

## CONFESSION OF FAITH.

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

IV. And because the Powers which God hath ordained, and the Liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God, to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; They, who upon pretence of Christian Liberty, shall oppose any lawfull Power, or the lawfull exercise of it, whether it bee Civil or Ecclesiastical, resist the Ordinance of God<sup>1</sup>. And, for their publishing of such Opinions, or maintaining of such Practises, as are contrary to the light of Nature, or to the known Principles of Christianity, whether concerning Faith, Worship, or Conversation; or, to the Power of Godliness; or, such erroneous Opinions or Practises, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the externall Peace and Order which Christ hath established in the Church, they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the Censures of the Church<sup>2</sup>, and by the Power of the Civil Magistrate<sup>3</sup>.

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Question 1.—*Do those who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise thereof, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Matt. 12:25; 1 Pet. 2:13,14,16. The powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God, to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another. Since both the Church and the State are divine institutions, it follows necessarily that the authority of the officers of each, when acting legitimately within their respective spheres, represents the authority of God and binds the Christian to obedience for conscience' sake, Rom. 13:1-8; Heb. 13:17.

Question 2.—*May such men be lawfully called to an account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magistrate, who publish such opinions, or maintain such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation, or to the power of godliness, or such erroneous opinions and practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order, which Christ hath established in his church?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Rom. 1:32 *with* 1 Cor. 5:1,5,11,13; 2 John 10,11; Rev. 2:2,14,15,20; 3:9. Thus, the Anabaptists err, maintaining that there should be no ecclesiastical censures. Also, those err, maintaining that church censures should not be inflicted upon heretics. They are confuted because: 1.) Because the keys of the kingdom of heaven, are for this end delivered to the ministers of the church, that with censures they may pursue

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<sup>1</sup>Matt. 12:25; 1 Pet. 2:13,14,16; Rom. 13:1-8; Heb. 13:17.

<sup>2</sup>Rom. 1:32 *with* 1 Cor. 5:1,5,11,13; 2 John 10,11; 2 Thess. 3:14; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Tit. 1:10,11,13; Tit. 3:10 *with* Matt. 18:18:15-17; 1 Tim. 1:19,20; Rev. 2:2,14,15,20; 3:9.

<sup>3</sup>Deut. 13:6-12; Rom. 13:3,4 *with* 2 John 10,11; Ezra 7:23,25-28; Rev. 17:12,16,17; Neh. 13:15,17,21,22,25,30; 2 Kings 23:5,6,9,20,21; 2 Chron. 34:33; 15:12,13,16; Dan. 3:29; 1 Tim. 2:2; Isa. 49:23; Zech. 13:2,3.

scandalous and offending persons, who will not obey admonition, Matt. 18:15-17. But such also are heretics, Gal. 5:20; Tit. 1:10-13. 2.) Because an heretic, after the first and second admonition, is to be rejected, avoided, or shunned. That is, let him not remain in the external communion of the church, Tit. 3:10. 3.) Because Paul did excommunicate Hymenaeus and Alexander, who had made shipwreck of the faith, 1 Tim. 1:19,20. 4.) Because if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed, 2 Thess. 3:14; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Tit. 1:11. Because Christ approves and commends the pastors of the church of Ephesus, because they could not suffer them that are evil; but had tried them which say they are apostles, and were not, and had found them liars, Rev. 2:2. And Christ, in that same chapter accuses the pastors of the church of Pergamos and Thyatira, and threatens them, because they had suffered heretics to be in the church.

Likewise, the Lutherans, Anabaptists, Arminians, Quakers and all sorts of heretics and sectaries err, maintaining, under the pretext of Christian liberty, that the civil magistrate is not in duty to punish any man with the sword, for errors in doctrine, but that they ought to be tolerated and suffered, provided such persons as own them, do not trouble or molest the commonwealth. They are confuted because: 1.) Because it is evident from many examples of godly magistrates, who did extirpate idolatry, and inflict punishment upon idolaters; as did Jacob the patriarch, who purged his family of strange gods, Gen. 35:2-4. Moses likewise took punishment with the sword, upon those who did worship the golden calf, Ex. 32:26-28. 2.) We have the examples of Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:4. Of Josiah, 2 Kings 23:5,6,9,20,21. Of Asa, who decreed, that whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel, (according to the law of God, Deut. 13:9) should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman, 2 Chron. 15:12,13,16. Of Nehemiah, Neh. 13:15,17,21,22,25,30. 3.) Were not good kings reprov'd, and was it not imputed to them as a fault, that they did not take away the high places? 2 Kings 12:3; 14:4; 15:4; 2 Chron. 15:17. Far more, then, is it a fault to suffer heretics. 4.) It is evident from the office of the magistrate, who is the minister of God against them that do evil, Rom. 13:3,4. 5.) Because it is expressly commanded in Scripture, that punishment be inflicted upon idolaters, even by the nearest relations. Much more, then, the civil magistrate, Deut. 13:6-13; 17:2-7; Lev. 24:16. 6.) Because it is foretold, that under the New Testament, kings shall be nursing fathers to the church, and queens nursing mothers; and that heretics that were about to be hurtful to the church, shall be removed and taken away, Isa. 49:23; Zech. 13:2,3. Compare this with 1 John 4:1-3. For confirmation, consider what is foretold by John, Rev. 17:12,16,17. 7.) It is evident from the epithets whereby the pernicious and destructive nature of heretics is set forth in Scripture. Acts 20:29; John 10:8; Acts 15:24; Gal. 5:12; 2 Tim. 2:17; Gal. 5:9. 8.) Because Ezra did esteem it a great favour and blessing of God conferred upon the church; for which he thanked God, that had inclined Artaxerxes' heart to punish those that did not observe the law, Ezra 7:23,25-28. 9.) Because we ought to pray for kings, and all in authority, that under them we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness, and in honesty, which cannot be done, unless the civil magistrate bridle and tie up heretics, 1 Tim. 2:2. The term "godliness" points to the first table of the moral law; the term "honesty" to the second. True magistrates are keepers and defenders of both tables of the ten commandments. 10.) The toleration of heretics, as we may read of the Anabaptists in Germany, and the Quakers in New England, has always brought both church and state into confusion.