

FROM THE ANGLICAN PATRIMONY

On Confession of Sins

It is a very pious preparation to the holy sacrament, that we confess our sins to the minister of religion : for since it is necessary that a man be examined, and a self-examination was prescribed to the Corinthians in the time of their lapsed discipline, that though there were divisions amongst them, and no established governors, yet from this duty they were not to be excused, and they must in destitution of a public minister do it themselves, but this is in case only of such necessity : the other is better; that is, it is of better order and more advantage that this part of repentance and holy preparation be performed under the conduct of a spiritual guide. And the reason is pressing. For since it is life or death that is there administered, and the great dispensation of the keys is in that ministry, it were very well if he that ministers did know whether the person presented were fit to communicate or no; and if he be not, it is charity to reject him, and charity to assist him that he may be fitted. There are many sad contingencies in the constitution of ecclesiastical affairs, in which every man that needs this help, and would fain make use of it, cannot; but when he can meet with the blessing, it were well it were more frequently used, and more readily entertained. I end these advices with the words of Origen, “Extra veniam est qui peccatum cognovit, nec cognitum confitetur; confitendum autem semper est, non quod peccatum supersit ut semper sit confitendum, sed quia peccati veteris et antequi utilis sit indefessa confessio” (he shall have no pardon who knows his sin and confesses it not; but we must confess always, not that the sin always remains, but that of an old sin an unwearied confession is useful and profitable.”

Jeremy Talyor

The Whole Works of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor, D.D., Volume VII:
“Unum Necessarium”; Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans,
1850, pp 486-87

Jeremy Taylor was a Cambridge graduate who served as chaplain ordinary to King Charles I before the English Civil War. During the war he suffered numerous imprisonments, but following the Restoration in 1660 he was made bishop of Down and Connor in Ireland. His books Holy Living and Holy Dying are still in print.