

The thirde kinde of confession is that, which we make priuately to our brother. And thys confession is requisite, whē either we haue iniuriēd or by any way damaged our neighbour, whether he be rich or poore. wherof speaketh the Gospell: Go and reconcile thy selfe first vnto thy neighbour. &c. Also S. James: Confesse your selues one to another. &c. Whē els this confession may also haue place, whē any such thing lieth in our conscience, in the opening whereof we stande in neede of the counsell & comfort of some faithfull brother. But herein must we vse discretiō in auoiding these poyntes of blinde superstition. First that we put therein no necessitie for remission of our sinnes, but to vse therein oure owne voluntarie discretiō, accordyng as we see it expedient for the better satisfying of our troubled minde. The second is, that we be not bound to any enumeration of our sinnes. The thirde, that we tie not our selues to any one persone, more then to an other, but to vse therein our free choyse, whome we thinke can geue vs the best spirituall counsell in the Lord.

But as there is nothyng in the Churchē so good and so ghostly, which through penitthe superstitiō either hath not, or may not be peruerced: so thys confession also hath not lacked his abuses. First the secret confession to God alone, as it hath ben counted insufficient, so hath it ben but lightly esteemed of many. The publicke confession to the congregatiō hathē bene turned to a standinge in a sheete, or else hath bene bought out for money. Furthermore, the secret breaking of a mans minde to some faithfull or spirituall brother, in disclosing hym selfe infirmitie or temptatiōs, for counsell and godly comfort, hath bene turned into auricular confession in a priuē care for assoyling of his sinnes. In the which auricular confession, first of the free libertie of the penitent in uttering his griefs, they haue made a mere necessity, and that vnto saluation and remission of sinnes. Secondly, they require withal, enumeration and a full recitall of all sinnes whatsoeuer: both great and small, also to besides y necessity of this care confessiō, they adde thereto a prescription of time, at leaste once in the yeare for all men, whether they repent or no, to be confessed: making mozeouer of the same a sacrament. And lastly, where as befoze it stood in the voluntary choyse of a man to open his hart to what spirituall brother he thought best, for an easement of his griefe & ghostly consolation, they binde him to a Priest (vntesse some frere come by the waye to be his ghostly father) to whome he must needs confesse all, whatsoeuer he hath done, and though he lacke the key of knowledge, and peraduenture of good discretiō, yet none must haue power to assoyle him, but he through the authority of hys keyes.

And this manner of confession, say they, was instituted by Christe, and hys Apostles, and hathē bene vled in the Church euer since to this present day. which is a most manifest vnruth, and cause by stoyes to be conuincēd.

For Socrates lib. 5. cap. 19. Sozom. lib. 7. cap. 16. in y booke of Ecclesiasticall history, do geue vs plainly to vnderstand, that thys Auricular confession hencē came of Chylde, but onely of men.

Item, in the time of Tertullian, Beat. Rhenanus testifieth, that there was no mention made of thys Auricular confession, which may well be gathered thereof, for that Tertullian wytyng vpon repentance, maketh no mention at all thereof.

Item, in the tyme of Chrysostome, it appeareth there was no such assoyling at the Priests hands, by these wordes where he sayeth: require thee not that thou shouldest confesse thy sinnes to thy fellowe seruaunt. Tell them vnto God, who careth for them.

Item, the sayde Chrysostome in an other place wytyng vpon repentance, and confision: Let the examination of thy sinnes, and thy iudgement (sayth he) be secreate and close without witnesse. Let God onely see and heare thy confession. &c.

Item, in the time of Ambrose, De poenit. Dist. 1. Petrus, the glose of the Popes owne decrees recordeth: That the institution of Baptisme was not then begonne, which nowe in oure dayes is in vse.

Item, it is truly sayd therfore of the Glose in another place, where he testifieth: That this institution of penance began rather of some tradition of the vniuersall church, than of any authoritie of the new Testament, or of the olde. &c.

The lyke also testifieth Erasme wytyng vpon Hierome in these wordes. Apparet tempore Hieronymi neadum institutum fuisse. &c. That is: It appeareth, that in the time of Hierome, this secreate confession of sinnes was not yet ordained, whiche the church afterwarde did institute holefomely, if our Priests and lay men woulde vse it rightly. But herein, diuines not considering aduisedly that the olde doctours do say, are much deceiued. That which they say of general and open confession, they vrast by and by to this priuē and secreate kinde of confession; which is farre diuers, and of an other sort. &c.

The lyke testimony may also be taken of Gracian himselfe, who speaking of confession vled then in hys tyme, leaueth the matter in doubtfull suspence, neither pronouncing on the one side, nor on the other, but referreth y matter to the free iudgement of the Readers, which the acte of these sixe Articles here entoryneth as necessary, vnder paine of death.

Briefly, in fewe wordes to searche out and notifie the very certaine tyme, when this Article of care confession first crept into the Church, & what antiquitie it hath in following the Iudgement of Ioannes Scotus, and of Antoninus, it may be well supposed, that the institution thereof toke his first origine by Pope Innocent the thirde, in hys Council of Laterane, An. 1215. For so we reade in Ioannes Scotus Lib. 4. Sent. Dist. 17. Artic. 3. Præcipua autem specificatio huius præcepti inuenitur in illo cap. Extra. de poenit. & remis. Omnis vtriusque sexus. &c. And after in the same Article it followeth: Nam ex prima institutione Ecclesie non videntur fuisse distincti proprii sacerdotes. Quando enim Apostoli hinc & inde ibant prædicando verbum Dei. &c. By the which wordes it appeareth that there was no institution of any suche confession specified befoze the constitution of Innocentius the thirde.

But more plainly the same may appeare by the wordes of Antoninus in 3. parte Histor. Whyche be these Innocentius tertius in Concilio generali prædicto, circa Sacramenta confessionis & communionis sic statuit: Omnis vtriusque sexus fidelis, postquam ad annum discretionis peruenierit, omnia peccata sua solus saltem hys in anno confiteatur proprio sacerdoti, & in iunctam sibi poenitentiam proprijs viribus studeat adimplere, alioqui & viuens ab ingressu Ecclesie arceatur, & moriens Christiana careat sepultura. Vnde hoc salutare statutum frequenter in Ecclesijs publicetur: ne quisquam ignorans cœcitate vlamen confessionis assumat. &c. What is to say. Pope Innocent the 3. in hys generall Council afore sayde, touching the Sacraments of confession and the communion, made this constitution as followeth. That euery faithfull person, both man & woman, after they come to the yeares of discretion, shall confesse all their sinnes by themselves alone, at least once a yeare, to their owne ordinarie priest, and shall endeouor to fulfil by their owne strength, their penance to them enioyned. Or els who so doth not, shall neither haue entrance into the Churchē being aliuē, nor being dead shall enioy Christian buriall. Wherefore this wholsome constitution we wil to be published often in the Churches, least any manne through the blindnesse of ignorance maye make to them selues a cloke of excuse. &c. And thus much heretho we haue alleged by occasion incident of these sixe Articles for some part of constitution of the same, referring the reader for the rest, to the moze exquisite tractation of Diuines, whyche professedly wyte vpon those matters.

In the meane time, for asmuche as there is extante in Latin a certaine learned Epistle of Bishopp Melancthon, wyrtten to king Henry againste these vj. wicked Articles aboue specified, I thought not to defraud the reader of the fruit thereof, for his better vnderstanding and instruction. The tenour and effect of hys Epistle translated into English, thus followeth.

The Copie of Melancthons Epistle sent to king Henry, againste the cruel Acte of the vj. Articles.

Moste famous and noble Prince, there were certayne Emperours of Rome, as Adrianus, Iulius, and afterwarde the two brethren Cæsar and Marcus, which did receiue gently the Apologies and defences of the Christians: whych so preuailed with those moderate Princes, that they swaged theyr wrath againste the Christians, and obtained mitigation of theyr cruell Decrees. Euen so, for asmuch as there is a Decree let forth of late in your Realme agaynst that doctrine whych we professe, both godly and necessary for the Churchē, I beseeche your moste honourable Maiestie fauorably both to read & consider this our complaint, especially seeing I haue not onely for our owne cause, but much rather for the common fauourde of the Churchē, directed this my wytyng vnto you. For seying those heathen Princes did both admitt and allowe the defences of the Christians, howe much moze is it becomyng for a King of Christian profession, and such a one as is occupied in y studies of holy histories, to heare the complaints and admonitions of the godly in the Churchē? And so muche the moze willingly I wyte vnto you, for that you haue so fauorably heretofore receiued my letters w a singular declaration of your beneuolence towarde me. This also grieueth me some hope that you wil not vnwillingly read these things, for asmuch as I see that the very phisic & manner of wytyng doth playnly declare, not your selfe, but onely the byshops to be the authoys of these articles and decrees there set

Gracian. De poenit. Dist. 1. Quamuis.

The first institution of auricular confession, when and by whom it begonne.

Ioan. Scotus Lib. 4. Sent. Dist. 17. Artic. 3.

Antoninus part. 3. Hist. tit. 19.

The constitution of Pope Innocent 3. touching auricular confession.

A fruitfull epistle of Phil. Melancthon sent to king Henry touching the 6. articles.

* He meanneth here the kinges liberall reward sent to him before in money, by M. Iohn Hales which money he then distributed among the ministers & learned men of Wittenberge.

Pruate confession to our brother. Math. 5.

Jacob. 5.

Certaine pointes of superstition to be auoided in priuate confession.

4. or 5. abuses in auricular confession.

1. necessity.
2. Enumeration of sinnes.
3. Prescription of tyme.
4. Confession made a Sacrament.
5. To a Priest enely.

Socrat. Lib. 5. cap. 19. Sozo. Lib. 7. cap. 16. Beat. Rhenanus in argum. Hæbel. Tertulliani de poenitentia.

Christof. in Ps. 30. hom. 1.

Chrysof. in h. m. de poenit. & confessione.

De poenit. dist. 1. Petrus in Glosa.

De poenit. Dist. 1. in principio.

Erasme in Schol. in Epitaphium fabiola.