

BELGIC CONFESSION - ARTICLE 36

The Magistrates

We believe that our good God, because of the depravity of mankind, has appointed kings, princes, and magistrates, desiring that the world should be governed by certain laws and policies; to the end that the lawlessness of men might be restrained, and all things carried on among them with good order and decency. For this purpose He has invested the magistracy with the sword, *for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well*. And their office is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also that they protect the sacred ministry, **and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship; that the kingdom of antichrist may be thus destroyed, and** that the kingdom of Christ may be promoted. They must, therefore, permit the preaching of the word of the gospel everywhere, that God may be honored and worshipped by every one, as He commands in His Word.

Moreover, it is the duty of every one, regardless of what state, quality, or condition he may be in, to subject himself to the magistrates;¹ to pay tribute,² to show due honor and respect to them, and to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the Word of God;³ to supplicate for them in their prayers, that God may rule and guide them in all their ways, and that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.⁴

Wherefore we detest the error of the Anabaptists and other seditious people, and in general all those who reject the higher powers and magistrates, and would subvert justice, introduce a community of goods, and confound that decency and good order which God has established among men.

Verses for Consideration

1. Titus 3:1; Romans 13:1-2
2. Mark 12:17
3. Acts 4:17–19; Acts 5:29
4. 1 Timothy 2:1–2

Questions for Consideration

1. What is the source of the power that is held by kings, princes, and magistrates?
2. What is the main job of the magistrates?
3. How far should we go in our obedience to the civil magistrates?