

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 25.-Of the Church.

III. Unto this Catholique Visible Church, Christ hath given the Ministry, Oracles, and Ordinances of God, for the gathering, and perfecting of the Saints, in this life, to the end of the World: and doth by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto¹.

Question 1.—*Does the catholic visible church exist apart from and prior to the ministry, oracles and ordinances?*

Answer.—Yes. Matt. 28:18-20. Scripture states that Christ gave the ministry, oracles and ordinances to the church not *vice versa*, 1 Cor. 12:28. Therefore, the Papists do err in their assertion that the church consists in the *clergy* and that the people are grafted into this church *via* the sacraments. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because the church is constituted by the profession of the true religion, 1 Cor. 1:2, 2 Cor. 9:13; Rom. 10:10; not by adherence to the ministry or ordinances, Rom. 2:25-29; Gal. 6:15. 2.) Because the ministry belongs to the church not the church to the ministry, Eph. 4:11-16. 3.) Because the thing given cannot be the same as that which receives the donation, but it is clear that the ministry is given to the church, 1 Cor. 12:12, 13, 28. 4.) Because a gift is not prior to or the same as its recipient, but the ministry and ordinances are gifts, Eph. 4:8, 11. 5.) Because that it is true the less is blessed of the better, Heb. 7:7; but the ministry, oracles and ordinances derive their blessing from their relation to the profession of the true religion, therefore, 2 John 7; Acts 24:14; 1 Tim. 6:12.

Question 2.—*Has Christ given to this catholic church visible, the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-13; Ps. 72:17; 102:28. There shall always be a church on earth, to worship God according to his will. Therefore the Socinians, Anabaptists, and Libertines do err, affirming, that the visible church may fail and perish out of the world. Likewise, the Sceptics, commonly called Seekers, err, affirming, that the whole universal church which has been upon the earth, and all religious worship, all external and outward preaching of the word, all administration of sacraments, and the use of all other religious things have perished a little after the apostles' times, and are not to this day restored, until Christ shall send new apostles, with an extraordinary commission, for restoring and raising up again the visible church. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because the Lord has promised that his church shall endure so long as the ordinances of heaven continue, Isa. 66:22. 2.) Because Christ has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church, Matt. 16:18. 3.) Because there is no end to be put to the kingdom of Christ, Luke 1:33. And, therefore, there is no end to his church, Isa. 9:7. 4.) Because glory will be to him in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end, Amen, Eph. 3:21. 5.) Because Christ who has given power to his ministers to teach his church, and to administer the sacraments, has promised to be

¹ 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-13; Matt. 28:19, 20; Isa. 59:21.

with them to the end of the world, Matt. 28:19, 20. 6.) Because the Lord has promised to preserve a people to himself, to the end of the world, which he shall rule and govern by his word and Spirit, Isa. 59:20, 21; 9:6, 7. 7.) Because the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation, where he will rest, and dwell forever, Ps. 132:13, 14. 8.) Because Christ has given some to be pastors and teachers, for perfecting of the saints, till we all come to the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of God, Eph. 4:14. And he has appointed a ministry to continue after the apostle's days. As is evident from 1 Tim. 3 and Tit. 1, where the apostle sets down the ordinary qualifications of ministers, and the rules for calling them to the ministry. 9.) Because there is a general rule set down for the government and discipline of Christ's church: which discipline and order is to continue in it, to the end of the world, Matt. 18:18. 10.) Because the Lord commands, that we forsake not the assembling of ourselves together: and has promised to bless, after a special manner, any that are gathered in his name, any where; but our assembling for hearing the word of God, is done in the name of Christ, Heb. 10:25; Matt. 18:20; 28:20.

Question 3.—Does he, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make the ministry, oracles and ordinances effectual for the gathering, and perfecting of the Saints, in this life, to the end of the World?

Answer.—Yes. Matt. 28:19, 20; Isa. 59:20, 21. 1.) Because the death of Christ, in the last supper, is to be showed till he come, 1 Cor. 11:26. 2.) Because by the word (even preached, Rom. 10:17), we are born again, 1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18. By baptism we are engrafted into Christ, Rom. 6:3, 5; Gal. 3:27. In the Lord's supper, we have communion with Christ, 1 Cor. 10:16.