

OF SINS

CCXLIV.

None of the Fathers of the Church made mention of original sin until Augustine came, who made a difference between original and actual sin; namely, that original sin is to covet, lust, and desire, which is the root and cause of actual sin; such lust and desire in the faithful, God forgives, imputing it not unto them, for the sake of Christ, seeing they resist it by the assistance of the Holy Ghost. As St Paul, Rom. viii. The papists and other sinners oppose the known truth. St Paul says: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition, rejects," knowing that such an one sins, being condemned of himself. And Christ says: "Let them alone, they are blind leaders of the blind." If one err through ignorance, he will be instructed; but if he be hardened, and will not yield to the truth, like Pharaoh, who would not acknowledge his sins, or humble himself before God, and therefore was destroyed in the Red Sea, even so will he be destroyed. We are all sinner by nature - conceived and born in sin; sin has poisoned us through and through; we have from Adam a will, which continually sets itself against God, unless by the Holy Ghost it be renewed and changed. Of this neither the philosophers nor the lawyers know anything; therefore they are justly excluded from the circuit of divinity, not grounding their doctrine upon God's Word.

CCXLV.

Sins against the Holy Ghost are, first, presumption; second, despair; third, opposition to and condemnation of the known truth; fourth, not to wish well, but to grudge one's brother or neighbor the grace of God; fifth, to be hardened; sixth, to be impenitent.

CCXLVI.

The greatest sins committed against God, are the violations of the first table of the law. No man understands or feels these sins, but he that has the Holy Ghost and the grace of God. Therefore people feeling secure, though they draw God's wrath upon them, yet flatter themselves they still remain in God's favor. Yea, they corrupt the Word of God, and condemn it; yet think they do that which is pleasing and a special service to God. As for example: Paul held the law of God to be the highest and most precious treasure on earth, as we do the gospel. He would venture life and blood to maintain it; and he thought he wanted neither understanding, wisdom, nor power. But before he could rightly look about him, and while he thought his cause most sure, then he heard another lesson, he got another manner of commission, and it was told him plainly, that all his works, actions, diligence and zeal, were quite against God. Yet his doings carried a fair favor with the learned and seeming holy people, who said, Paul dealt herein uprightly, and performed divine and holy works, in showing such zeal for God's honor and for the law.

But God struck him on the ear, that he fell to the ground, and heard, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? As if he should say, Saul, even with that wherein thou thinkest to do me service, thou dost nothing but persecute me, as my greatest enemy. It is true, thou boastest that thou hast my word, that thou understandest the law, and wilt earnestly defend and maintain it; thou receivest testimony and authority from the elders and scribes, and in such they conceit and blind zeal thou proceedest. But know, that in my law I have commanded, that whoso taketh my name in vain shall die. Thou, Saul, takest my name in vain; therefore thou art justly punished. Whereupon he said: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Mark, this man was a master in the law of Moses, and yet he asked what he should do.

CCXLVII.

We have within us many sins against our Lord God, and which justly displease him: such as anger, impatience, covetousness, greediness, incontinence, hatred, malice, etc. These are great sins, which everywhere in the world go on with power, and get the upper hand. Yet these are nothing in comparison of condemning of God's Word; yea, all these would remain uncommitted, if we did but love and reverence that. But, alas! the whole world is drowned in this sin. No man cares a flip for the gospel, all snarl at and persecute it, holding it as no sin. I behold with wonder in the church, that among the hearers, one looks this way, another that; and that among so great a multitude, few come to hear the sermon. This sin is so common, that people will not confess it to be like other sins; every one deems it a slight thing to hear a discourse without attention, and not diligently to mark, learn and inwardly digest it. It is not so about other sins; as murder, adultery, thieving, etc. For, after these sins, in due time follow grief, sorrow of heart, and remorse. But not to hear God's Word with diligence, yea, to condemn, to persecute it, of this man makes no account. Yet it is a sin so fearful, that for the committing it both land and people must be destroyed, as it went with Jerusalem, with Rome, Greece, and other kingdoms.

CCXLVIII.

Christ well knew how to discriminate sins; we see in the gospel how harsh he was towards the Pharisees, by reason of their great hatred and envy against him and his Word, while, on the contrary, how mild and friendly he was towards the woman who was a sinner. That same envy will needs rob Christ of his Word, for he is a bitter enemy unto it, and in the end will crucify it. But the woman, as the greatest sinner, takes hold on the Word, hears Christ, and believes that he is the only Saviour of the world; she washes his feet, and anoints him with a costly water.

CCXLIX.

Let us not think ourselves more just than was the poor sinner and murderer on the cross. I believe if the apostles had not fallen, they would not have believed in the remission of sins. Therefore, when the devil upbraids me, touching my sins, then I say; Good St Peter, although I am a great sinner, yet I have not denied Christ my Saviour, as you did. In such instances the forgiveness of sins remains confirmed. And although the apostles were sinners, yet our Saviour Christ always excused them, as when they plucked the ears of corn; but, on the contrary, he jeered the Pharisees touching the paying of tribute, and commonly showed his disapprobation of them; but the disciples he always comforted, as Peter, where he says: "Fear not, thou shalt henceforth catch men."

CCL.

No sinner can escape his punishment, unless he be sorry for his sins. For though one go scot free for awhile, yet at last he will be snapped, as the Psalm says: "God indeed is still judge on earth."

Our Lord God suffers the ungodly to be surprised and taken captive in very slight and small things, when they think not of it, when they are most secure, and live in delight and pleasure, leaping for joy. In such manner was the pope surprised by me, about his indulgences and pardons, comparatively a slight matter.

CCLI.

A magistrate, a father or mother, a master or dame, tradesmen and others, must now and then look through the fingers at their citizens, children, and servants, if their faults and offences be not too gross and frequent; for where we will have summum jus, there follows often summa injuria, so that all must go to wreck. Neither do they which are in office always hit it aright, but err and sin themselves, and must therefore desire the forgiveness of sins.

God forgives sins merely out of grace for Christ's sake; but we must not abuse the grace of God. God has given signs and tokens enough, that our sins shall be forgiven; namely, the preaching of the gospel, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Holy Ghost in our hearts.

Now it is also needful we testify in our works that we have received the forgiveness of sins, by each forgiving the faults of his brother. There is no comparison between God's remitting of sins and ours. For what are one hundred pence, in comparison with ten thousand pounds? as Christ says, naught. And although we deserve nothing by our forgiving, yet we must forgive that thereby we may prove and give testimony that we from God have received forgiveness of our sins.

The forgiveness of sins is declared only in God's Word, and there we must seek it; for it is grounded on God's promises. God forgives thee thy sins, not because thou feelest them and art sorry, for this sin itself produces, without deserving, but he forgives thy sins because he is merciful, and because he has promised to forgive for Christ's sake.

CCLII.

When God said to Cain, through Adam: "If thou do well shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou dost not well sin lieth at the door," he shows the appearance of sinners, and speaks with Cain as with the most hypocritical and poisonous Capuchin; 'twas as if Adam had said: Thou hast heard how it went with me in Paradise; I also would willingly have hid my offence with fig leaves, lurking behind a tree, but know, good fellow, our Lord God will not be so deceived; the fig leaves would not serve the turn.

Ah! it was, doubtless, to Adam, a heart-breaking and painful task, when he was compelled to banish and proscribe his first born and only son, to hunt him out of his house, and to say: Depart from me, and come no more in my sight; I still feel what I have already lost in Paradise, I will lose no more for thy sake; I will now, with more diligence, take heed to my God's commands. And no doubt Adam afterwards preached with redoubled diligence.

CCLIII.

These two sins, hatred and pride, deck and trim themselves out, as the devil clothed himself, in the Godhead. Hatred will be godlike; pride will be truth. These two are right deadly sins: hatred is killing; pride is lying.

CCLIV.

It can be hurtful to none to acknowledge and confess his sins. Hast thou done this or that sin? - what then? We freely, in God's name, acknowledge the same, and deny it not, but from our hearts say: O Lord God! I have done this sin.

Although thou hast not committed this or that sin, yet, nevertheless, thou art an ungodly creature; and if thou hast not done that sin which another has done, so has he not committed that sin which thou hast done; therefore cry quits one with another. `Tis as the man said, that had young wolves to sell; he was asked which of them was the best? He answered: If one be good, then they are all good; they are all like one another. If thou hast been a murderer, an adulterer, a drunkard, etc., so have I been a blasphemer of God, who for the space of fifteen years was a friar, and blasphemed God with celebrating that abominable idol, the mass. It had been better for me I had been a partaker of other great wickednesses instead; but what is done cannot be undone; he that has stolen, let him henceforward steal no more.

CCLV.

The sins of common, untutored people are nothing in comparison with the sins committed by great and high persons, that are in spiritual and temporal offices.

What are the sins done by a poor wretch, that according to law and justice is hanged, or the offences of a poor strumpet, compared with the sins of a false teacher, who daily makes away with many poor people, and kills them both body and soul? The sins committed against the first table of God's ten commandments, are not so much regarded by the world, as those committed against the second table.

CCLVI.

Original sin, after regeneration, is like a wound that begins to heal; though it be a wound, yet it is in course of healing, though it still runs and is sore.

So original sin remains in Christians until they die, yet itself is mortified and continually dying. Its head is crushed in pieces, so that it cannot condemn us.

CCLVII.

All natural inclinations are either without God or against him; therefore none are good. I prove it thus: All affections, desires, and inclinations of mankind are evil, wicked, and spoiled, as the Scripture says.

Experience testifies this; for no man is so virtuous as to marry a wife, only thereby to have children, to

love and to bring them up in the fear of God.

No hero undertakes great enterprises for the common good, but out of ambition, for which he is justly condemned: hence it must needs follow, that such original, natural desires and inclinations are wicked. But God bears with them and lets them pass, in those that believe in Christ.

CCLVIII.

Schenck proceeds in a most monstrous manner, haranguing, without the least discernment, on the subject of sin. I, myself, have heard him say, in the pulpit at Eisenach, without any qualification whatever, "Sin, sin is nothing; God will receive sinners; He himself tells us they shall enter the kingdom of heaven." Schenck makes no distinction between sins committed, sins committing, and sins to be committed, so that when the common people hear him say, "Sin, for God will receive sinners;" they very readily repeat, "Well, we'll sin then." `Tis a most erroneous doctrine. What is announced as to God's receiving sinners, applies to sinners who have repented; there is all the difference in the world between agnitum peccatum, attended by repentance, and velle peccare, which is an inspiration of the devil.

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