

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

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

III. They, who upon pretence of Christian Liberty, doe practise any sin, or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian Liberty, which is, that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, wee might serve the Lord, without feare, in holinesse and righteousnesse before him, all the dayes of our life¹.

Question 1.—*Do they who upon pretence of Christian liberty, practise any sin, or cherish any lust, destroy thereby the end of Christian liberty?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 Pet. 2:16. Therefore Libertines err, maintaining that the true Christian liberty, which we ought not to follow and use, is to take away all difference between good and evil, *contra* Isa. 5:20; Prov. 17:15: it is to esteem nothing of sin, nor to be touched with any conscience or sense of it, *cf.* Mal. 2:17; Matt. 6:23; it is to teach that every man ought to follow the swing of his own lusts, *cf.* Jer. 7:24. But they are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because we being called to liberty, ought not to use our liberty for an occasion of the flesh, Gal. 5:13. And also, with well-doing, we ought to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1 Pet. 2:15. 2.) Because they that follow the liberty of sinning, and promise liberty to others, are truly the servants of corruption, 2 Pet. 2:19. 3.) Because the end of that liberty, which is purchased by Christ, is, that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life, Luke 1:74,75. 4.) Because whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin, John 8:34. 5.) Because the moral law obliges believers to perform obedience, out of gratitude and thankfulness; for Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, Matt. 5:17. 6.) Because whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 5:19.

Question 2.—*Is the true end of Christian liberty, that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord, without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life?*

Answer.—Yes. Isa. 61:1. The liberty of Christ frees us from the yoke of the cursing law, Gal. 3:13, and believers are warned not to return to this yoke and abandon the true service of God, Gal. 2:4; 4:9; 5:1. The liberty of Christ frees us from the tyranny of the Devil, Heb. 2:14,15; and from the bondage of sin, Rom. 6:6. It does not release from the necessity of rendering obedience to God, which is indispensable from every creature as such and especially from redeemed sons. Scripture calls the law of God a law of liberty, James 1:25; 2:12, because obedience to God is the highest form of liberty, Ps. 119:45,—being set free from the bondage of sin, 2 Pet. 2:19. Yea, the chain of our duty binds so much the more strongly, as we are connected with God by more names, Rom. 8:21. Thus, liberty from sin implies necessarily the service of grace; being made free from sin, we become the servants of righteousness, Rom. 6:18. Indeed the whole life of Christians ought to be a sort of practice of godliness, for we have been called to sanctification, 1 Thess. 4:7; Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 4:3. True liberty consists in this—that we be subject to God,

¹Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:16; 2 Pet. 2:19; John 8:34; Luke 1:74,75.

“for to serve him is to reign,” 2 Tim. 2:11-13; Rev. 20:6. “The liberty of the Spirit,” 2 Cor. 3:17, therefore, differs from “the license of the flesh,” Jude 4. The latter is in truth incompatible with the law, but the former is in the highest degree consistent with it and inseparable from it, 1 Pet. 2:16, Gal. 5:13. As children ought we to be, firmly trusting that our services will be approved by our most merciful Father, however small, rude, and imperfect these may be, 1 Pet. 1:13-16. Of this he assures us through the prophet Malachi, 3:17. The word “spare” is clearly here used in the sense of “to be indulgent or compassionately to overlook faults,” while also mention is made of “service,” Jer. 31:20.