifice, which was proper to the priest only, 1 Sam. 13:9, 10, 13; 2 Chron. 26:16, 19.

Question 2.—*Is it the duty of the civil magistrate to take order, that all blasphemies, and heresies be suppressed, all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed; all abuses in worship and discipline reformed, all idolaters, gainsayers, and other obstinate dissenters, be obliged and forced to quit their tenets and opinions, and conform themselves to the true worship and service of God according to his law?*

¹ 2 Chron. 26:18 *with* Matt. 18:17 & Matt. 16:19; 1 Cor. 12:28, 29; Eph. 4:11, 12; 1 Cor. 4:1, 2; Rom. 10:15; Heb. 5:4.

² Isa. 49:23; Ps. 122:9; Ezra 7:23, 25-28; Lev. 24:16; Deut. 13:5, 6, 12; 2 Kings 18:4; 1 Chron. 13:1-9; 2 Kings 23:1-26; 2 Chron. 34:33; 2 Chron. 15:12, 13.

³ 2 Chron. 19:8-11; 2 Chron. 29 & 30 chapters; Matt. 2:4,5.

Answer.—Yes. 2 Kings 23:1-26. Thus do the Quakers, and other sectaries err, who judge it antichristian, and the practice of the church of Rome, that the civil supreme magistrate, with the assistance of the church and her censures, should by his coactive power, force and oblige all his subjects to a reformation of religion, and to a conformity to the true worship, sound doctrine, and discipline of the church. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because it is foretold by the prophet Isaiah, that in the days of the Gospel, kings shall be nursing fathers and queens nursing mothers to the church of God, Isa. 49:23. 2.) Because Artaxerxes, who was but a heathen king, was very careful to make a decree, that whatsoever was commanded by the God of heaven, should be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven. And whosoever would not obey the law of God and the king was punished speedily. For which singular mercy Ezra blessed the God of his fathers, who had put such a thing in the king's heart, Ezra 7:23, 25-28. So, too, did Nebuchadnezzar make such a decree, Dan. 3:29. The like we read of Darius, Dan. 6:26. 3.) From the example of Hezekiah, who removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent, to which the Israelites did burn incense, 2 Kings 18:4. 4.) From the example of Josiah, who made a thorough reformation; and made all Israel serve the Lord their God. The word in the Hebrew imports, that he in a manner forced and compelled them to the pure worship of God, as a servant is forced and compelled to his work. He, by his royal power and authority, kept them in order, forbidding idolatry, and commanding them to serve God no otherwise, than according to his word, 2 Chron. 15:12, 13; 34:33. They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and whosoever should not was to be put to death. 5.) Because whosoever blasphemed the name of the Lord, was surely put to death, Lev. 24:16. This blaspheming was a piercing through or stabbing the name of the Lord, as is indicated in the Hebrew, which may also be done by maintaining blasphemous errors and heresies. 6.) Because the supreme magistrate is *custos utriusque tabulae*, a keeper of both tables of the law of God. As well the first, which relates to religion, and of our duty to God; as of the second, which relates to righteousness, and our duty to our neighbour. If then, he may punish evil doers who have offended against the second table, and force and compel them to obedience by the sword of justice, which God has put in his hand; much more may he punish idolaters and blasphemers, who offend against the first table, and compel them to obedience, seeing there are many sins against the first table, which are more heinous and odious than the sins against the second table. And though it is a sinful practice of the church of Rome, to force men and women to be of their religion, which is superstitious and idolatrous; yet it is not so to others, who have the true religion among them.

Question 3.—*Has the civil magistrate power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God?*

Answer.—Yes. 2 Chron. 19:10, 11; Matt. 2:4, 5. Thus, the Papists do err, maintaining that the judgment and care of religion does not belong to the civil magistrate. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because the custody and keeping of the divine law, is committed by God to the civil magistrate, Deut. 17:18. 2.) Because it was foretold, that kings should be nursing fathers to the church, Isa. 49:23. 3.) Because it is the duty of the magistrate, to take care that subjects may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty, 1 Tim. 2:2. 4.) From the commendable examples of the good kings of Judah, 2 Chron. 29, 30.