

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 27.-Of the Sacraments.

III. The Grace which is exhibited in, or by the Sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them: neither doth the efficacy of a Sacrament depend upon the Piety, or Intention of him that doth administer it¹: but, upon the work of the Spirit², and the word of Institution, which contains, together with a Precept authorizing the use thereof, a Promise of benefit to worthy Receivers³.

Question 1.—*Is the grace, which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, conferred by any power in them?*

Answer.—No. Rom. 2:28, 29; 1 Pet. 3:21. Thus do the Papists and Lutherans err maintaining that the sacraments of themselves are true, immediate, and effectual causes of our justification, and give life. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because the holy Scripture attributes our justification to faith only, as an instrumental cause and to no other thing, Rom. 1:17; 3:28; Gal. 2:16. And therefore the sacraments cannot be the efficient causes of our justification and life. 2.) Because the Scripture makes an express difference between the work of a man dispensing the sacraments, and the work of the Holy Ghost, Matt. 3:11. 3.) Because the signs and seals of grace cannot confer and effectuate grace; but the sacraments are but signs and seals of grace, Rom. 4:11: Because to signify, and to have virtue, and power to do, differ in nature and in kind. 4.) Because many are partakers of the sacraments, who are not yet partakers of the grace of God, as Simon Magus, Acts 8:13; Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:4, 9. And how many thousands do eat and drink unworthily, drinking and eating damnation to themselves, 1 Cor. 11:29. 5.) Because many have been justified before they did partake of a sacrament, as Abraham, Rom. 4:11. And Cornelius with his fellows, Acts 10:46.

Question 2.—*Does the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that does administer it?*

Answer.—No. Matt. 3:11; 1 Cor. 12:13. Thus do the Donatists and Anabaptists err maintaining that the sacraments dispensed by a wicked and graceless minister are of no virtue or efficacy. So do they err who are not far from that opinion in these days. Lastly, do the Papists err maintaining that to the perfection of a sacrament, the actual intention of the minister, at least his virtual intention of his doing that, which the church does, is necessary. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because Judas, who was a thief and a traitor, did according to the command of Christ, baptize as well as the rest, Matt. 10:2-5; yet Christ never called in question his baptism. 2.) Because the efficacy of the word does not depend upon the piety, goodness, worthiness, or good intention of the instrument, Phil. 1:16. Therefore neither does the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the intention of him that does administer it. 3.) If the efficacy of baptism depend upon the good intention of the minister, then no Christian could be sure he is baptized, seeing no

¹ Rom. 2:28, 29; 1 Pet. 3:21.

² Matt. 3:11; 1 Cor. 12:13.

³ Matt. 26:27, 28; 28:19, 20.

man can be sure of, or know the minister's intention, 1 Cor. 2:11. 4.) Because the operation and efficacy of the sacraments, depend upon the operation of the Holy Ghost, and the word of institution, Matt. 3:11; 1 Cor. 12:13. 5.) Because the Papists themselves (which is *argumentum ad hominem*) cannot be sure that the bread in the Eucharist is transubstantiated into the body of Christ. And therefore in their adoration, and falling down to the host, they commit most damnable idolatry in worshiping that which is neither God, nor any divine thing. They cannot be sure, because the priest's intention may be deficient, while he is consecrating the bread, *contra* Ex. 20:4, 5.

Question 3.—*Does the efficacy of the sacrament depend upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 Cor. 12:13; Matt. 26:27, 28; 28:19, 20. Just as there is the necessity of the work of the Spirit to make the sacraments efficacious, Matt. 3:11; so, too, we confess the promise of benefit is made efficacious only to worthy receivers. For the efficacy of the sacrament faith is required, devotion and an internal motion of the mind, because the Scripture does expressly assert it, Mark 16:16; 1 Cor. 11:27; Acts 2:38. This is not to say that faith is of the essence of a sacrament (neither is it of the essence of the preaching of the Word), but as the latter profits nothing without faith, Heb. 4:2, so there is no saving efficacy of the sacraments in unbelievers—without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. 11:6.