

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 6.-*Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof.*

IV. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good,¹ and wholly inclined to all evil,² do proceed all actual transgressions.³

Question 1.—*Does this original corruption utterly indispose, disable and make us opposed to all that is good?*

Answer.—Yes. Rom. 5:6; 8:7; Col. 1:21. Scripture describes that sin not only privatively (*i.e.*, lacking original righteousness) and by way of negation, *cf.* Rom. 3:23; 7:18; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:18, but also positively and by way of affirmation, when it calls it “flesh,” “concupiscence,” “the law of the members,” “indwelling sin,” “body of death,” “old man,” *etc.* *cf.* John 3:6; Rom. 7:18, 20, 23, 24; Eph. 4:22.

Question 2.—*Does this original corruption wholly incline us to all evil?*

Answer.—Yes. Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Rom. 3:10-12. Men are not only destitute of righteousness, but also full of unrighteousness; incapable of good, but also inclined to evil; turned away from God, as the immutable and eternal good, but also turned toward the creature and inclined to every vice, Job 15:14, 16. Hence, sinners (before grace) are called “foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts,” Tit. 3:3. “Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, false witness,” Matt. 15:19, are said to proceed out of the heart and the flesh is said “to lust against the Spirit,” Gal. 5:17.

Question 3.—*Do all actual transgressions proceed from this original corruption?*

Answer.—Yes. Jas. 1:14, 15; Eph. 2:2, 3; Matt. 15:19. When we speak of actual sin we mean aberration from the law of God (in internal and external acts) proceeding from original sin as the effect from its cause, a river from the fountain and the second act from the first, Mark 7:21, 22. It is called “actual” not so much because it exists in act (because this belongs no less to original sin) as because it is in actions and not in habit, Jas. 3:5-8. With respect to its object, it is against God and against our neighbors (this includes one’s self), *cf.* Gen. 39:9. The former against the first table of the law; the latter against the second, *cf.* Mark 12:30, 31. This, however, must be taken materially and not formally because thus God alone is the proper object of sin, Ps. 51:4.

Question 4.—*Into what divisions may we place these actual sins?*

Answer.—1.) With respect to form, it is divided into sins of commission and sins of omission, Jas. 2:15, 16. By the latter, the good commanded is omitted; by the former, a forbidden evil is committed. 2.) Some are of themselves sin, others are sin accidentally. The former, being when the act is condemned in the law of God (whether positively, by commission, or negatively, by omission), Jas. 4:17. The latter as to mode (when an act otherwise good is performed defectively), John 14:15. Its fault lies either in principle (not from a heart of faith; Heb. 11:6), with regard to the end (not done to the glory of God; 1 Cor. 10:31), or with regard to mode (lacking in sincerity or honesty; 1 Cor. 13:2, 3). 3.)

¹ Rom. 5:6; 8:7; 7:18; Col. 1:21.

² Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Rom. 3:10-12.

³ Jas. 1:14, 15; Eph. 2:2, 3; Matt. 15:19.

With respect to principle, there are sins of ignorance, Heb. 9:7; 1 Tim. 1:13, and sins of knowledge, Heb. 10:26; Luke 12:47. A sin of ignorance denies all knowledge, both theoretical and practical. A sin against knowledge does not deny theoretical knowledge, but has not practical knowledge, John 13:17. 4.) Sin is either of weakness or of depravity; either wholly voluntary or relatively involuntary. In the Old Testament sins committed through "error and weakness," cf. Num. 15:25, are distinguished from those committed "presumptuously," Num. 15:30. In the latter, the sinner adds to the evil contumacy and pride, by which he gives full consent to and glories in the rebellion. So errors and secret sins, Ps. 19:12, are distinguished from "presumptuous" sins, wherein we find obstinacy and open rebellion, Ps. 19:13. Paul, speaking of himself, says, "the evil which I would not, that I do," Rom. 7:19; but elsewhere speaks of those who "sin wilfully." Heb. 10:26. A sin of weakness and voluntary arises from ignorance, subreption, or any great passion distorting judgment, 1 Tim. 1:13. It is one done without any certain purpose of committing it (which appears daily in the sins of those renewed by the grace of God), Lev. 4:2, 13. A sin of depravity does not arise from ignorance, weakness or fear, but from wickedness and contumacy and with a purpose of committing it, John 9:41. It is committed not with resistance and struggling, but with a deliberate and full consent of the mind against the knowledge of the truth, Deut. 17:12. 5.) With respect of adjuncts, one is indwelling only, Rom. 7:19; another reigning, John 8:34, 1 John 3:8. The former, the sinner resists (though yielding to it); the latter, occurs without struggling, the sinner in every way serves or practices sin.