

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 29.-*Of the Lords Supper.*

VIII. Although ignorant, and wicked men receive the outward Elements, in this Sacrament: yet, they receive not the Thing signified thereby; but by their unworthy coming thereunto, are guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord to their own damnation. Wherefore, all ignorant, and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy Communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lords Table; and, cannot without great sin against Christ while they remain such, partake of these Holy Mysteries¹, or be admitted thereunto².

Question 1.—*Do ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements, in this sacrament: yet, they receive not the thing signified thereby; but by their unworthy coming thereunto, are they not guilty of the body and blood of the Lord to their own damnation?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 Cor. 11:27-29. Thus do they err who, not perceiving the spiritual food present to the faith of believers, do teach there is nothing but an empty symbol and that it matters not whether you eat and drink unworthily. For, as we see that this sacred bread of the Lord's Supper is spiritual food, is sweet and savoury, not less than salutary, to the pious worshippers of God, on tasting which they feel that Christ is their life, are disposed to give thanks, and exhorted to mutual love; so, on the other hand, it is converted into the most noxious poison to all whom it does not nourish and confirm in the faith, nor urge to thanksgiving and charity, John 6:53. Just as corporeal food, when received into a stomach subject to morbid humours, becomes itself vitiated and corrupted, and rather hurts than nourishes, so this spiritual food also, if given to a soul polluted with malice and wickedness, plunges it into greater ruin, not indeed by any defect in the food, Tit. 1:15, however much it may be sanctified by the blessing of the Lord; likewise Paul, 1 Cor. 11:27, 29. For men of this description, who without any spark of faith, without any zeal for charity, rush forward like swine to seize the Lord's Supper, do not at all discern the Lord's body, Heb. 5:14. For, inasmuch as they do not believe that body to be their life, they put every possible affront upon it, stripping it of all its dignity, and profane and contaminate it by so receiving, Eccl. 8:5; inasmuch as while alienated and estranged from their brethren, they dare to mingle the sacred symbol of Christ's body with their dissensions, 1 Cor. 11:18. No thanks to them if the body of Christ is not rent and torn to pieces, 1 Cor. 1:10. Wherefore they are justly held guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, which, with sacrilegious impiety, they so vilely pollute, Jude 12. By this unworthy eating, they bring judgment on themselves, 1 Cor. 11:29. For while they have no faith in Christ, yet, by receiving the sacrament, they profess to place their salvation only in him, and abjure all other confidence, 2 Pet. 2:13. Wherefore they themselves are their own accusers; they bear witness against themselves; they seal their own condemnation, Eccl. 8:5. Next being divided and separated by hatred and ill-will from their brethren, that is, from the members of Christ, they have no part in Christ, and yet they declare that the only safety is to communicate with Christ, and be united to him, 1 John 3:14. For this reason Paul commands a man to examine himself before he eats of that bread, and drinks of that cup,

¹ 1 Cor. 11:27-29; 2 Cor. 6:14-16.

² 1 Cor. 5:6, 7, 13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15; Matt. 7:6.

1 Cor. 11:28. By this, he means that each individual should descend into himself, and consider, first, whether, with inward confidence of heart, he leans on the salvation obtained by Christ, and with confession of the mouth, acknowledges it, Matt. 22:11; and, secondly, whether with zeal for purity and holiness he aspires to imitate Christ, 2 Chron. 30:18-20; whether, after his example, he is prepared to give himself to his brethren, and to hold himself in common with those whom have Christ in common; whether, as he himself is regarded by Christ, he in his turn regards all his brethren as members of his body, or, like his members, desires to cherish, defend, and assist them, because it behooves us to contend and seek, with all our heart, daily to increase our faith, Luke 17:5.

Question 2.—*Are all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with Christ, unworthy of his table; and do they partake of these holy mysteries with great sin against Christ, while they continue such?*

Answer.—Yes. 2 Cor. 6:14-16. Thus do they err, who maintain that any may come to the Lord's table, without reference to competent knowledge or practice. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because in the right use of this sacrament, Christ is united to a man by faith, and by the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 10:16; conversely, those who eat and drink unworthily, are said not to discern the Lord's body, 1 Cor. 11:29. 2.) Because ignorant and wicked men eating and drinking unworthily, are guilty of the body and blood of Christ, and so bring judgment upon themselves, 1 Cor. 11:27, 31.

They are ignorant persons who do not have an intellectual knowledge of Christ's person, natures, suretyship, humiliation, and exaltation, nor of the need of the atonement and the efficacy of Christ's death, Acts 20:28. They are those who as yet have no knowledge of the essence of faith, regeneration, spiritual life, God's righteousness, and the sinner's state of condemnation; they neither understand the essence of the Lord's Supper, know not how to unite the sign with the matter signified, nor understand its sealing function, *cf.* Num. 9:10, 13.

Question 3.—*Are not therefore church officers to debar those who appear grossly ignorant and scandalous?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 Cor. 5:6, 7, 13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15; Matt. 7:6. Thus do they err in their practice, if not in their opinions, who suffer ignorant, scandalous, and ungodly persons to come to the table. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because all were not admitted to eat the passover, neither was it for all promiscuously to partake thereof, Num. 9:6, 7; 2 Chron. 23:19; Ezek. 22:26. 2.) Because it was not lawful for any man to come to the marriage feast that wanted the wedding garment, Matt. 22:11. 3.) Because pearls are not to be cast before dogs and swine, men manifestly ungodly and wicked, Matt. 7:6. 4.) Because they who deserve to be excluded from the fellowship and society of believers, ought not to be admitted to the sacrament of intimate communion and familiarity with God; but such are all those who walk inordinately, 1 Cor. 6:16. 5.) Because if the churches willingly and wittingly admit such persons, they stir up the wrath of God against themselves, for suffering God's covenant, and his holy symbols, to be openly profaned, 1 Cor. 11:30. 6.) Because the Lord will not suffer such as are manifestly and contumaciously wicked, to take his covenant in their mouth; therefore to such persons, the seals and symbols of his covenant, ought not to be offered, Ps. 50:16, 17. 7.) Because ignorant, profane, and godless persons, ought not to be esteemed as heathens and publicans, Matt. 18:17. 8.) Christ invites friends, Song 5:1; and those who hunger and thirst, Isa. 55:1.