

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Midweek Activities

2

6:00-6:25 Supper

6:30-6:50 Prayer Meeting in Fellowship Hall

6:50-7:30 Classes

- **American Gospel:** Fellowship Hall
- **To God's Glory:** Adult Sunday School Room
- **KidsQuest:** Small Parlor (Old Building)

Presbyterianism 101

ALL TO GOD'S GLORY:
Truth and Government
(WCF 22-23)

3

The Christian Life: Oaths, Gov't

- **New Section of WCF:** Largely focused on the means of grace
- **What does the Truth have to do with the Civil Magistrate, Government?**
- **Fullness of Christian Life:** Christianity informs the words we speak, impacts our view of Government, transforms our duty to the Governing Authorities

5

Lawful Oaths are Acts of Worship (22.1)

6

A lawful oath is a part of religious worship, wherein, upon just occasion, the person swearing solemnly calleth God to witness what he asserteth, or promiseth, and to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he sweareth.

Lawful Oaths are Acts of Worship

7

- **Oath Defined:** an oath is to call God as witness to verify the truth of one's words
- **How to Swear:** Oaths must be sworn in God's name; to use His Name lightly is profanity
- **Nature of Oaths:** Oaths may not bind to what is false or sin; oaths must be sworn when imposed by *lawful* authority
- **Solemnity of Oaths:** Oaths are not to be changed, abandoned, vacated lightly

The Source, Purpose of Gov't (23.1)

8

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 evil doers.

The Source, Purpose of Gov't (23.1)

9

- **Divine Institution:** God has not stipulated the precise form of government, but all civil laws *should* conform to God's Natural Law, what He reveals in Nature
- **Enlightenment Ideas:** power derived from the "consent of the governed," "will of the majority"??
- **1 John 5:16,** *If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that.*

The Source, Purpose of Gov't (23.1)

10

- **Divine Institution**
 - **Enlightenment Ideas**
 - **Divine Will:** the source of the magistrate's power, authority, and legitimacy
- 1 Peter 2:13-17,** *Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*

The Source, Purpose of Gov't (23.1)

11

- **Purpose:** public good; encourage the good, punish evildoer
 - If a government fails to do good, promotes evil is their just cause in rejecting, overthrowing, defying that government?
 - Ultimate End of Government: Glory of God
- **Power of Government:** the sword, i.e. capital punishment is instituted by God

Christian Magistrates (23.2)

12

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

Christian Magistrates (23.2)

13

- **New Covenant Relationship:** complexity of status of Christian to the Civil Government
 - Reject Secular Gov't Completely?
 - Reject Participation in Gov't?
 - Reject Participation in Gov't *except* Christian Government or Christian Political Party
- **Civil Authority Derived from God Always:**
(ir)Regardless of whether His Authority is acknowledged

Christian Magistrates (23.2)

14

- **Church and State Similar**
 - Ordained of God
 - Ordained for His Glory
 - Ordained for Good of Mankind
- **Church and State Different**

Christian Magistrates (23.2)

15

- **Church and State Similar**
- **Church and State Different**

1. "The state ordained for man as man; the church for man as sinner in condition of inchoate restoration and salvation. The state is for the whole race of man; the church consist of that portion of the race which is really or by credible profession, the mediatorial body of Christ."
- Thos. E. Peck, 1863

Christian Magistrates (23.2)

16

- **Church and State Similar**
- **Church and State Different**

2. "The next point of difference between the church and state is the rules by which they are to be respectively regulated in the exercise of their functions. The rule of the church is the word of God... The rule for the state is the light of nature or human reason." T. E. Peck, "Church and State," 1863
(*Miscellanies*, 2.281)

Christian Magistrates (23.2)

17

- **Should the Bible and Supremacy of Christ be Acknowledged in Civil Constitutions?**

- If it can be honestly and sincerely done
- "As the doctrine of the supremacy of Christ is a doctrine of pure revelation, it forms no part of the essential functions of civil government to teach it or profess it..." (T. E. Peck, 2.284)

Christian Magistrates (23.2)

18

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Romans 13:1-2, *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.*

19

Christian Magistrates (23.2)

20

- **Civil Authority Derived from God Always:**
(ir)Regardless of whether His Authority is acknowledged
- **Duty of Magistrates:** maintain justice, peace, piety on pain of destruction (cf. Psa 2:9-12, *You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*). Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. . Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.)

Elements of Public Worship (21.5)

21

- **Christians may become Magistrates**
 - Christians (ought to) make the best magistrates
 - Most magistrates are in rebellion against God
- **What are Christian Magistrates to do?**
 - Establish Christianity?
 - Enforce “wholesome laws” of the commonwealth
 - Wage War?

Magistrate and the Church (23.3)

22

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 heaven: 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 entire; 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, administrated, and observed. 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 mind of God.

Magistrate and the Church (23.3)

23

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; 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...

Magistrate and the Church (23.3)

24

...And, as Jesus Christ hath 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 pretense 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.

Magistrate and the Church (23.3)

25

• **Limits to Magistrate's Authority!**
• **Church and Government:** both established by God with different spheres of authority, objects, purposes; this is true in Old and New covenant
2 Chron 26:16-19, *But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the LORD who were men of valor, and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God." Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the LORD, by the altar of incense.*

Magistrate and the Church (23.3)

26

• **Magistrate has no jurisdiction over Church Affairs (keys of the Kingdom)**
- Magistrate has a duty to promote, guarantee the freedom of people to worship
- May the magistrate summon councils? Maintain doctrinal purity?
• **Civil Magistrate may be a member of the Church, but has no governing authority**

"Sirrah, ye are God's silly vassal; there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is king James, the head of the commonwealth; and there is Christ Jesus, the king of the Church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, not a lord, not a head, but a member."
- Andrew Melville

27

"It is further declared, That the Assembly understandeth some parts of the second article of the thirty-one chapter only of **kirks not settled, or constituted in point of government**: And that although, in such kirks, a synod of Ministers, and other fit persons, may be called by the Magistrate's authority and nomination, without any other call, to consult and advise with about matters of religion; and although, likewise, the Ministers of Christ, without delegation from their churches, may of themselves, and by virtue of their office, meet together synodically in such kirks not yet constituted, **yet neither of these ought to be done in kirks constituted and settled...**"
- General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

Subject's Duty (23.4)

28

It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honour their persons, to pay them tribute or other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience' sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to them: from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted, much less hath the Pope any power and 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.

Subject's Duty (23.4)

29

- **Pray for Civil Magistrates** (cf. 1 Tim 2, Psalm 82)
- **Obey, Honor the Civil Magistrate** (cf. 1 Peter 2:17)
 - Obey only insofar as s/he does not command disobedience to God
 - Civil magistrate is worthy of honor by virtue of the calling s/he has received from God (context!)
- **Pay Taxes**

30

Mark 12:14-17, *And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him.*

31

Subject's Duty (23.4)

- **Rebellion?**
 - Wicked rulers are a judgment of God on a people
 - Rebellion is a grievous sin (cf. **2 Peter 2:9-10**, *then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.*)
- **When is Rebellion or Resistance Permissible?**

32

Subject's Duty (23.4)

- **When is Rebellion or Resistance Permissible?**
 - When forced or commanded to sin personally (i.e. not simply that your taxes are used to fund sin)
 - When government so radically corrupt it ceases to be government, but mere thuggery
- **Lower Magistrates**
- **Church Courts Sort out Which Magistrate?**

33

Correction of unbridled despotism is the Lord's to avenge...I am speaking...of private individuals. For if there are now any magistrates of the people, appointed to restrain the willfulness of kings, I am so far from forbidding them to withstand in accordance with their duty the fierce licentiousness of kings..."
(Calvin, Institutes 4.20.31)

34

Subject's Duty (23.4)

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35

"The constitution of the Church assigns to the General assembly no function to the end that it may counsel, direct, or assist the civil government"

"...Questions between different interpretations of the Federal constitution...Questions not of duties toward the recognized Caesar, but of deciding between rival Caesars"

General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church US 1870
