

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 15.-Of Repentance unto Life.

VI. As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof¹; upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall finde mercy²: so, he that scandalizeth his Brother, or the Church of Christ, ought to be willing by a private or publique confession, and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended³, who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him⁴.

Question 1.—*Is every man bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof?*

Answer.—Yes. Ps. 51:4, 5, 7, 9, 14; 32:5, 6. Thus Antinomians, Libertines and Anabaptists err, maintaining that those who are once justified are not any more obliged to confess their sins and to be grieved for them or repent of them. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because whosoever calls upon God the Father, in their prayers, they ought to seek daily remission of sin, Luke 11:2-4. 2.) Because God does commend the serious confession of sins, and grief for them, in justification, and delights therein, Jer. 31:18-20; Luke 7:44; Isa. 66:2. 3.) Because pardon of those sins, which justified persons shall confess, is promised, Prov. 28:13; Ps. 32:5; 1 John 1:9. 4.) Because such are declared blessed that mourn, Matt. 5:4. 5.) Because in whom the Spirit dwells, it works in them groaning and sorrow for sin, Rom. 7:23, 24; 8:26. 6.) Because true repentance, is a renewing of the image of God lost, at least greatly defaced, by the committing of sin, which in sanctification is not perfected, but only begun, and does daily increase through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, Eph. 4:19-24. 7.) From the example of justified persons, 2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 51.; 2 Kings 22:19; Neh. 9.; Mark 14:72.

Question 2.—*Do those who confess their sins privately to God, who pray for pardon thereof, and forsake them, obtain mercy?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 John 1:9. Then do Papists err maintaining that besides confession of sins made to God, and forsaking of them, an auricular confession, an enumeration of all sins after baptism, must be made to our own proper priest, as a necessary means for obtaining remission of them. They are confuted because: 1.) The Psalmist says, who can understand his errors, Ps. 19:12, and they being more than the hairs of our head, how can they be mumbled over to a priest? Ps. 40:12. 2.) Because Christ gave absolution without an enumeration of every sin, Matt. 9:2. Neither does he demand an enumeration of all our several sins, though we are obliged to reckon, and rehearse all that we are able to remember, Luke 7:48; 18:13, 14. 3.) Because there is no command, or example, in Scripture for any man to whisper his sins into the ear of a priest: And whatsoever is not of faith is sin, Rom. 14:23. 4.) Because whoever turns from his sin to God, and confesses them, finds mercy presently, Ezek. 18:21, 28; Prov. 28:13.

¹ Ps. 51:4, 5, 7, 9, 14; 32:5, 6.

² Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9.

³ Jas. 5:16; Luke 17:3, 4; Josh. 7:19; Ps. 51.

⁴ 2 Cor. 2:8.

Question 3.—*Ought he who scandalizeth his brother, or the church of Christ, to be willing, by a private, or public confession, and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those who are offended?*

Answer.—Yes. Jas. 5:16; Ps. 51. So, the Novatians and others err, maintaining that those who have offended their brother, or the church of Christ, are not obliged to declare their repentance to the parties offended; and that those who are offended, ought not to require any such thing, as private or public confession and acknowledgment, but that they ought to be received, without doing any such thing. Likewise, those who connive, and wink, at public scandals, especially of the rich and better sort err. Lastly, many in our time err, who jeer, and make a mock at public confessions of sins. They are confuted because: 1.) He who offends his brother ought to return to him saying, I repent, Luke 17:3, 4. 2.) Christ did even value so much a private man's offence, that he was not to be admitted to the altar with his gift, until he reconciled with his brother, Matt. 5:24. 3.) Because the incestuous person was not to be received until he gave evidence of repentance, 2 Cor. 2:6. 4.) Because public confession of sin glorifies God, Josh. 7:19. 5.) Because those who sin must be rebuked before all, that others also may fear, 1 Tim. 5:20.

Question 4.—*Are those, who are offended, bound to be reconciled to the offending party, by declaring his repentance, and ought they in love to receive him?*

Answer.—Yes. 2 Cor. 2:8. So, the Novatians and Anabaptists err, maintaining that professors of religion, falling into public scandal, especially in denying the truth, in a time of persecution, ought no more to be received into the church, even though they repent. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because Christ commands forgiveness as often as it is sought, Luke 17:3, 4. 2.) Because for a heathen and publican (that is one cast out from the communion of the church) he only is so to be esteemed, who neglects to hear the church, Matt. 18:17. 3.) Because such as have offended the church, after submission to the church's censure, ought to be comforted; the church ought to make known its love and receive them again into communion, 2 Cor. 2:7, 8. 4.) Because those who are spiritual ought to restore one taken in a fault, Gal. 6:1. 5.) Because if men, repenting of their sins committed against their brethren and the church, are not received again, Satan may gain advantage of them, 2 Cor. 2:10. 6.) Because Miriam, who for her sedition against Moses, was shut out of the camp seven days, was brought in again, Num. 12:15. So was the incestuous person received again after repentance, 2 Cor. 2:8.