

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 20.-Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience.

II. God alone is Lord of the Conscience¹, and hath left it free from the Doctrines and Commandements of men, which are, in any thing contrary to his Word; or beside it, in matters of Faith, or Worship². So that, to believe such Doctrines, or to obey such Commands, out of Conscience, is to betray true Liberty of Conscience³: and the requiring of an implicate Faith, and an absolute and blinde obedience, is, to destroy Liberty of Conscience, and Reason also⁴.

Question 1.—*Is God alone, Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship?*

Answer.—Yes. Rom. 14:4; 1 Cor. 7:23; 2 Cor. 1:24; Gal. 1:10. Thus do the Papists err, who contradict this, both in doctrine (because they teach that the pope of Rome, and bishops in their own dioceses, may, by their own authority, besides the Word make laws which oblige and bind the conscience, under the pain of everlasting death); and in practice, (because they have obtruded, and do obtrude many ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies, as necessary in worship, without any foundation in Scripture), Prov. 30:5, 6.

They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because there is one lawgiver, who can save and destroy, James 4:12. Therefore no pope, no prelate, nor any mere man can be a lawgiver. 2.) Because Christ rejects the commandments of men from the worship of God, Matt. 15:9. 3.) Because the apostles refused to obey the orders of their council, since they were contrary to the commands of God, Acts 4:19 *and* 5:29. 4.) Because the Lord threatens to do a marvelous work among his people, because they drew near to him with their mouth, (as the most part of the ceremonial service is but a drawing near to God with the mouth), but had their hearts removed far from him, Isa. 29:13, 14. 5.) Because Christ expressly forbids such subjection and obedience to the commands of men, Matt. 23:8-10. 6.) Because the apostles themselves forbid all will-worship, such as the Papists ceremonies are, Col. 2:18, 20-23. 7.) Because the apostle Paul withstood those false brethren, unawares brought in, who came in privily, to spy out his liberty which he had in Christ Jesus, that they might bring him into bondage, to whom he gave place by subjection, no not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue; where he lays so much weight upon Christian liberty, that if it were taken away, the truth of the gospel would perish likewise, Gal. 2:4, 5. 8.) Because the apostle commands believers to stand fast in their liberty, wherewith Christ has made them free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage, Gal. 5:1. 9.) Because ceremonies are superstitious, being a vice

¹ James 4:12; Rom. 14:4.

² Acts 4:19; 5:29; 1 Cor. 7:23; Matt. 23:8-10; 2 Cor. 1:24; Matt. 15:9.

³ Col. 2:20, 22, 23; Gal. 1:10; 2:4, 5; 5:1.

⁴ Rom. 10:17; 14:23; Isa. 8:20; Acts 17:11; John 4:22; Hos. 5:11; Rev. 13:12, 16, 17; Jer. 8:9.

opposite to religion in the excess, commanding more in the worship of God, than he requires, Heb. 13:9.

Question 2.—*Is not the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience to the church, or any man, a destroying of liberty of conscience, and reason also?*

Answer.—Yes. Rom. 10:17; Acts 17:11; John 4:22; Hos. 5:11; Rev. 13:12, 16, 17; Jer. 8:9. Thus do the Papists err, who require an implicit faith to all the decrees and ordinances of their church and pope; and a blind obedience to their commands, without a previous judgment of discretion.

They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because no man performing any duty out of blind obedience, can be persuaded of the will of God therein; and so he that doubteth is damned, because it is not of faith, Rom. 14:23. 2.) Because all things must be examined and proved by the rule of the Word, Isa. 8:20; 1 John 4:1, 2. 3.) Because the apostle says, Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good, 1 Thess. 5:21. 4.) Because blind obedience makes us the servants of men, contrary to 1 Cor. 7:23. And against the command of Christ, forbidding us to call any man Father on earth, Matt. 23:9. 5.) Because absolute obedience is only due to God, whose commands are all most just, himself being the alone lawgiver, James 4:12. 6.) Because every man ought to be ready to render a reason of the hope which is in him, 1 Pet. 3:15. This no man can do, who receives the commands of superiors with an implicit faith.