

## XVIII. FREEDOM OF THE WILL

<sup>1</sup> It is also taught among us that man possesses **some measure of freedom of the will** which enables him to live an outwardly honorable life and to make choices among the things that reason comprehends.

<sup>2</sup> But without the grace, help, and activity of the Holy Spirit man is **not capable of making himself acceptable to God, of fearing God and believing in God with his whole heart, or of expelling inborn evil lusts from his heart.** <sup>3</sup> This is accomplished **by the Holy Spirit**, who is given through the Word of God, for Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:14, “Natural man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God.”

<sup>4</sup> In order that it may be evident that this teaching is no novelty, the clear words of **Augustine** on free will are here quoted from the third book of his *Hypognosticon*: “We concede that all men have a free will, for all have a natural, innate understanding and reason. However, this **does not enable them to act in matters pertaining to God** (such as loving God with their whole heart or fearing him), for it is **only in the outward acts of this life** that they have **freedom to choose good or evil.** <sup>5</sup> **By good** I mean what they are **capable of by nature**: whether or not to labor in the fields, whether or not to eat or drink or visit a friend, whether to dress or undress, whether to build a house, take a wife, engage in a trade, or do whatever else may be good and profitable. <sup>6</sup> None of these is or exists without God, but all things are from him and through him. <sup>7</sup> On the other hand, by his own choice **man can also undertake evil**, as when he wills to kneel before an idol, commit murder, etc.”

As it relates to Article II. Original Sin:

“...unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God...”

Pelagians and others “...that natural man is made righteous by his own powers...”

## XIX. THE CAUSE OF SIN

It is taught among us that although almighty **God has created and still preserves nature**, yet sin is caused in all wicked men and despisers of God **by the perverted will**. This is **the will of the devil and of all ungodly men**; as soon as God withdraws his support, the will turns away from God to evil. It is as Christ says in John 8:44, “When the devil lies, he speaks according to his own nature.”

As it relates to Article I. God: “one creator and preserver of all things...”  
Art II Original Sin: “...since the fall...”

## XX. FAITH AND GOOD WORKS

<sup>1</sup> Our teachers have been **falsely accused of forbidding good works**. <sup>2</sup> Their writings on the Ten Commandments, and other writings as well, show that they have given good and profitable accounts and instructions **concerning true Christian estates and works**. <sup>3</sup> About these little was taught in former times, when for the most part sermons were concerned with **childish and useless works like rosaries, the cult of saints, monasticism, pilgrimages, appointed fasts, holy days, brotherhoods,**<sup>7</sup> etc. <sup>4</sup> Our opponents no longer praise these useless works so highly as they once did, <sup>5</sup> and they have also learned to speak now of faith, about which they did not preach at all in former times. <sup>6</sup> They do not teach now that we become righteous before God by our works alone, but **they add faith in Christ and say that faith and works make us righteous before God**. <sup>7</sup> This teaching may offer a little more comfort than the teaching that we are to rely solely on our works.

<sup>8</sup> Since the teaching about **faith, which is the chief article in the Christian life**, has been neglected so long (as all must admit) while nothing but works was preached everywhere, our people have been instructed as follows:

As it relates to Article IV. **Justification:**

<sup>9</sup> We begin by teaching that **our works cannot reconcile us with God or obtain grace for us**, for this happens **only through faith, that is, when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who alone is the mediator who reconciles the Father**. <sup>10</sup> Whoever imagines that he can accomplish this by works, or that he can merit grace, **despises Christ** and seeks his own way to God, contrary to the Gospel.

As it relates to **Article III. Son of God:**

<sup>11</sup> This teaching about faith is plainly and clearly treated by Paul in many passages, especially in **Eph. 2:8, 9**, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God — not because of works, lest any man should boast," etc.

<sup>12</sup> That **no new interpretation** is here introduced can be demonstrated from Augustine, <sup>13</sup> who discusses this question thoroughly and teaches the same thing, namely, that we obtain grace and are justified before God through faith in Christ and not through works. His whole book, *De spiritu et litera*,<sup>8</sup> proves this.

<sup>15</sup> Although this teaching is held in great contempt among untried people, yet it is a matter of experience that weak and terrified consciences find it most comforting and salutary. **The conscience cannot come to rest and peace through works, but only through faith**, that is, when it is assured and knows that for Christ's sake it has a gracious God, <sup>16</sup> as Paul says in Rom. 5:1, "Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God."

<sup>19</sup> In former times this comfort was not heard in preaching, but poor consciences were driven to rely on their own efforts, and all sorts of works were undertaken. <sup>20</sup> Some were driven by their conscience **into monasteries** in the hope that there they might merit grace through monastic life.

<sup>21</sup> Others devised **other works** for the purpose of earning grace and making satisfaction for sins.

<sup>22</sup> Many of them discovered that they did not obtain peace by such means. It was therefore necessary to preach this doctrine about faith in Christ and diligently to apply it in order that men may know that **the grace of God is appropriated without merits, through faith alone**.

<sup>23</sup> Instruction is also given among us to show that **the faith here spoken of is not that possessed by the devil and the ungodly**, who also believe the history of Christ's suffering and his resurrection from the dead, but we mean such true faith as **believes that we receive grace and forgiveness of sin through Christ**.

<sup>24</sup> Whoever knows that in Christ he has a gracious God, truly knows God, calls upon him, and is not, like the heathen, without God. <sup>25</sup> For the devil and the ungodly do not believe this article concerning the forgiveness of sin, and so they are at enmity with God, cannot call upon him, and have no hope of receiving good from him. Therefore, as has just been indicated, the Scriptures speak of **faith but do not mean by it such knowledge as the devil and ungodly men possess**. Heb. 11:1 teaches about faith in such a way as to make it clear that faith is **not merely a knowledge of historical events** but is a confidence in God and in the fulfillment of his promises. <sup>26</sup> Augustine also reminds us that we would understand the word "faith" in the Scriptures to mean **confidence in God, assurance that God is gracious to us, and not merely such a knowledge of historical events as the devil also possesses**.

<sup>27</sup> It is also taught among us that **good works should and must be done, not that we are to rely on them to earn grace but that we may do God's will and glorify him**. <sup>28</sup> It is always faith alone that apprehends grace and forgiveness of sin. <sup>29</sup> **When through faith the Holy Spirit is given, the heart is moved to do good works**. <sup>31</sup> Before that, when it is **without the Holy Spirit, the heart is too weak**. <sup>32</sup> Moreover, it is in the power of the devil, who drives poor human beings into many sins. <sup>33</sup> We see this in the philosophers who undertook to lead honorable and blameless lives; they failed to accomplish this, and instead fell into many great and open sins. <sup>34</sup> This is what happens when a man is without true faith and the Holy Spirit and governs himself by his own human strength alone.

<sup>35</sup> Consequently this teaching concerning faith is not to be accused of forbidding good works but is rather **to be praised for teaching that good works are to be done and for offering help as to how they may be done**. <sup>36</sup> For without faith and without Christ human nature and human strength are much too weak to do good works, <sup>37</sup> call upon God, have patience in suffering, love one's neighbor, diligently engage in callings which are commanded, render obedience, avoid evil lusts, etc. <sup>38</sup> Such **great and genuine works** cannot be done without the help of Christ, <sup>39</sup> as he himself says in John 15:5, "Apart from me you can do nothing."

## XXI. THE CULT OF SAINTS

<sup>1</sup> It is also taught among us that **saints should be kept in remembrance** so that our faith may be strengthened when we see **what grace they received and how they were sustained by faith**. Moreover, **their good works are to be an example for us**, each of us in his own calling. So His Imperial Majesty may in salutary and godly fashion imitate the example of David in making war on the Turk, for both are incumbents of a royal office which demands the defense and protection of their subjects.

<sup>2</sup> However, **it cannot be proved from the Scriptures that we are to invoke saints or seek help from them**. "For there is one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5), who is **the only savior, the only high priest, advocate, and intercessor before God** (Rom. 8:34). He alone has promised to hear our prayers. <sup>3</sup> Moreover, according to the Scriptures, the highest form of divine service is sincerely to seek and call upon this same Jesus Christ in every

time of need. <sup>4</sup> “If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

<sup>1</sup> This is just about **a summary of the doctrines that are preached and taught in our churches** for proper Christian instruction, the consolation of consciences, and the amendment of believers.

Certainly we would not wish to put our own souls and consciences in grave peril before God by misusing his name or Word, nor should we wish to bequeath to our children and posterity any other teaching than **that which agrees with the pure Word of God and Christian truth.**

Since **this teaching is grounded** clearly on **the Holy Scriptures** and is not contrary or opposed to that of **the universal Christian church,** or even of **the Roman church** (in so far as the latter’s teaching is reflected in the writings of the Fathers),<sup>5</sup> **we think that our opponents cannot disagree with us in the articles set forth above.**

Therefore, those who presume to reject, avoid, and separate from our churches as if our teaching were heretical, act in an unkind and hasty fashion, contrary to all Christian unity and love, and do so without any solid basis of divine command or Scripture.

<sup>2</sup> **The dispute and dissension are concerned chiefly with various traditions and abuses.** Since, then, there is nothing unfounded or defective in the principal articles and since this our confession is seen to be godly and Christian, the bishops should in all fairness act more leniently, even if there were some defect among us in regard to traditions, although we hope to offer firm grounds and reasons why we have changed certain traditions and abuses.