

Sunday Evening November 26, 2023
Romans 13:1–7
WCF Chapter XXIII - Of the Civil Magistrate (2)

1. God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, has ordained civil authorities to be, under him, over the people, for his own glory and the public good. For this purpose he has armed them with the power of the sword for the defense and encouragement of those who are good, and for the punishment of those who do evil.
2. It is lawful for Christians to hold public office when called to it. In such office they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth. For that purpose they may now, under the new testament, lawfully wage war upon just and necessary occasion.
3. Civil authorities may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, nor should they interfere in any way in matters of faith. *(Then the American chapter, was rewritten and continues:)* Yet, as caring fathers, it is the duty of civil authorities to protect the church of our common Lord without giving preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest— doing so in such a way that all church authorities shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of carrying out every part of their sacred functions without violence or danger. As Jesus Christ has appointed a regular government and discipline in his church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, prevent, or hinder their proper exercise among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil authorities to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effective manner that no person be allowed, either in the name of religion or of unbelief, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatever. They should also take care that all religions and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without interference or disturbance.
4. It is the duty of people to pray for those in authority, to honor them, to pay them taxes or other revenue, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority for the sake of conscience. Neither unbelief nor difference in religion makes void the just and legal authority of officeholders nor frees the people—church authorities included—from their due obedience to them. Much less does the Pope have any power or jurisdiction over civil authorities in their domains or over any of their people, nor can he deprive them of their domains or lives if he shall judge them to be heretics or on any other pretense whatever.

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- I. Civil Office is Legitimate for Christians sect 2
 - A. The Legitimacy of Public Office Is Because God Is the Source of Civil Government Rom. 13:2

 - B. The Legitimacy of Public Office Is Because God Is the Judge of Civil Government Rom 13:4; Matt. 22:17

- II. Civil Office Is Limited by God sect 3
 - A. Their Opposition to this Section— what they removed from the original WCF

 - B. Their Concerns in this Section—what they added to the original WCF
 1. That the State Protect the Church
 2. That the State Give Freedom for the Church to Be the Church.
 3. That the State Give Freedom for All Christian Churches in America

- III. Civil Office Is to Be Honored by Christians sect 4
 - A. Qualifications on Christian Duties to Civil Leaders

- B. Description of Christian Duties to Civil Leaders
1. To Pray 1 Tim 2:1–3; Ps. 82:3, 4
 2. To Honor 1 Pet 2:17
 3. To Pay Taxes Rom. 13:5–7
 4. To Obey Lawful Commands Rom. 13:5; Titus 3:1

- C. The Result of Christian Duties of Civil Leaders
1. Christians Will Be the Best of Citizens Rom 1:30; 2 Tim. 3:1–2

John Calvin: *“We are not only subject to the authority of princes who perform their office toward us uprightly and faithfully as they ought, but also to the authority of all who, by whatever means, have got control of affairs, even though they perform not a whit of the princes’ office.”*

2. Christians Will Be the Worst of Citizens
 - a] Believers cannot be silent when the ruler does wrong
 - b] Believers are to work for just laws
 - c] Believers depend on moral persuasion

Os Guinness: *“In church and in the public square, contend for Christian principles and biblical truth through principled persuasion.”*

Lael Arrington: *“If we give in to the urge to use image over argument, appeal to inflamed passions over Spirit-led discernment of truth, then we confirm the Washington Post’s critique of the fundamental and evangelical Christian community as ‘poor, uneducated, and easy to command.’”*

- d] believers are to persevere Mic 6:8