

The Augsburg Confession: Article XVIII: Of Free Will.

1] *Of Free Will* they teach that man's will has some liberty to choose civil righteousness, and to work 2] things subject to reason. But it has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God, that is, spiritual righteousness; since the natural man 3] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2, 14; but this righteousness is wrought in the heart when the Holy Ghost is received 4] through the Word. These things are said in as many words by Augustine in his *Hypognosticon*, Book III:

8] They condemn the Pelagians and others, who teach that without the Holy Ghost, by the power of nature alone, we are able to love God above all things; also to do the commandments of God as touching "the substance of the act." For, although nature is able in a manner to do the outward work, 9] (for it is able to keep the hands from theft and murder,) yet it cannot produce the inward motions, such as the fear of God, trust in God, chastity, patience, etc.

Definitions

Pelagianism – Pelagius(ca. 354-418 AD) taught that man's nature is not depraved by the fall(See AC II: original sin), but is still in its original state of moral indifference and requires an act of the will in order to be saved.

Semi-Pelagianism – Later disciples said that man's nature was only impaired by the fall and needs the help of grace in order to choose the good and be saved.

Manicheanism – Mani(ca. 216-277 AD) taught a dualism of two opposing principles of good and evil which are wholly independent and different from each other.

Synergism – Man cooperates with God in his own conversion. (syn-ergeo = to work with)

Monergism – The grace of God is the only cause of man's salvation. (mon-ergeo = one work)

Roman Confutation, to Article XVIII

In the eighteenth article they confess the power of the Free Will—viz. that it has the power to work a civil righteousness, but that it has not, without the Holy Ghost, the virtue to work the righteousness of God. This confession is received and approved. For it thus becomes Catholics to pursue the middle way, so as not, with the Pelagians, to ascribe too much to the free will, nor, with the godless Manicheans, to deny it all liberty; for both are not without fault. 2. Thus Augustine says: "With sure faith we believe, and without doubt we preach, that a free will exists in men. For it is an inhuman error to deny the free will in man, which every one experiences in himself, and is so often asserted in the Holy Scriptures...."

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession: Article XVIII: Of Free Will.

67] The Eighteenth Article, *Of Free Will*, the adversaries receive, although they add some testimonies not at all adapted to this case. **They add also a declamation that neither, with the Pelagians, is too much to be granted to the free will, nor, with the Manicheans, is all freedom to be denied it.** 68] Very well; but **what difference is there between the Pelagians and our adversaries**, since both hold that without the Holy Ghost men can love God and perform God's commandments with respect to the substance of the acts, and can merit grace and justification by works which reason performs by itself, without the Holy Ghost?

69] How many absurdities follow from **these Pelagian opinions**, which are taught with great authority in the schools! These Augustine, following Paul, refutes with great emphasis, whose judgment we have recounted above in the article *Of Justification*. (see 119, 1 and 153, 106.) **70] Nor, indeed, do we deny liberty to the human will.** The human will has liberty in the choice of works and things which reason comprehends by itself. It can to a certain extent render civil righteousness or the righteousness of works; it can speak of God, offer to God a certain service by an outward work, obey magistrates, parents; in the choice of an outward work it can restrain

the bands from murder, from adultery, from theft. **Since there is left in human nature reason and judgment concerning objects subjected to the senses, choice between these things, the liberty and power to render civil righteousness, are also left.** For Scripture calls this the righteousness of the flesh which the carnal nature, *i.e.*, reason, renders by itself, **71]** without the Holy Ghost. Although **the power of concupiscence** is such that men more frequently obey evil dispositions than sound judgment. And the devil, who is efficacious in the godless, as Paul says, Eph. 2, 2, does not cease to incite this feeble nature to various offenses. These are the reasons why **even civil righteousness is rare among men**, as we see that not even the philosophers themselves, who seem **72]** to have aspired after this righteousness, attained it.

But it is false to say that he who performs the works of the commandments without grace does not sin. And they add further that such, works also merit *de congruo* the remission of sins and justification. **For human hearts without the Holy Ghost are without the fear of God; without trust toward God, they do not believe that they are heard, forgiven, helped, and preserved by God.** Therefore they are godless. For *neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit*, Matt. 7, 18. And *without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. 11, 6.

73] Therefore, although

A. we concede to free will the liberty and power to perform the outward works of the Law,

B. yet we do not ascribe to free will these spiritual matters, namely, truly to fear God, truly to believe God, truly to be confident and hold that God regards us, hears us, forgives us, etc.

These are **the true works of the First Table**, which the heart cannot render without the Holy Ghost, as Paul says, 1 Cor. 2, 14: *The natural man, i.e., man using only natural strength, receiveth not the things 74]* of the Spirit of God. (That is, a person who is not enlightened by the Spirit of God does not, by his natural reason, receive any thing of God's will and divine matters.)

And this can be decided if men consider what their hearts believe concerning God's will, whether they are truly confident that they are regarded and heard by God. Even for saints to retain this faith [and, as Peter says (1 Pet. 1, 8), to risk and commit himself entirely to God, whom he does not see, to love Christ, and esteem Him highly, whom he does not see] is difficult, so far is it from existing in the godless. But it is conceived, as we have said above, when terrified hearts hear the Gospel and receive consolation [when we are born anew of the Holy Ghost].

75] Therefore such a distribution is of advantage in which

A. civil righteousness is ascribed to the free will and

B. spiritual righteousness to the governing of the Holy Ghost in the regenerate.

For thus the **outward discipline is retained**, because all men ought to know equally, both that

A. God requires this civil righteousness [God will not tolerate indecent wild, reckless conduct], **B.** and that, in a measure, we can afford it.

And yet a distinction is shown

between **A.** human and **B.** spiritual righteousness,

between **A.** philosophical doctrine and **B.** the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, and it can be understood for what there is need of the Holy Ghost.

76] Nor has this distribution been invented by us, but **Scripture most clearly teaches it.**

Augustine also treats of it, and recently it has been well treated of by William of Paris, but it has been wickedly suppressed by those who have dreamt that men can obey God's Law without the Holy Ghost, but that the Holy Ghost is given in order that, in addition, it may be considered meritorious.

Man's Natural Will (in Spiritual matters) Is Bound:

John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

1 Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."

Ephesians 2:1, "And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins..."

Divine Monergism:

Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Titus 3:5, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit..."

John 3:5-6, "Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.'"

1 Peter 1:23, "...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever..."

Solid Declaration, Ep, II, Free Will, 2-4:

"1. Concerning this subject, our doctrine, faith, and confession is, that **in spiritual things the understanding and reason of man are [altogether] blind, and by their own powers understand nothing**, as it is written 1 Cor. 2, 14: *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them when he is examined concerning spiritual things.*

2. Likewise we believe, teach, and confess that the unregenerate will of man is not only turned away from God, but also has become **an enemy of God, so that it only has an inclination and desire for that which is evil and contrary to God**, as it is written Gen. 8, 21: *The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* Also Rom. 8, 7: *The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be.* Yea, as little as a dead body can quicken itself to bodily, earthly life, so little can man, who by sin is spiritually dead, raise himself to spiritual life, as it is written Eph. 2, 5: *Even when we were dead in sins, He hath quickened us together with Christ; 2 Cor. 3, 5: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything good as of ourselves, but that we are sufficient is of God.*

3. God the Holy Ghost, however, does not effect conversion without means, but **uses for this purpose the preaching and hearing of God's Word**, as it is written Rom. 1, 16: *The Gospel is the power of God 5] unto salvation to every one that believeth.* Also Rom. 10, 17: *Faith cometh by hearing of the Word of God.* And it is God's will that His Word should be heard, and that man's ears should not be closed. Ps. 95, 8. With this Word the Holy Ghost is present, and opens hearts, so that they, as Lydia in Acts 16, 14, are attentive to it, and are thus converted alone through the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, whose 6] work alone the conversion of man is. For without His grace, and if He do not grant the increase, our willing and running, our planting, sowing, and watering, all are nothing, as Christ says John 15, 5: *Without Me ye can do nothing.* With these brief words **He denies to the free will its powers, and ascribes everything to God's grace**, in order that no one may boast before God. 1 Cor. 1, 29; 2 Cor. 12, 5; Jer. 9, 23.

| | Arminian (most Baptists) | Roman Catholic Eastern Orthodox | Lutheran | Calvinist (<i>Presbyterian</i>) |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| Human Nature | Neither bad nor good | Injured, but not wholly corrupt | Wholly Depraved | Wholly Depraved |
| Will (<i>in spiritual matters</i>) | Free | Free, but impaired | Bound | Bound |
| Saved by... | Act of man's will | Man cooperating with God's grace. (Faith and good works) | By faith alone in Jesus' work through the Word | God's free choice of some, not others |
| Christ died for | All | All | All | Limited Only the elect |
| "Why are some saved and not others?" | Man chose or Man didn't choose. | Man cooperated or Man didn't cooperate with grace. | <u>Can't answer:</u> If saved, God gets all the credit; If not saved, man is the fault. | God chose or God didn't choose. |
| Cited Below | 2. 3. | 3. 4. 5. | Paragraph 19 | 1. 6. |

Solid Declaration, Ep, II. Free Will, 7-13, 19:

Accordingly, we reject and condemn all the following errors as contrary to the standard of God's Word:

1. The delirium [insane dogma] of philosophers who are called Stoics, as also of the **Manicheans, who taught that everything that happens must so happen**, and cannot happen otherwise, and that everything that man does, even in outward things, he does by compulsion, and that he is coerced to evil works and deeds, as in chastity, robbery, murder, theft, and the like.
2. We reject also the error of the **gross Pelagians**, who taught that man by his own powers, without the grace of the Holy Ghost, can turn himself to God, believe the Gospel, be obedient from the heart to God's Law, and thus merit the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.
3. We reject also the error of the **Semi-Pelagians**, who teach that man by his own powers can make a beginning of his conversion, but without the grace of the Holy Ghost cannot complete it.
4. Also, when it is taught that, although man by his free will before regeneration is too weak to make a beginning, and by his own powers to turn himself to God, and from the heart to be obedient to God, yet, if the Holy Ghost by the preaching of the Word has made a beginning, and therein offered His grace, then **the will of man from its own natural powers can add something, though little and feebly, to this end, can help and cooperate**, qualify and prepare itself for grace, and embrace and accept it, and believe the Gospel.
5. Also, that man, after he has been born again, can perfectly observe and completely fulfill God's Law, and that this fulfilling is our righteousness before God, by which we merit eternal life.
6. Also, we reject and condemn the error of **the Enthusiasts**, who imagine that God without means, without the hearing of God's Word, also without the use of the holy Sacraments, draws men to Himself, and enlightens, justifies, and saves them. (Enthusiasts we call those who expect the heavenly illumination of the Spirit [celestial revelations] without the preaching of God's Word.)

19]... Therefore, before the conversion of man there are only **two efficient causes, namely, the Holy Ghost and the Word of God**, as the instrument of the Holy Ghost, by which He works conversion. This Word man is [indeed] to hear; however, it is not by his own powers, but only through the grace and working of the Holy Ghost that he can yield faith to it and accept it.

Civil Righteousness

1. Man's will is free to make decisions in matters understood by human reason.

AC XVIII, "We grant that all men have a free will, **free, inasmuch as it has the judgment of reason**; not that it is thereby capable, without God, either to begin, or, at least, to complete aught in things pertaining to God, but **only in works of this life, whether good or evil**. 'Good' I call those works which spring from the good in nature, such as, willing to labor in the field, to eat and drink, to have a friend, to clothe oneself, to build a house, to marry a wife, to raise cattle, to learn divers useful arts, or whatsoever good **6]** pertains to this life. For all of these things are not without dependence on the providence of God; yea, of Him and through Him they are and have their being. 'Evil' **7]** I call such works as willing to worship an idol, to commit murder, etc."

2. Human Reason and Judgment, therefore Liberty and Power

Ap XVIII, 70-71, "**70]** Nor, indeed, do we deny **liberty** to the human will. The human will has liberty in the choice of works and things which reason comprehends by itself. It can to a certain extent render civil righteousness or the righteousness of works; it can speak of God, offer to God a certain service by an outward work, obey magistrates, parents; in the choice of an outward work it can restrain the hands from murder, from adultery, from theft. **Since there is left in human nature reason and judgment concerning objects subjected to the senses, choice between these things, the liberty and power to render civil righteousness, are also left**. For Scripture calls this **the righteousness of the flesh** which the carnal nature, *i.e.*, reason, renders by itself, **71]** without the Holy Ghost."

3. Concupiscence impairs Human Reason and Judgment

Ap XVIII, 71-72, "Although **the power of concupiscence is such that men more frequently obey evil dispositions than sound judgment**. And the devil, who is efficacious in the godless, as Paul says, Eph. 2, 2, does not cease to incite this feeble nature to various offenses. These are the reasons why even civil righteousness is rare among men, as we see that not even the philosophers themselves, who seem **72]** to have aspired after this righteousness, attained it."

4. Civil Righteousness is Sin

Ap XVIII, 72, "**But it is false to say that he who performs the works of the commandments without grace does not sin**. And they add further that such, works also merit *de congruo* the remission of sins and justification. For human hearts without the Holy Ghost are without the fear of God; without trust toward God, they do not believe that they are heard, forgiven, helped, and preserved by God. Therefore they are godless. For *neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit*, Matt. 7, 18. And *without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. 11, 6."

5. Distinction between Civil and Spiritual Righteousness

Ap XVIII, 75-76, "**75]** Therefore such a **distribution** is of advantage in which **civil righteousness is ascribed to the free will** and **spiritual righteousness to the governing of the Holy Ghost in the regenerate**. For thus the outward discipline is retained, because all men ought to know equally, both that God requires this civil righteousness [God will not tolerate indecent wild, reckless conduct], and that, in a measure, we can afford it. And yet a **distinction** is shown between **human and spiritual righteousness, between philosophical doctrine and the doctrine of the Holy Ghost**, and it can be understood for what there is need of the Holy Ghost. **76]** Nor has this **distribution** been invented by us, but Scripture most clearly teaches it. Augustine also treats of it, and recently it has been well treated of by William of Paris, but it has been wickedly suppressed by those who have dreamt that men can obey God's Law without the Holy Ghost, but that the Holy Ghost is given in order that, in addition, it may be considered meritorious.

6. Human Reason and the Law

Apology, Art. IV (II): Of Justification, "1]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.... 4]...in order that the sources of both kinds of doctrine, i.e., both that of our adversaries and our own, may be known.

5] All Scripture ought to be distributed into these **two principal topics, the Law and the promises....** 7] 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.** 8] 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.

7. Works of Reason

9] 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 10] for God's sake be active in that which is good....

12] 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 13] of Christ or regeneration [as Peter declares, 1 Pet. 1, 18ff]? And from these opinions the matter has now come to such a pass that many ridicule us because we teach that an other than 14] the philosophic righteousness must be sought after. ...**

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....**

Note: In Article XXVIII: Of Ecclesiastical Power, we will see that human reason is to be used in the kingdom of the state (civil realm) according to the power of the sword in the governing of this temporal world and in the protection of body and goods.

8. Opinion of the Law

144] But **works** become conspicuous among men. **Human reason** naturally admires these, and because it sees only works, and does not understand or consider faith, **it dreams accordingly that these works merit remission of sins and justify. This opinion of the Law inheres by nature in men's minds; 145] neither can it be expelled, unless when we are divinely taught.** But the mind must be recalled from such **carnal opinions to the Word of God.** We see that the Gospel and the promise concerning Christ have been laid before us. When, therefore, the Law is preached, when works are enjoined, we should not spurn the promise concerning Christ. But the latter must first be apprehended, in order that we may be able to produce good works, and our works may please God, as Christ says, John 15, 5: Without Me ye can do nothing.

166] ...they only select from the Scriptures passages concerning works, and even these they distort; that everywhere they add certain human opinions to that which the words of Scripture say; that they teach the Law in such a manner as to suppress the Gospel concerning Christ. 166] **For the entire doctrine of the adversaries is, in part, derived from human reason, and is, in part, a doctrine of the Law, not of the Gospel.** For they teach two modes of justification, of which the one has been derived **from reason** and the other **from the Law**, not from the Gospel, or the promise concerning Christ.... 167] The former mode of justification with them is, that they teach that by good works men merit grace both *de congruo* and *de condigno*. This mode is **a doctrine of reason**, because **reason, not seeing the uncleanness of the heart, thinks that it pleases God if it perform good works**, and for this reason other works and other acts of worship are constantly devised, by men in great peril, against the terrors of conscience.

9. Look away from Human Reason (in spiritual matters)

Therefore, by faith we must first apprehend the promise that for Christ's sake the Father is reconciled and forgives. 175] Afterwards we begin to observe the Law. **Our eyes are to be cast far away from human reason, far away from Moses upon Christ, and we are to believe that Christ is given us, in order that for His sake we may be accounted righteous.** In the flesh we never satisfy the Law. Thus, therefore, we are accounted righteous, not on account of 176] the Law, but on account of Christ, because His merits are granted us, if we believe on Him.

FC SD VII. **Lord's Supper**, "45] We are certainly in duty bound not to interpret and explain these words of the eternal, true, and almighty Son of God, our Lord, Creator, and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, differently, as allegorical, figurative, tropical expressions, according as it seems agreeable to our reason, but with simple faith and due obedience to receive the words as they read, in their proper and plain sense, and allow ourselves to be diverted therefrom [from this express testament of Christ] by **no objections or human contradictions spun from human reason**, however charming they may appear to **reason.**"

FC SD XI. **Eternal Election**, "91] Accordingly, if any one presents the doctrine concerning the gracious election of God in such a manner that troubled Christians cannot derive comfort from it, but are thereby incited to despair, or that the impenitent are confirmed in their wantonness, it is undoubtedly sure and true that such a doctrine is taught, not according to the Word and will of God, but **according to [the blind judgment of human] reason** and the instigation of the devil.

FC SD I. **Original Sin**, "60] But if it be further asked what kind of an accidents original sin is, that is another question, of which no philosopher, no papist, no sophist, yea, **no human reason**, however acute it may be, can give the right explanation, but **all understanding and every explanation of it must be derived solely from the Holy Scriptures**, which testify that original sin is an unspeakable evil and such an entire corruption of human nature that in it and all its internal and external powers nothing pure or good remains, but everything is entirely corrupt, so that on account of original sin man is in God's sight truly spiritually dead, with all his powers dead to that which is good.