

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 25.-*Of the Church.*

V. The purest Churches under Heaven are subject both to mixture, and error¹: and some have so degenerated, as to become no Churches of Christ, but Synagogues of Satan². Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on Earth, to worship God according to his will³.

Question 1.—*Are the purest churches under heaven subject both to mixture and error?*

Answer.—Yes. Rev. 2, 3 chapters. Therefore the Papists do err, affirming, that the church cannot err, neither in matters absolutely necessary, neither in other things which it proposes to be done and believed by us. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because the visible church under the Old Testament, oftentimes made defection to idolatry, Ex. 32:8; Judg. 3:7. 2.) Because as long as we are here, we know but in part, and therefore we are subject and liable to mistakes, 1 Cor. 13:9,12. 3.) Because the seven churches of Asia, to whom John did write, are accused of mixture and errors, Rev. 2:4,5. 4.) Because while Christ was here on earth, the disciples dreamed of a worldly kingdom; and for a time, even after his resurrection they did believe it, Acts 1:6. 5.) Because before the day of Christ be at hand, there shall be a falling away of the visible church, from the true faith to Antichristianism, which in great part is already come to pass, and more than is to come between this time and his second coming, 2 Thess. 2:3; Rev. 13:3. 6.) Because one of the chief differences between the church militant and the church triumphant is this, that the one can err, but not the other, 1 Cor. 13:9,10,12. 7.) Because Christ has foretold, that there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect, Matt. 24:24. 8.) Because when the Son of man comes, he shall scarce find faith on the earth, Luke 18:8. 9.) Because the converted Jews erred, in being zealous for the law: thinking that the ceremonial law ought yet to be observed, not understanding that the same was abolished by Christ, Acts 21:20. So did the Galatians err, in admitting circumcision, Gal. 1:6. And the Corinthians, in their abuse of the Lord's supper, 1 Cor. 11:18.

Question 2.—*Have some churches so degenerated as to be no churches of Christ at all, but synagogues of Satan?*

Answer.—Yes. Rev. 18:2; Rom. 11:18-22. This truth is, that Israel of old so degenerated that the apostle describes her as cast off; as well, the warning in Revelation to come out of mystery Babylon the Romish apostasy indicates that churches may and have so degenerated. Consider: 1.) As Christ has a church in the world, the spiritual Israel of God, Gal. 6:16, so the devil has his synagogue, Ps. 26:5 (literally "synagogue of evil-doers"). Those assemblies which are set up in opposition to the truths of the gospel, and which promote and propagate damnable errors, 2 Thess. 2:9-12; John 18:37;

¹1 Cor. 13:12; Rev. 2,3 chapters; Matt. 13:24-30,47.

²Rev. 18:2; Rom. 11:18-22.

³Matt. 16:18; Ps. 72:17; 102:28; Matt. 28:19,20.

10:14,4,5; Eph. 2:20; John 8:47,—those which are set up in opposition to the purity and spirituality of gospel worship, and which promote and propagate the vain inventions of men and rites and ceremonies which never entered into the thoughts of God, 1 Kings 12:25-33; Isa. 1:14; Ezek. 11:21; Mark 7:7,—these are all synagogues of Satan: he presides over them, he works in them, his interests are served by them, and he receives a horrid homage and honour from them, 2 Chron. 11:14,15. 2.) For the synagogues of Satan to give themselves out to be the church or Israel of God is no less than blasphemy, Rom. 2:23,24. God is greatly dishonoured when his name is made use of to promote and patronize the interests of Satan, Ezek. 16:20,21; Hos. 9:1; Jas. 3:14-16; and he has a high resentment of this blasphemy, and will take a just revenge on those who persist in it, Jer. 28:15,16; Hos. 9:7-9; Rom. 1:25,26. 3.) Those enemies are described to be such as *said they were Jews*, but lied in saying so—pretended to be the only and peculiar people of God, but were really *the synagogue of Satan*, Rev. 2:9. Assemblies that *worship God in spirit and in truth* are the Israel of God, John 4:24; assemblies that either worship false gods, or the true God in a false manner, are the synagogues of Satan, Rev. 3:9: though they may profess to be the only people of God, their profession is a lie, Isa. 63:8.

Question 3.—*Shall there be always a church on earth, to worship God according to his will?*

Answer.—Yes. Matt. 16:18; Ps. 72:17; 102:28; Matt. 28:19,20. The perpetuity of the church is to be found, not in the outward governing of it, as Papists and prelates have so wrongly assumed, for often the greatest enemies of Christ have arisen from within, Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:29; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 2:18. It is to be found amongst those who profess the true religion, John 10:26,27, together with their children, Acts 2:39. And this church is known to God by its fidelity in worshipping Him according to His will. This we see plainly held forth in the case of Elijah, when he thought he alone remained, 1 Kings 19:10,18; likewise, the apostle concludes the same applies during the time of the Christian Church, Rom. 11:3-5.