

I have added the coloured emphasis

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The Belgic Confession

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Article 36: *The Civil Government*

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We believe that
because of the depravity of the human race
our good God has ordained kings, princes, and civil officers.
He wants the world to be governed by laws and policies
so that human lawlessness may be restrained
and that everything may be conducted in good order
among human beings.

For that purpose he has placed **the sword**
in the hands of the government,
to punish evil people
and protect the good.

And being called in this manner
to contribute to the advancement of a society
that is pleasing to God,
the civil rulers have the task,
subject to God's law,
of removing every obstacle
to the preaching of the gospel
and to every aspect of divine worship.

They should do this
while completely refraining from every tendency
toward exercising absolute authority,
and while functioning in the sphere entrusted to them,
with the means belonging to them.

They should do it in order that
the Word of God may have free course;
the kingdom of Jesus Christ may make progress;
and every anti-Christian power may be resisted. *

Moreover everyone,
regardless of status, condition, or rank,
must be subject to the government,
and pay taxes,
and hold its representatives in honor and respect,
and obey them in all things that are not in conflict
with God's Word,
praying for them
that the Lord may be willing to lead them
in all their ways
and that we may live a peaceful and quiet life
in all piety and decency. **

* The Synod of 1958, in line with 1910 and 1938, substituted the above statement for the following (which it judged unbiblical):

And the government's task is not limited
to caring for and watching over the public domain
but extends also to upholding the sacred ministry,
with a view to REMOVING AND DESTROYING
all idolatry and false worship of the Antichrist;
to promoting the kingdom of Jesus Christ;
and to furthering the preaching of the gospel everywhere;
to the end that God may be honored and served by everyone,
as he requires in his Word.

** The Synod of 1985 directed that the following paragraph be taken from the body of the text and be placed in a footnote:

And on this matter WE DENOUNCE THE ANABAPTISTS, other anarchists,

and in general all those who want
to reject the authorities and civil officers
and to subvert justice
by introducing common ownership of goods
and corrupting the moral order
that God has established among human beings.