

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 25.-Of the Church.

II. The Visible Church, which is also Catholique or Universal, under the Gospel (not confined to one Nation, as before, under the Law) consists of all those, throughout the World, that profess the true Religion¹; and, of their Children²: and is, the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ³, the House and Family of God⁴, out of which, there is no ordinary possibility of Salvation⁵.

Question 1.—*Is the visible church under the New Testament, catholic and universal?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 Cor. 12:12,13; Rev. 7:9; Rom. 15:9-12. Therefore the Independents do err, maintaining, there is no visible church, under the New Testament, except what may meet in one place, and may perform all their holy services in a private church. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because in many places in the New Testament, the word *church* (that is, visible), is so largely taken, that it cannot be restricted to any particular congregational church, Acts 8:3; Gal. 1:13; Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 10:32; Eph. 3:10; 1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Tim. 3:15. 2.) Because it has been foretold in many places of the Old Testament, that the catholic church shall be visible, Ps. 22:22,25,27,28; 72:8-11; 86:9; Isa. 2:2-4; Zech. 14:9,14. 3.) Because the donation, or the gift of the kingdom, that is, of the church universal, made by the Father to the Son, is universal, and of all the world, Ps. 2:8; 72:2; Isa. 49:6; Dan. 7:14. 4.) Because the gospel of the kingdom is universal, and according to the style of the Scripture, works the visible conversion of the whole world, and therefore the church visibly converted, and gathered together, is catholic and universal, Matt. 26:13; Mark 14:9; Col. 1:16. 5.) Because the visible charter, which constitutes the church, is universal: and therefore, since one charter constitutes one policy or government, all visible particular churches, which are constitute by that one catholic charter, are one church universal, Matt. 28:19; Eph. 3:6. 6.) Because if there are officers of a church visible universal, there must be a church visible universal itself: but the first is true, since the donation of the ministry, and the giving of it in a gift, is made to the catholic church, 1 Cor. 12:28; Matt. 28:18,19. 7.) Because there is a general outward call, and a general outward covenant, into which all Christians enter outwardly, by virtue whereof all of them are knit, and tied together, Acts 2:39. 8.) Because the same individual system, and body of external laws, proceeding from the same authority, in which all particular churches are equally concerned, and by which they are ruled, is universal, 1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1. 9.) Because the external union of brotherhood, which is amongst all the visible Christians in the world, is catholic and universal, Acts 15:23; 24:14; Gal. 5:14. 10.) Because the initial visible seal, admittance, and enrollment, are things catholic, and ecumenical. For he that takes up his freedom in a whole corporation or kingdom, is free of the whole, and in

¹1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12,13; Ps. 2:8; Rev. 7:9; Rom. 15:9-12.

²1 Cor. 7:14; Acts 2:39; Ezek. 16:20,21; Rom. 11:16; Gen. 3:15; Gen. 17:7.

³Matt. 13:47; Isa. 9:7.

⁴Eph. 2:19; Eph. 3:15.

⁵Acts 2:47.

every part thereof, and has right to all the general privileges and general immunities thereof. There is a command for baptism; Go and baptize all nations. And by virtue of the privileges thereof, they that are baptized in any one church, are accounted visible subjects of Christ's kingdom, in all places of the Christian world, Matt. 28:19. 11.) Because all churches are one body, Rom. 12:5. 12.) Because Peter writing to the strangers scattered abroad throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, calls them all one flock, 1 Pet. 1:2. 13.) Because all the churches of the world are one sheepfold, John 10:16. 14.) Because the visible church is one great house, 2 Tim. 2:20.

Question 2.—*Does the visible church consist of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 Cor. 1:2; Ps. 2:8; 1 Cor. 7:14; Ezek. 16:20,21; Rom. 11:16; Gen. 3:15. Thus the Donatists and Anabaptists err, who affirm that the visible church consists only of those that are pious and holy. So too, the Independents err, who think, none ought to be members of the visible church, save those who in the judgment of men, very spiritual and discerning, are esteemed true believers, and saints who have given sufficient proof of their knowledge in the fundamentals of religion, who have reported in order, and given a good account of the experimental work of conversion, and effectual calling; who have showed their conversation in the world, to have been without the omission of any known duty, or commission of any known fault, and that for a considerable length of time. Also, the Quakers do err, who think, the only visible church of God on earth, is themselves; and all others not of their profession, and practice, are unregenerate, and lacking the Spirit. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because the mixed nature of the visible church is held forth under various similitudes, Matt. 13; and to a great house in which there are diverse vessels, 2 Tim. 2:20. 2.) Because Christ will cast out some on that last day, who were, evidently, members of his visible church, Matt. 7:22,23. 3.) From the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, Matt. 25:1. 4.) From the parable of the banquet, whereof one was found at the table without a wedding garment, Matt. 22:11. 5.) Because many are of the visible church, who are not of the invisible church, 1 John 2:19. 6.) Because the apostle calls the church of Corinth, the church of Christ, notwithstanding of their gross enormities, 1 Cor. 1:11; 3:3; 5:1; 6:7. 7.) Because Moses did acknowledge, even then those to be members of the visible church, to whom the Lord had not given ears to hear, nor eyes to see, nor a heart to understand, the great and wonderful miracles which he wrought in their sight, Deut. 29:10-13 w/ verses 2-4. 8.) Because John the Baptist did admit many thousands, into the communion of the visible church, without making a narrow search of their true grace and conversion, Matt. 3. 9.) Because the apostles did instantly, and without delay of one day, baptize all those that professed the Christian religion, Acts 2:38,41; 8:12; John 3:26. 10.) Because the preaching of the gospel, is appointed by God, as an ordinary mean, no less for the conversion of men and women, than for the advancement of those in grace that are converted, Prov. 9:3,4; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:24,25. 11.) Because we are forbidden by the apostle, to judge the spiritual state and condition of our neighbour, Rom. 14:4. 12.) Because Christ did acknowledge Judas the thief and traitor, as a member of his visible church, whom he yet foresaw to be the son of perdition, Matt. 26:23. 13.) Because Christ had a visible church on earth, many hundreds of years before ever there were such cattle as Quakers in the world.

Likewise, the Papists and Lutherans err, who will have none members of the visible church that are unbaptized. Additionally, the Anabaptists err, who will have no infants

members of the visible church. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because God commanded infants and little ones should stand before him, and should enter into covenant with him, Deut. 29:10,11. 2.) Because infants are called the people of God, no less than men and women come to age, Deut. 29:11-13. 3.) Because the promise of grace belongs to children as well as to parents, Acts 2:39. 4.) If children are not members of the visible church, they must be members of the visible kingdom of the devil, for there is no middle ground, Eph. 2:12,13. And so there would be no difference between the children of believers, and the children of the Turks and pagans. 5.) Because infants under the Old Testament had right unto the covenant of grace, Gen. 17:7,12. And children of believers under the New Testament have lost no right to that covenant of grace, which children under the Old Testament had; seeing the covenant of grace now under the gospel, is not more strictly and sparingly administered, than long since under the law, Heb. 8:6; Rom. 11:12. 6.) Because infants are commanded to join themselves to God's ordinances, Joel 2:16. 7.) Because if Christ, while an infant, was head of the visible church, then infants may be members. But the first is true, Isa. 9:6; therefore the second must be true also. 8.) Because they are whom the false apostles would have to be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, and therefore infants were called disciples, Acts 15:10.

Question 3.—*What are we to understand by the true religion?*

Answer.—We are to understand by it the whole of those doctrines deduced from the holy Scriptures, which are contained in our *Confession of Faith*, and *Catechisms*, as agreeing, in the main, with the *Confessions* of other reformed churches, 2 Tim. 1:13.

Question 4.—*What is it to profess the true religion?*

Answer.—It is openly to acknowledge, on all proper occasions, a steadfast adherence to the whole of divine truth, without espousing or countenancing any opposite error, Ps. 119:1,5; Rom. 10:10.

Question 5.—*Is there any ordinary possibility of salvation out of the visible church?*

Answer.—No. Acts 2:47. Thus do the enthusiasts, Quakers and Libertines err, who affirm that any man may be a true Christian, and be saved, though he live without the visible church. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because the Lord, in his visible church (ordinarily) commands his blessing, even life for evermore, Ps. 133:3. 2.) Because the visible church is the mother of all believers, Gal. 4:26. By Jerusalem which is above, we understand the true Christian church, which seeks its salvation, not by the first covenant of the law, namely, by works of the law, but by the second of the gospel, namely, by the merits of Christ embraced by a true faith, which has its original from heaven, by the powerful calling of the Holy Ghost. 3.) Because they that are without the visible church are without Christ, Eph. 2:12. 4.) Why are men and women joined unto the visible church, but that they may be saved? Acts 2:47. 5.) Because they that are without the visible church are destitute of the ordinary means of life and salvation, Ps. 147:19,20.