

answer to that trite question so much triumphed in. We must first know what they mean by their question; whether by our religion they mean the doctrine which we profess to believe, or any number of persons openly professing that doctrine. If they mean the first, our answer is easy. Our religion was, 1500 years before Luther, in the writings of the Prophets, Evangelists and Apostles. But if by our religion they mean our Church, or a people professing that doctrine which we profess, we answer that for four hundred years after Christ, the writings of the ancient Church, as much depraved as they be, will attest that they and the Christians of those ages were of the same faith that we are. But admit our faith to be contained in the Holy Scriptures. It is a sufficient reproach to the Church of Rome, who after that time till the time of Luther had the government of the greatest part of the Christian affairs in the western parts of the world, if there were no number of people that owned and professed the doctrine of faith contained in the Holy Scriptures which was owned and professed for three hundred years after Christ. It is a sign they had by degrees dispatched them out of the world (as indeed they had as to many thousands of them) and driven the remainder into the wilderness, such places as the valleys of Piedmont and Bohemia, where, indeed, the only true Church of Christ lay hid for many hundreds of years. Particular witnesses God had in other parts, but no bodies of people that we read of. There God fed them, there He upheld them. But if one should ask the Papists where was their religion or church before five hundred years after Christ, it would be a much harder question to answer, whether we now understood the doctrines which they now hold distinct from those which are held by Protestants, or any body of people holding them. The Papists will appear to any reasonable persons very unreasonable in inquiring where, before Luther, there were any bodies of people owning the faith of Protestants, when they know that for several hundred years before they had made it their work to destroy them by the sword of war, so, as Bellarmine himself boasts of an hundred thousand of the Albigenes so slain by virtue of the Popes's Crusade, and by all manner of deaths in times of peace. And if it were necessary to trace the true Church of God to the times when Popery first prevailed, it might be done by the Popish fires, in which they had burned the true professors, and by the drops of blood, nay streams of their blood, which these bloodthirsty villains had made to run down in all places. And if we have no more records than we have of the professors of our faith for 1000 years, it is not to be admired (wondered at), if we consider in whose hands during that time all such records were, and how they have dealt by all books in their keeping that had anything in them looking across upon (being contrary to) those doctrines of which they had made up their mystery of iniquity."

The doctrines that the translator of Scultetus has thus illustrated, which are the possibility of any part of the visible church (but no part of the Church invisible) falling away, and ceasing to be the true Church of Christ on earth, and the constant witness, although, oftentimes very obscure and feeble, of the true Church for the truth of the Gospel, are clearly set forth in the 5th section of the chapter of the Confession of Faith, from which extracts have already been taken.

*The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no Churches of Christ, but Synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless there shall always be a Church on earth to worship God according to His will.—Confession xxv. 5.*