

Apology of the Augsburg Confession

INTRODUCTION

Philip Melanchthon Presents His Greeting to the Reader. Wherefore we believe that troubles and dangers for the glory of Christ and the good of the Church should be endured, and we are confident that this our fidelity to duty is approved of God, and we hope that the judgment of posterity concerning us will be more just.

For it is undeniable that many topics of Christian doctrine whose existence in the Church is of the greatest moment have been brought to view by our theologians and explained; in reference to which we are not disposed here to recount under what sort of opinions, and how dangerous, they formerly lay covered in the writings of the monks, canonists, and sophistical theologians. [This may have to be done later.]

We have the public testimonials of many good men, who give God thanks for this greatest blessing, namely, that concerning many necessary topics it has taught better things than are read everywhere in the books of our adversaries.

We shall commend our cause, therefore, to Christ, who some time will judge these controversies, and we beseech Him to look upon the afflicted and scattered churches, and to bring them back to godly and perpetual concord. [Therefore, if the known and clear truth is trodden under foot, we will resign this cause to God and Christ in heaven, who is the Father of orphans and the Judge of widows and of all the forsaken, who (as we certainly know) will judge and pass sentence upon this cause aright. Lord Jesus Christ, it is Thy holy Gospel, it is Thy cause; look Thou upon the many troubled hearts and consciences, and maintain and strengthen in Thy truth Thy churches and little flocks, who suffer anxiety and distress from the devil. Confound all hypocrisy and lies, and grant peace and unity, so that Thy glory may advance, and Thy kingdom, strong against all the gates of hell, may continually grow and increase.]

Part 1

Article I: Of God.

The First Article of our Confession our adversaries approve, in which we declare that we believe and teach that there is one divine essence, undivided, etc., and yet, that there are three distinct persons, of the same divine essence, and coeternal, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This article we have always taught and defended, and we believe that it has, in Holy Scripture, sure and firm testimonies that cannot be overthrown. And we constantly affirm that those thinking otherwise are outside of the Church of Christ, and are idolaters, and insult God.

Article II: Of Original Sin.

The Second Article, Of Original Sin, the adversaries approve, but in such a way that they, nevertheless, censure the definition of original sin, which we incidentally gave. Here, immediately at the very threshold, His Imperial Majesty will discover that the writers of the Confutation were deficient not only in judgment, but also in candor. For whereas we, with a simple mind, desired, in passing, to recount those things which original sin embraces, these men, by framing an invidious interpretation, artfully distort a proposition that has in it nothing which of itself is wrong. Thus they say: "To be without the fear of God, to be without faith, is actual guilt"; and therefore they deny that it is original guilt.

It is quite evident that such subtillies have originated in the schools, not in the council of the Emperor. But although this sophistry can be very easily refuted; yet, in order that all good men may understand that we teach in this matter nothing that is absurd, we ask first of all that the German Confession be examined. This will free us from the suspicion of novelty. For there it is written: Weiter wird gelehrt, dass nach dem Fall Adams alle Menschen, so natuerlich geboren werden, in Suenden empfangen und geboren werdenen, das ist, dass sie alle von Mutterleibe an voll boeser Lueste und Neigung sind, keine wahre Gottesfurcht, keinen wahren Glauben an Gott von Natur haben koennen. [It is further taught that since the Fall of Adam all men who are naturally born are conceived and born in sin, i.e., that they all, from their mother's womb, are full of evil desire and inclination, and can have by nature no true fear of God, no true faith in God.] This passage testifies that we deny to those propagated according to carnal nature not only the acts, but also the power or gifts of producing fear and trust in God. For we say that those thus born have concupiscence, and cannot produce true fear and trust in God. What is there here with which fault can be found? To good men, we think, indeed, that we have exculpated ourselves sufficiently. For in this sense the Latin description denies to nature [even to innocent infants] the power, i.e., it denies the gifts and energy by which to produce fear and trust in God, and, in adults [over and above this innate evil disposition of the heart, also] the acts, so that, when we mention concupiscence, we understand not only the acts or fruits, but the constant inclination of the nature [the evil inclination within, which does not cease as long as we are not born anew through the Spirit and faith].

But hereafter we will show more fully that our description agrees with the usual and ancient definition. For we must first show our design in preferring to employ these words in this place. In their schools the adversaries confess that "the material," as they call it, "of original sin is concupiscence." Wherefore, in framing the definition, this should not have been passed by, especially at this time, when some are philosophizing concerning it in a manner unbecoming teachers of religion [are speaking concerning this innate, wicked desire more after the manner of heathen from philosophy than according to God's Word, or Holy Scripture].

For some contend that original sin is not a depravity or corruption in the nature of man, but only servitude, or a condition of mortality [not an innate evil nature, but only a blemish or imposed load, or burden], which those propagated from Adam bear because of the guilt of another [namely, Adam's sin], and without any depravity of their own. Besides, they add that

no one is condemned to eternal death on account of original sin, just as those who are born of a bond-woman are slaves, and bear this condition without any natural blemish, but because of the calamity of their mother [while, of themselves, they are born without fault, like other men: thus original sin is not an innate evil but a defect and burden which we bear since Adam, but we are not on that account personally in sin and inherited disgrace]. To show that this impious opinion is displeasing to us, we made mention of "concupiscence," and, with the best intention, have termed and explained it as "diseases," that "the nature of men is born corrupt and full of faults" [not a part of man, but the entire person with its entire nature is born in sin as with a hereditary disease].

Nor, indeed, have we only made use of the term concupiscence, but we have also said that "the fear of God and faith are wanting." This we have added with the following design: The scholastic teachers also, not sufficiently understanding the definition of original sin, which they have received from the Fathers, extenuate the sin of origin. They contend concerning the fomes [or evil inclination] that it is a quality of [blemish in the] body, and, with their usual folly, ask whether this quality be derived from the contagion of the apple or from the breath of the serpent, and whether it be increased by remedies. With such questions they have suppressed the main point. Therefore, when they speak of the sin of origin, they do not mention the more serious faults of human nature, to wit, ignorance of God, contempt for God, being destitute of fear and confidence in God, hatred of God's judgment, flight from God [as from a tyrant] when He judges, anger toward God, despair of grace, putting one's trust in present things [money, property, friends], etc. These diseases, which are in the highest degree contrary to the Law of God, the scholastics do not notice; yea, to human nature they meanwhile ascribe unimpaired strength for loving God above all things, and for fulfilling God's commandments according to the substance of the acts; nor do they see that they are saying things that are contradictory to one another. For what else is the being able in one's own strength to love God above all things, and to fulfil His commandments, than to have original righteousness [to be a new creature in Paradise, entirely pure and holy]? But if human nature have such strength as to be able of itself to love God above all things, as the scholastics confidently affirm, what will original sin be? For what will there be need of the grace of Christ if we can be justified by our own righteousness [powers]? For what will there be need of the Holy Ghost if human strength can by itself love God above all things, and fulfil God's commandments? Who does not see what preposterous thoughts our adversaries entertain? The lighter diseases in the nature of man they acknowledge, the more severe they do not acknowledge; and yet of these, Scripture everywhere admonishes us, and the prophets constantly complain [as the 13th Psalm, and some other psalms say Ps. 14, 1-3; 5, 9; 140, 3; 36, 1], namely, of carnal security, of the contempt of God, of hatred toward God, and of similar faults born with us. [For Scripture clearly says that all these things are not blown at us, but born with us.] But after the scholastics mingled with Christian doctrine philosophy concerning the perfection of nature [light of reason], and ascribed to the free will and the acts springing therefrom more than was sufficient, and taught that men are justified before God by philosophic or civil righteousness (which we also confess to be subject to reason, and in a measure, within our power), they could not see the inner uncleanness of the nature of men. For this cannot be judged except from the Word of God, of which the scholastics, in their discussions, do not frequently treat.

These were the reasons why, in the description of original sin, we made mention of concupiscence also, and denied to man's natural strength the fear of God and trust in Him. For we wished to indicate that original sin contains also these diseases, namely, ignorance of God, contempt for God, the being destitute of the fear of God and trust in Him, inability to love God. These are the chief faults of human nature, conflicting especially with the first table of the Decalog.

Neither have we said anything new. The ancient definition understood aright expresses precisely the same thing when it says: "Original sin is the absence of original righteousness" [a lack of the first purity and righteousness in Paradise]. But what is righteousness? Here the scholastics wrangle about dialectic questions, they do not explain what original righteousness is. Now, in the Scriptures, righteousness comprises not only the second table of the Decalog [regarding good works in serving our fellow-man], but the first also, which teaches concerning the fear of God, concerning faith, concerning the love of God. Therefore original righteousness was to embrace not only an even temperament of the bodily qualities [perfect health and, in all respects, pure blood, unimpaired powers of the body, as they contend], but also these gifts, namely, a quite certain knowledge of God, fear of God, confidence in God, or certainly the rectitude and power to yield these affections [but the greatest feature in that noble first creature was a bright light in the heart to know God and His work, etc.]. And Scripture testifies to this, when it says, Gen. 1, 27, that man was fashioned in the image and likeness of God. What else is this than that there were embodied in man such wisdom and righteousness as apprehended God, and in which God was reflected, i.e., to man there were given the gifts of the knowledge of God, the fear of God, confidence in God, and the like? For thus Irenaeus and Ambrose interpret the likeness to God, the latter of whom not only says many things to this effect, but especially declares: That soul is not, therefore, in the image of God, in which God is not at all times. And Paul shows in the Epistles to the Ephesians, 5, 9, and Colossians, 3,10, that the image of God is the knowledge of God, righteousness, and truth. Nor does Longobard fear to say that original righteousness is the very likeness to God which God implanted in man. We recount the opinions of the ancients, which in no way interfere with Augustine's interpretation of the image.

Therefore the ancient definition, when it says that sin is the lack of righteousness, not only denies obedience with respect to man's lower powers [that man is not only corrupt in his body and its meanest and lowest faculties], but also denies the knowledge of God, confidence in God, the fear and love of God, or certainly the power to produce these affections [the light in the heart which creates a love and desire for these matters]. For even the theologians themselves teach in their schools that these are not produced without certain gifts and the aid of grace. In order that the matter may be understood, we term these very gifts the knowledge of God, and fear and confidence in God. From these facts it appears that the ancient definition says precisely the same thing that we say, denying fear and confidence toward God, to wit, not only the acts, but also the gifts and power to produce these acts [that we have no good heart toward God, which truly loves God, not only that we are unable to do or achieve any perfectly good work].

Of the same import is the definition which occurs in the writings of Augustine, who is accustomed to define original sin as concupiscence [wicked desire]. For he means that when righteousness had been lost, concupiscence came in its place. For inasmuch as diseased nature cannot fear and love God and believe God, it seeks and loves carnal things. God's judgment it either contemns when at ease, or hates, when thoroughly terrified. Thus Augustine includes both the defect and the vicious habit which has come in its place. Nor indeed is concupiscence only a corruption of the qualities of the body, but also, in the higher powers, a vicious turning to carnal things. Nor do those persons see what they say who ascribe to man at the same time concupiscence that is not entirely destroyed by the Holy Ghost, and love to God above all things.

We, therefore, have been right in expressing, in our description of original sin, both namely, these defects: the not being able to believe God, the not being able to fear and love God; and, likewise: the having concupiscence, which seeks carnal things contrary to God's Word, i.e., seeks not only the pleasure of the body, but also carnal wisdom and righteousness, and, contemning God, trusts in these as god things. Nor only the ancients [like Augustine and others], but also the more recent [teachers and scholastics], at least the wiser ones among them, teach that original sin is at the same time truly these namely, the defects which I have recounted and concupiscence. For Thomas says thus: Original sin comprehends the loss of original righteousness, and with this an inordinate disposition of the parts of the soul; whence it is not pure loss, but a corrupt habit [something positive]. And Bonaventura: When the question is asked, What is original sin? The correct answer is, that it is immoderate [unchecked] concupiscence. The correct answer is also, that it is want of the righteousness that is due. And in one of these replies the other is included. The same is the opinion of Hugo, when he says that original sin is ignorance in the mind and concupiscence in the flesh. For he thereby indicates that when we are born, we bring with us ignorance of God unbelief, distrust, contempt, and hatred of God. For when he mentions ignorance, he includes these. And these opinions [even of the most recent teachers] also agree with Scripture. For Paul sometimes expressly calls it a defect [a lack of divine light], as 1 Cor. 2, 14: The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. In another place, Rom. 7, 5, he calls it concupiscence working in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. We could cite more passages relating to both parts, but in regard to a manifest fact there is no need of testimonies. And the intelligent reader will readily be able to decide that to be without the fear of God and without faith are more than actual guilt. For they are abiding defects in our unrenewed nature.

In reference to original sin we therefore hold nothing differing either from Scripture or from the Church catholic, but cleanse from corruptions and restore to light most important declarations of Scripture and of the Fathers, that had been covered over by the sophistical controversies of modern theologians. For it is manifest from the subject itself that modern theologians have not noticed what the Fathers meant when they spake of defect [lack of original righteousness]. But the knowledge of original sin is necessary. For the magnitude of the grace of Christ cannot be understood [no one can heartily long and have a desire for Christ for the inexpressibly great treasure of divine favor and grace which the Gospel offers], unless our diseases be recognized. [As Christ says Matt. 9, 12; Mark 2, 17: They that are whole need not a physician.] The entire

righteousness of man is mere hypocrisy [and abomination] before God, unless we acknowledge that our heart is naturally destitute of love, fear, and confidence in God [that we are miserable sinners who are in disgrace with God]. For this reason the prophet Jeremiah, 31, 19, says: After that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. Likewise Ps. 116, 11: I said in my haste, All men are liars, i.e., not thinking aright concerning God.

Here our adversaries inveigh against Luther also because he wrote that, "Original sin remains after Baptism." They add that this article was justly condemned by Leo X. But His Imperial Majesty will find on this point a manifest slander. For our adversaries know in what sense Luther intended this remark that original sin remains after Baptism. He always wrote thus, namely, that Baptism removes the guilt of original sin, although the material, as they call it, of the sin, i.e., concupiscence, remains. He also added in reference to the material that the Holy Ghost, given through Baptism, begins to mortify the concupiscence, and creates new movements [a new light, a new sense and spirit] in man. In the same manner, Augustine also speaks who says: Sin is remitted in Baptism, not in such a manner that it no longer exists, but so that it is not imputed. Here he confesses openly that sin exists, i.e., that it remains although it is not imputed. And this judgment was so agreeable to those who succeeded him that it was recited also in the decrees. Also against Julian, Augustine says: The Law, which is in the members, has been annulled by spiritual regeneration, and remains in the mortal flesh. It has been annulled because the guilt has been remitted in the Sacrament, by which believers are born again; but it remains, because it produces desires against which believers contend. Our adversaries know that Luther believes and teaches thus, and while they cannot reject the matter, they nevertheless pervert his words, in order by this artifice to crush an innocent man.

But they contend that concupiscence is a penalty, and not a sin [a burden and imposed penalty, and is not such a sin as is subject to death and condemnation]. Luther maintains that it is a sin. It has been said above that Augustine defines original sin as concupiscence. If there be anything disadvantageous in this opinion, let them quarrel with Augustine. Besides Paul says, Rom. 7, 7. 23: I had not known lust (concupiscence), except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet. Likewise: I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. These testimonies can be overthrown by no sophistry. [All devils, all men cannot overthrow them.] For they clearly call concupiscence sin, which, nevertheless, is not imputed to those who are in Christ although by nature it is a matter worthy of death where it is not forgiven. Thus, beyond all controversy, the Fathers believe. For Augustine, in a long discussion refutes the opinion of those who thought that concupiscence in man is not a fault but an adiaphoron, as color of the body or ill health is said to be an adiaphoron [as to have a black or a white body is neither good nor evil].

But if the adversaries will contend that the fomes [or evil inclination] is an adiaphoron, not only many passages of Scripture but simply the entire Church [and all the Fathers] will contradict them. For [even if not entire consent, but only the inclination and desire be there] who ever dared to say that these matters, even though perfect agreement could not be attained, were adiaphora, namely, to doubt concerning God's wrath, concerning God's grace, concerning God's Word, to be angry at the judgments of God, to be provoked because God does not at

once deliver one from afflictions, to murmur because the wicked enjoy a better fortune than the good, to be urged on by wrath, lust, the desire for glory, wealth, etc.? And yet godly men acknowledge these in themselves, as appears in the Psalms and the prophets. [For all tried, Christian hearts know, alas! that these evils are wrapped up in man's skin, namely to esteem money, goods, and all other matters more highly than God, and to spend our lives in security; again, that after the manner of our carnal security we always imagine that God's wrath against sin is not as serious and great as it verily is. Again, that we murmur against the doing and will of God, when He does not succor us speedily in our tribulations, and arranges our affairs to please us. Again, we experience every day that it hurts us to see wicked people in good fortune in this world, as David and all the saints have complained. Over and above this, all men feel that their hearts are easily inflamed, now with ambition, now with anger and wrath, now with lewdness.] But in the schools they transferred hither from philosophy notions entirely different, that, because of passions, we are neither good nor evil, we are neither deserving of praise nor blame. Likewise, that nothing is sin, unless it be voluntary [inner desires and thoughts are not sins, if I do not altogether consent thereto]. These notions were expressed among philosophers with respect to civil righteousness, and not with respect to God's judgment. [For there it is true, as the jurists say, *L. cogitationis*, thoughts are exempt from custom and punishment. But God searches the hearts; in God's court and judgment it is different.] With no greater prudence they add also other notions, such as, that [God's creature and] nature is not [cannot in itself be] evil. In its proper place we do not censure this; but it is not right to twist it into an extenuation of original sin. And, nevertheless, these notions are read in the works of scholastics, who inappropriately mingle philosophy or civil doctrine concerning ethics with the Gospel. Nor were these matters only disputed in the schools, but, as is usually the case, were carried from the schools to the people. And these persuasions [godless, erroneous, dangerous, harmful teachings] prevailed, and nourished confidence in human strength, and suppressed the knowledge of Christ's grace. Therefore, Luther wishing to declare the magnitude of original sin and of human infirmity [what a grievous mortal guilt original sin is in the sight of God], taught that these remnants of original sin [after Baptism] are not, by their own nature, adiaphora in man, but that, for their non-imputation, they need the grace of Christ and, likewise for their mortification, the Holy Ghost.

Although the scholastics extenuate both sin and punishment when they teach that man by his own strength, can fulfil the commandments of God; in Genesis the punishment, imposed on account of original sin, is described otherwise. For there human nature is subjected not only to death and other bodily evils, but also to the kingdom of the devil. For there, Gen. 3, 16, this fearful sentence is proclaimed: I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. The defects and the concupiscence are punishments and sins. Death and other bodily evils and the dominion of the devil, are properly punishments. For human nature has been delivered into slavery, and is held captive by the devil, who infatuates it with wicked opinions and errors, and impels it to sins of every kind. But just as the devil cannot be conquered except by the aid of Christ, so by our own strength we cannot free ourselves from this slavery. Even the history of the world shows how great is the power of the devil's kingdom. The world is full of blasphemies against God and of wicked opinions, and the devil keeps entangled in these bands those who are wise and righteous [many hypocrites who appear holy]

in the sight of the world. In other persons grosser vices manifest themselves. But since Christ was given to us to remove both these sins and these punishments, and to destroy the kingdom of the devil, sin and death, it will not be possible to recognize the benefits of Christ unless we understand our evils. For this reason our preachers have diligently taught concerning these subjects, and have delivered nothing that is new but have set forth Holy Scripture and the judgments of the holy Fathers.

We think that this will satisfy His Imperial Majesty concerning the puerile and trivial sophistry with which the adversaries have perverted our article. For we know that we believe aright and in harmony with the Church catholic of Christ. But if the adversaries will renew this controversy, there will be no want among us of those who will reply and defend the truth. For in this case our adversaries, to a great extent, do not understand what they say. They often speak what is contradictory, and neither explain correctly and logically that which is essential to [i.e., that which is or is not properly of the essence of] original sin, nor what they call defects. But we have been unwilling at this place to examine their contests with any very great subtlety. We have thought it worth while only to recite, in customary and well-known words, the belief of the holy Fathers, which we also follow.

Part 2

Article III: Of Christ

The Third Article the adversaries approve, in which we confess that there are in Christ two natures, namely, a human nature, assumed by the Word into the unity of His person; and that the same Christ suffered and died to reconcile the Father to us; and that He was raised again to reign, and to justify and sanctify believers, etc., according to the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

Article IV: Of Justification.

In the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and, below, in the Twentieth Article, they condemn us, for teaching that men obtain remission of sins, not because of their own merits, but freely for Christ's sake, through faith in Christ. [They reject quite stubbornly both these statements.] For they condemn us both for denying that men obtain remission of sins because of their own merits, and for affirming that, through faith, men obtain remission of sins, and through faith in Christ are justified. But since in this controversy the chief topic of Christian doctrine is treated, which, understood aright, illumines and amplifies the honor of Christ [which is of especial service for the clear, correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, and alone shows the way to the unspeakable treasure and right knowledge of Christ, and alone opens the door to the entire Bible], and brings necessary and most abundant consolation to devout consciences, we ask His Imperial Majesty to hear us with forbearance in regard to matters of such importance. For since the adversaries understand neither what the remission of sins, nor what faith, nor what grace, nor what righteousness is, they sadly corrupt this topic, and obscure the glory and benefits of

Christ and rob devout consciences of the consolations offered in Christ. But that we may strengthen the position of our Confession, and also remove the charges which the adversaries advance against us, certain things are to be premised in the beginning, in order that the sources of both kinds of doctrine, i. e., both that of our adversaries and our own, may be known.

All Scripture ought to be distributed into these two principal topics, the Law and the promises. For in some places it presents the Law, and in others the promise concerning Christ, namely, either when [in the Old Testament] it promises that Christ will come, and offers, for His sake, the remission of sins justification, and life eternal, or when, in the Gospel [in the New Testament], Christ Himself, since He has appeared, promises the remission of sins, justification, and life eternal. Moreover, in this discussion, by Law we designate the Ten Commandments, wherever they are read in the Scriptures. Of the ceremonies and judicial laws of Moses we say nothing at present.

Of these two parts the adversaries select the Law, because human reason naturally understands, in some way, the Law (for it has the same judgment divinely written in the mind); [the natural law agrees with the law of Moses, or the Ten Commandments] and by the Law they seek the remission of sins and justification. Now, the Decalog requires not only outward civil works, which reason can in some way produce, but it also requires other things placed far above reason, namely, truly to fear God, truly to love God, truly to call upon God, truly to be convinced that God hears us, and to expect the aid of God in death and in all afflictions; finally, it requires obedience to God, in death and all afflictions, so that we may not flee from these, or refuse them when God imposes them.

Here the scholastics, having followed the philosophers, teach only a righteousness of reason, namely, civil works, and fabricate besides that without the Holy Ghost reason can love God above all things. For, as long as the human mind is at ease, and does not feel the wrath or judgment of God, it can imagine that it wishes to love God, that it wishes to do good for God's sake. [But it is sheer hypocrisy.] In this manner they teach that men merit the remission of sins by doing what is in them, i.e., if reason, grieving over sin, elicit an act of love to God, or for God's sake be active in that which is good. And because this opinion naturally flatters men, it has brought forth and multiplied in the Church many services, monastic vows, abuses of the mass; and, with this opinion the one has, in the course of time, devised this act of worship and observances, the other that. And in order that they might nourish and increase confidence in such works, they have affirmed that God necessarily gives grace to one thus working, by the necessity not of constraint, but of immutability [not that He is constrained, but that this is the order which God will not transgress or alter].

In this opinion there are many great and pernicious errors, which it would be tedious to enumerate. Let the discreet reader think only of this: If this be Christian righteousness, what difference is there between philosophy and the doctrine of Christ? If we merit the remission of sins by these elicit acts [that spring from our mind], of what benefit is Christ? If we can be justified by reason and the works of reason, wherefore is there need of Christ or regeneration [as Peter declares, 1 Pet. 1, 18 ff.]? And from these opinions the matter has now come to such a

pass that many ridicule us because we teach that an other than the philosophic righteousness must be sought after. [Alas! it has come to this, that even great theologians at Louvain, Paris, etc., have known nothing of any other godliness or righteousness (although every letter and syllable in Paul teaches otherwise) than the godliness which philosophers teach. And although we ought to regard this as a strange teaching, and ought to ridicule it, they rather ridicule us, yea, make a jest of Paul himself.] We have heard that some, after setting aside the Gospel, have, instead of a sermon, explained the ethics of Aristotle. [I myself have heard a great preacher who did not mention Christ and the Gospel, and preached the ethics of Aristotle. Is this not a childish, foolish way to preach to Christians?] Nor did such men err if those things are true which the adversaries defend [if the doctrine of the adversaries be true, the Ethics is a precious book of sermons, and a fine new Bible]. For Aristotle wrote concerning civil morals so learnedly that nothing further concerning this need be demanded. We see books extant in which certain sayings of Christ are compared with the sayings of Socrates, Zeno, and others, as though Christ had come for the purpose of delivering certain laws through which we might merit the remission of sins, as though we did not receive this gratuitously, because of His merits. Therefore, if we here receive the doctrine of the adversaries, that by the works of reason we merit the remission of sins and justification, there will be no difference between philosophic, or certainly pharisaic, and Christian righteousness.

Although the adversaries, not to pass by Christ altogether, require a knowledge of the history concerning Christ, and ascribe to Him that it is His merit that a habit is given us, or, as they say, "prima gratia", "first grace," which they understand as a habit, inclining us the more readily to love God; yet what they ascribe to this habit is of little importance [is a feeble, paltry, small, poor operation, that would be ascribed to Christ], because they imagine that the acts of the will are of the same kind before and after this habit. They imagine that the will can love God; but nevertheless this habit stimulates it to do the same the more cheerfully. And they bid us first merit this habit by preceding merits; then they bid us merit by the works of the Law an increase of this habit and life eternal. Thus they bury Christ, so that men may not avail themselves of Him as a Mediator, and believe that for His sake they freely receive remission of sins and reconciliation, but may dream that by their own fulfilment of the Law they merit the remission of sins, and that by their own fulfilment of the Law they are accounted righteous before God; while, nevertheless, the Law is never satisfied, since reason does nothing except certain civil works, and, in the mean time neither [in the heart] fears God, nor truly believes that God cares for it. And although they speak of this habit, yet, without the righteousness of faith, neither the love of God can exist in man, nor can it be understood what the love of God is.

Their feigning a distinction between "meritum congrui" and "meritum condigni" [due merit and true, complete merit] is only an artifice in order not to appear openly to Pelagianize, For, if God necessarily gives grace for the "meritum congrui" [due merit], it is no longer "meritum congrui", but "meritum condigni" [a true duty and complete merit]. But they do not know what they are saying. After this habit of love [is there], they imagine that man can acquire "meritum de condigno". And yet they bid us doubt whether there be a habit present. How, therefore, do they know whether they acquire merit "de congruo" or "de condigno" [in full, or half]? But this whole matter was fabricated by idle men [But, good God! these are mere inane ideas and

dreams of idle, wretched, inexperienced men who do not much reduce the Bible to practise], who did not know how the remission of sins occurs, and how, in the judgment of God and terrors of conscience, trust in works is driven out of us. Secure hypocrites always judge that they acquire "merit de condigno", whether the habit be present or be not present, because men naturally trust in their own righteousness, but terrified consciences waver and hesitate, and then seek and accumulate other works in order to find rest. Such consciences never think that they acquire merit "de condigno", and they rush into despair unless they hear, in addition to the doctrine of the Law, the Gospel concerning the gratuitous remission of sins and the righteousness of faith. [Thus some stories are told that when the Barefooted monks had in vain praised their order and good works to some good consciences in the hour of death, they at last had to be silent concerning their order and St. Franciscus, and to say: "Dear man, Christ has died for you." This revived and refreshed in trouble, and alone gave peace and comfort.]

Thus the adversaries teach nothing but the righteousness of reason, or certainly of the Law, upon which they look just as the Jews upon the veiled face of Moses, and, in secure hypocrites who think that they satisfy the Law, they excite presumption and empty confidence in works [they place men on a sand foundation, their own works] and contempt of the grace of Christ. On the contrary, they drive timid consciences to despair, which, laboring with doubt, never can experience what faith is, and how efficacious it is; thus, at last they utterly despair.

Now, we think concerning the righteousness of reason thus, namely, that God requires it, and that, because of God's commandment, the honorable works which the Decalog commands must necessarily be performed, according to the passage Gal. 3, 24: The Law was our schoolmaster; likewise 1 Tim. 1, 9: The Law is made for the ungodly. For God wishes those who are carnal [gross sinners] to be restrained by civil discipline, and to maintain this, He has given laws, letters, doctrine, magistrates, penalties. And this righteousness reason, by its own strength, can, to a certain extent, work, although it is often overcome by natural weakness, and by the devil impelling it to manifest crimes. Now, although we cheerfully assign this righteousness of reason the praises that are due it (for this corrupt nature has no greater good [in this life and in a worldly nature, nothing is ever better than uprightness and virtue], and Aristotle says aright: Neither the evening star nor the morning star is more beautiful than righteousness, and God also honors it with bodily rewards), yet it ought not to be praised with reproach to Christ.

For it is false [I thus conclude, and am certain that it is a fiction, and not true] that we merit the remission of sins by our works.

False also is this, that men are accounted righteous before God because of the righteousness of reason [works and external piety].

False also is this that reason, by its own strength, is able to love God above all things, and to fulfil God's Law, namely, truly to fear God to be truly confident that God hears prayer, to be willing to obey God in death and other dispensations of God, not to covet what belongs to others, etc.; although reason can work civil works.

False also and dishonoring Christ is this, that men do not sin who, without grace, do the commandments of God [who keep the commandments of God merely in an external manner, without the Spirit and grace in their hearts]. We have testimonies for this our belief, not only from the Scriptures, but also from the Fathers. For in opposition to the Pelagians, Augustine contends at great length that grace is not given because of our merits. And in "De Natura et Gratia" he says: If natural ability, through the free will, suffice both for learning to know how one ought to live and for living aright, then Christ has died in vain, then the offense of the Cross is made void. Why may I not also here cry out? Yea I will cry out, and, with Christian grief, will chide them: Christ has become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace. Gal. 5, 4; cf. 2, 21. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Rom. 10 3. 4. And John 8, 36: If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. Therefore by reason we cannot be freed from sins and merit the remission of sins. And in John 3, 5 it is written: Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. But if it is necessary to be born again of the Holy Ghost the righteousness of reason does not justify us before God, and does not fulfil the Law, Rom. 3, 23: All have come short of the glory of God, i.e., are destitute of the wisdom and righteousness of God, which acknowledges and glorifies God. Likewise Rom. 8, 7. 8: The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. These testimonies are so manifest that, to use the words of Augustine which he employed in this case, they do not need an acute understanding, but only an attentive hearer. If the carnal mind is enmity against God, the flesh certainly does not love God; if it cannot be subject to the Law of God, it cannot love God. If the carnal mind is enmity against God, the flesh sins even when we do external civil works. If it cannot be subject to the Law of God, it certainly sins even when, according to human judgment, it possesses deeds that are excellent and worthy of praise. The adversaries consider only the precepts of the Second Table which contain civil righteousness that reason understands. Content with this, they think that they satisfy the Law of God. In the mean time they do not see the First Table which commands that we love God, that we declare as certain that God is angry with sin, that we truly fear God, that we declare as certain that God hears prayer. But the human heart without the Holy Ghost either in security despises God's judgment, or in punishment flees from, and hates, God when He judges. Therefore it does not obey the First Table. Since, therefore, contempt of God, and doubt concerning the Word of God and concerning the threats and promises, inhere in human nature, men truly sin, even when, without the Holy Ghost, they do virtuous works, because they do them with a wicked heart, according to Rom. 14, 23: Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. For such persons perform their works with contempt of God, just as Epicurus does not believe that God cares for him, or that he is regarded or heard by God. This contempt vitiates works seemingly virtuous, because God judges the heart.

Lastly, it was very foolish for the adversaries to write that men who are under eternal wrath merit the remission of sins by an act of love, which springs from their mind, since it is impossible to love God, unless the remission of sins be apprehended first by faith. For the heart, truly feeling that God is angry, cannot love God, unless He be shown to have been

reconciled. As long as He terrifies us, and seems to cast us into eternal death, human nature is not able to take courage, so as to love a wrathful, judging, and punishing God [poor, weak nature must lose heart and courage, and must tremble before such great wrath, which so fearfully terrifies and punishes, and can never feel a spark of love before God Himself comforts]. It is easy for idle men to feign such dreams concerning love as, that a person guilty of mortal sin can love God above all things, because they do not feel what the wrath or judgment of God is. But in agony of conscience and in conflicts [with Satan] conscience experiences the emptiness of these philosophical speculations. Paul says, Rom. 4,15: The Law worketh wrath. He does not say that by the Law men merit the remission of sins. For the Law always accuses and terrifies consciences. Therefore it does not justify, because conscience terrified by the Law flees from the judgment of God. Therefore they err who trust that by the Law, by their own works, they merit the remission of sins. It is sufficient for us to have said these things concerning the righteousness of reason or of the Law, which the adversaries teach. For after a while, when we will declare our belief concerning the righteousness of faith, the subject itself will compel us to adduce more testimonies, which also will be of service in overthrowing the errors of the adversaries which we have thus far reviewed.

Because, therefore, men by their own strength cannot fulfil the Law of God, and all are under sin, and subject to eternal wrath and death, on this account we cannot be freed by the Law from sin and be justified but the promise of the remission of sins and of justification has been given us for Christ's sake, who was given for us in order that He might make satisfaction for the sins of the world, and has been appointed as the [only] Mediator and Propitiator. And this promise has not the condition of our merits [it does not read thus: Through Christ you have grace salvation, etc., if you merit it], but freely offers the remission of sins and justification, as Paul says, Rom. 11, 6: If it be of works, then is it no more grace. And in another place, Rom. 3, 21: The righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, i.e., the remission of sins is freely offered. Nor does reconciliation depend upon our merits. Because, if the remission of sins were to depend upon our merits, and reconciliation were from the Law, it would be useless. For, as we do not fulfil the Law, it would also follow that we would never obtain the promise of reconciliation. Thus Paul reasons, Rom. 4, 14: For if they which are of the Law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. For if the promise would require the condition of our merits and the Law, which we never fulfil, it would follow that the promise would be useless.

But since justification is obtained through the free promise, it follows that we cannot justify ourselves. Otherwise, wherefore would there be need to promise? [And why should Paul so highly extol and praise grace?] For since the promise cannot be received except by faith, the Gospel, which is properly the promise of the remission of sins and of justification for Christ's sake, proclaims the righteousness of faith in Christ, which the Law does not teach. Nor is this the righteousness of the Law. For the Law requires of us our works and our perfection. But the Gospel freely offers, for Christ's sake, to us, who have been vanquished by sin and death, reconciliation, which is received, not by works, but by faith alone. This faith brings to God not confidence in one's own merits, but only confidence in the promise, or the mercy promised in Christ. This special faith, therefore, by which an individual believes that for Christ's sake his sins

are remitted him, and that for Christ's sake God is reconciled and propitious, obtains remission of sins and justifies us. And because in repentance, i.e. in terrors, it comforts and encourages hearts it regenerates us, and brings the Holy Ghost that then we may be able to fulfil God's Law, namely, to love God, truly to fear God, truly to be confident that God hears prayer, and to obey God in all afflictions; it mortifies concupiscence, etc. Thus, because faith, which freely receives the remission of sins, sets Christ, the Mediator and Propitiator, against God's wrath, it does not present our merits or our love [which would be tossed aside like a little feather by a hurricane]. This faith is the true knowledge of Christ, and avails itself of the benefits of Christ, and regenerates hearts, and precedes the fulfilling of the Law. And of this faith not a syllable exists in the doctrine of our adversaries. Hence we find fault with the adversaries, equally because they teach only the righteousness of the Law and because they do not teach the righteousness of the Gospel, which proclaims the righteousness of faith in Christ.

Part 3: What Is Justifying Faith?

The adversaries feign that faith is only a knowledge of the history, and therefore teach that it can coexist with mortal sin. Hence they say nothing concerning faith, by which Paul so frequently says that men are justified, because those who are accounted righteous before God do not live in mortal sin. But that faith which justifies is not merely a knowledge of history, [not merely this, that I know the stories of Christ's birth, suffering, etc. (that even the devils know,)] but it is to assent to the promise of God, in which for Christ's sake, the remission of sins and justification are freely offered. [It is the certainty or the certain trust in the heart, when, with my whole heart, I regard the promises of God as certain and true, through which there are offered me, without my merit, the forgiveness of sins, grace, and all salvation, through Christ the Mediator.] And that no one may suppose that it is mere knowledge we will add further: it is to wish and to receive the offered promise of the remission of sins and of justification. [Faith is that my whole heart takes to itself this treasure. It is not my doing, not my presenting or giving, not my work or preparation, but that a heart comforts itself, and is perfectly confident with respect to this, namely, that God makes a present and gift to us, and not we to Him, that He sheds upon us every treasure of grace in Christ.]

And the difference between this faith and the righteousness of the Law can be easily discerned. Faith is the "latreia" [divine service], which receives the benefits offered by God; the righteousness of the Law is the "latreia" [divine service] which offers to God our merits. By faith God wishes to be worshiped in this way, that we receive from Him those things which He promises and offers.

Now, that faith signifies, not only a knowledge of the history, but such faith as assents to the promise, Paul plainly testifies when he says, Rom. 4, 16: Therefore it is of faith, to the end the promise might be sure. For he judges that the promise cannot be received unless by faith. Wherefore he puts them together as things that belong to one another, and connects promise and faith. [There Paul fastens and binds together these two, thus: Wherever there is a promise faith is required and conversely, wherever faith is required there must be a promise.] Although

it will be easy to decide what faith is if we consider the Creed where this article certainly stands: The forgiveness of sins. Therefore it is not enough to believe that Christ was born, suffered, was raised again, unless we add also this article, which is the purpose of the history: The forgiveness of sins. To this article the rest must be referred, namely, that for Christ's sake, and not for the sake of our merits, forgiveness of sins is given us. For what need was there that Christ was given for our sins if for our sins our merits can make satisfaction?

As often, therefore, as we speak of justifying faith, we must keep in mind that these three objects concur: the promise, and that, too, gratuitous, and the merits of Christ, as the price and propitiation. The promise is received by faith; the "gratuitous" excludes our merits, and signifies that the benefit is offered only through mercy; the merits of Christ are the price, because there must be a certain propitiation for our sins. Scripture frequently implores mercy, and the holy Fathers often say that we are saved by mercy. As often, therefore, as mention is made of mercy, we must keep in mind that faith is there required, which receives the promise of mercy. And, again, as often as we speak of faith, we wish an object to be understood, namely, the promised mercy. For faith justifies and saves, not on the ground that it is a work in itself worthy, but only because it receives the promised mercy.

And throughout the prophets and the psalms this worship, this "latreia", is highly praised, although the Law does not teach the gratuitous remission of sins. But the Fathers knew the promise concerning Christ that God for Christ's sake wished to remit sins. Therefore, since they understood that Christ would be the price for our sins, they knew that our works are not a price for so great a matter [could not pay so great a debt]. Accordingly, they received gratuitous mercy and remission of sins by faith, just as the saints in the New Testament. Here belong those frequent repetitions concerning mercy and faith, in the psalms and the prophets, as this, Ps. 130, 3 sq.: If Thou Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Here David confesses his sins and does not recount his merits. He adds; But there is forgiveness with Thee. Here he comforts himself by his trust in God's mercy, and he cites the promise: My soul doth wait and in His Word do I hope; i.e., because Thou hast promised the remission of sins, I am sustained by this Thy promise. Therefore the fathers also were justified, not by the Law but by the promise and faith. And it is amazing that the adversaries extenuate faith to such a degree, although they see that it is everywhere praised as an eminent service, as in Ps. 50, 15: Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee. Thus God wishes Himself to be known, thus He wishes Himself to be worshiped, that from Him we receive benefits, and receive them, too, because of His mercy, and not because of our merits. This is the richest consolation in all afflictions [physical or spiritual, in life or in death as all godly persons know]. And such consolations the adversaries abolish when they extenuate and disparage faith, and teach only that by means of works and merits men treat with God [that we treat with God, the great Majesty, by means of our miserable, beggarly works and merits].

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