

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 25.-*Of the Church.*

I. The Catholique or Universal Church which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the Elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is, the Spouse, the Body, the Fulness of Him that filleth all in all¹.

Question 1.—*Does the catholic or universal church which is invisible, consist of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be, gathered into one under Christ, the head thereof?*

Answer.—Yes. Eph. 5:23, 27, 32; Col. 1:18. Therefore the Popish church does err, denying any catholic invisible church, consisting of the elect only, effectually called; who maintain the catholic church to be absolutely visible, and as visible a society, as any republic or kingdom, and that it consists no less of reprobates, unbelievers, great and manifest sinners, void of all inward and true graces, than of the elect effectually called. They are confuted by the following reasons: 1.) Because we profess to believe, according to the creed, that there is a church universal, namely, such an one as we have now described; but what we believe must be invisible, Heb. 11:1. 2.) Because the internal form of the church (namely, her effectual calling by the word and Spirit), 1 Pet. 2:9, is invisible, 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 Cor. 2:11. 3.) Because the glory of the king's daughter, (that is, of the universal church, as the adversaries themselves confess), is internal. And therefore hidden and invisible, Ps. 45:13. 4.) Because the word tells us there is a church, even the number of those whom Christ has loved, for whom he gave himself to the death; whom he has sanctified, and washed, and cleansed, and redeemed with his own blood, and whom at last he will glorify, Eph. 5:25-27. 5.) Because the Scripture tells us, that there is a church, which is the mystical body of Christ, (and therefore invisible to the eyes) which by a most mystical, and most marvelous union is conjoined, and united straitly with him, Eph. 1:10, 22, 23. 6.) Because the church universal, as to its internal form, is a spiritual house, built of lively stones, in Christ, 1 Pet. 2:5. 7.) Because the members of the church universal, considered as to their internal state and condition, are united and conjoined together in one body, by one Spirit, and by one faith, 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4, 5. 8.) Because the members of the church universal, considered the former way, are the lively members of Christ, which he himself does cherish, with a lively and quickening nourishment, Eph. 5:29, 30.

Question 2.—*Is the invisible church the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all?*

Answer.—Yes. Eph. 1:10, 22, 23; 5:23, 27, 32; Col. 1:18. The invisible church, which consists only of the elect, who are effectually called, enjoys a mystical union with Christ which is described in various ways throughout the Scriptures. *First*, This invisible church is considered as the spouse of Christ: 1.) In Isaiah, it is prophesied that God would take His people into covenant relation as a bride, Isa. 62:5. 2.) Because John Baptist confesses that the Christ would be the bridegroom and the people of God the bride, John

¹ Eph. 1:10, 22, 23; 5:23, 27, 32; Col. 1:18.

3:29. 3.) The Song of Solomon speaks forth the relationship between Christ and His church under the similitude of the bridegroom and the bride. 4.) The apostle Paul calls this union of Christ and His church, as husband and wife, a great mystery, Eph. 5:32. 5.) The New Jerusalem descending from heaven, which is the church of the elect revealed, is explicitly called the bride of the Lamb, the Lamb's wife, Rev. 21:2, 9. *Second*, this invisible church is held forth as the body of Christ: 1.) So Scripture affirms most clearly, Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:12; Col. 1:18; 3:15; 1 Cor. 12:27. 2.) Such is the connection that exists, that Christ, who is God the Saviour, is said to be afflicted in the affliction of his people, who are His body, Isa. 63:9; likewise, the sufferings of Christ are manifested in His people, His body, 2 Cor. 1:5. *Third*, the church is said to be the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, Eph. 1:10, 22, 23. Jesus Christ filleth all in all; he supplies all defects in all his members, filling them with his Spirit, and even with *the fulness of God*, Eph. 3:19. And yet the church is said to be his fulness, because Christ as Mediator would not be complete if he had not a church. How could he be a king if he had not a kingdom? This therefore comes in to the honour of Christ, *who as Mediator, that the church is his fulness.*

Question 3.—*Is there any propriety for the distinction, visible and invisible Church?*

Answer.—Yes. The distinction is necessary to the right understanding of the Scriptures, which sometimes ascribe to the church what is true only of a visible church, John 15:2; Rev. 2:12-15; and at other times, what is not applicable to the body of visible professors, Eph. 5:27. The *visible* church comprehends all those who stand in an *external relation* to the Saviour; the *invisible* church, all those who being elected unto eternal life, are *savingly united* to Christ the head.