

# Wittenberg Articles 1536

*(Articles of Christian Doctrine Concerning Which the Delegates from England Dealt with Doctor Martin in 1536)*

## I. The Ecumenical Creeds

As far as the first, third, seventh, and seventeenth articles of our confession are concerned, we confess simply, clearly, and unambiguously that we believe, hold, teach, and defend all those things which are in the canon of the Bible and in the three symbols, that is, in the Apostles' Nicæan, and Athanasian Creeds, with the very sense which those symbols themselves intend and in which the true church fathers employ and defend them. And it is our wish that these symbols be held and considered very sacred, immovable, and not subject to uncertainty through anyone's authority or contrary opinion. In addition we hold that the articles of faith which are given in them are so necessary for the salvation of souls that those persons who hold the opposite are not able to be members of the church, but are utterly idolatrous.

Furthermore, we hold that the very formulation of the words in those articles ought to be retained most faithfully, just as it exists in the symbols themselves, and that no retreat should ever be made from the formulation of the words. Therefore we unanimously condemn the heresies of the Valentinians, Manichæans, Samosatenes, Arians, Pneumatomachians, and also all other similar heresies which the church previously condemned in the four holy synods at Nicæa, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon.

## II. Original Sin

Respecting the second article concerning original sin, we clearly and unambiguously hold, teach, and defend what St. Paul teaches, and we do this with the understanding which St. Augustine gives in his interpretation and defense against the Pelagians and which those others also have had who follow Augustine's understanding, such as Anselm and Bonaventure; and we hold that this understanding of original sin is true understanding of it and that it was rightly approved in the synods.

Further, we especially approve Anselm's definition of original sin. He says that original sin is the lack of that original righteousness which ought to be in man; for just as original righteousness consisted not only in Adam's being acceptable to God by virtue of a reckoning unto him of righteousness, but included also an integrity of his own faculties, that is, a right will toward God, a completely perfect obedience to God, even so, in the opposite way, original sin is not only guilt or the imputation of guilt in the sense that God holds us guilty, but original sin is also actual corruption, that God holds us guilty, which, subsequent to Adam's fall, is in all who are engendered according to the course of nature. And this corruption is not only a lack of the rectitude which had been in man's nature before the Fall, namely, the fact that since the Fall we lack reliable knowledge of God, the upright will, the predisposition toward perfect obedience, toward true fear of God, toward true faith, toward true love of God and of one's own neighbor; but this corruption is also concupiscence, that is, rebellion against God's law and the inclination to sins of every sort contrary to the first and second tables of God's Law.

We also hold that all men who are brought forth naturally are born with original sin, and that this original sin is truly sin which brings eternal death even now upon those who are not reborn through Baptism and the Holy Spirit.

### III. Baptism

Regarding the ninth article, we also openly and unambiguously confess, teach, and defined what is the universal consensus of the church concerning Baptism, namely, that Baptism was instituted by Christ and is necessary for salvation, and that through Baptism remission of sins and the grace of Christ is offered to infants and adults. We teach that Baptism ought not be repeated and that infants through Baptism obtain remission of sins and grace and become children of God, because the promise of grace and of eternal life pertains not only to adults but also to infants, and this promise ought to be administered by the ministry in the church to infants and adults.

Because infants are in fact born with original sin, they have need of the remission of that sin. And that sin is forgiven in such a manner that the state of guilt is taken away even though the matter of sin, namely, corruption of nature and concupiscence, still remain in this life, although it does begin to be healed, because the Holy Spirit is efficacious also in infants and in some way of His own makes them neat and clean. For no one can enter the kingdom of heaven without having been reborn of water and of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we approve the statement of the church which condemned the Pelagians because they denied that infants possess original sin, and we also condemn the Anabaptists who deny that infants are to be baptized.

As for adults, we teach that through Baptism they obtain remission of sins and grace if the persons who are to be baptized truly repent, confess the articles of faith, assure themselves of the promise which has been attached to Baptism, and believe that in it they are given remission of sins and justification for Christ's sake, as the Gospel says [Mark 16:16]: "He that believeth and is baptized..." and as Peter says in Acts [2:38]: "Repent, and be baptized, everyone one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And when the eunuch asked to be baptized, Philip [Acts 8:37] said: "if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And St. Paul says, Titus 3, [5]: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," and Peter [1 Peter 3:21] calls Baptism the covenant of a good conscience.

### IV. Repentance and Justification

Regarding the fourth, sixth, twelfth, and twentieth articles concerning the doctrines of repentance, justification, and good works, we teach and defend the doctrine which is transmitted to us in the Holy Scriptures, which the church fathers Ambrose, Augustine, and some others like them have taught in the church, and we judge it very profitable that this doctrine be transmitted in the churches, in order that Christ's glory may be magnified and His favors may be rightly understood, and in order that consciences may have steadfast consolation and learn what true worship of God is. Since therefore Christ has clearly commanded that repentance and remission of sins be preached in His name, we also teach that, in order to obtain salvation and eternal life, repentance and remission of sins are necessary.

First, then, regarding repentance we confess and defend the unanimous statement of the whole church, which holds, in accordance with the Scriptures, that repentance by those who fall into sin after Baptism is necessary and that those who have fallen, but do not repent in this life, certainly will be damned; conversely, however, we hold that those who have fallen truly obtain remission of sins whenever and as often as they

repent and are converted, and we hold that the church should grant absolution to such persons. Therefore we condemn the Novatians, who have taught otherwise.

But in order that the nature of repentance may be clearly understood, we confess clearly and openly, in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the church fathers, that the true and genuine repentance which Christ commands embraces the following three parts: contrition, faith or trust in the mercy of God that is promised for Christ's sake, and newness of life or new obedience. Now contrition occurs when a conscience which has been accused by God's Word recognizes its sin, truly realizes that God is angry with the sin, is genuinely terror-stricken, and grieves at having sinned, that is, when such a conscience is truly ashamed and realizes that it is unable to make any human works or merits stand up against God's wrath. This contrition is commended and described by means of many examples and statements in Scriptures, as in the Psalm [38:4]: "Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin," and in Acts [2:37]: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart..."

To those afflicted by these terrors and this sorrow it is necessary that the doctrine concerning faith in Christ and the remission of sins be presented. When therefore faith is added, this dread and these sorrows become filial fear, good works worship of God, and the kind of sacrifice concerning which the Psalm [51:17] says: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

Therefore the second element of repentance must be faith by which we believe that our sins are forgiven to us by God and that we are justified and accounted just and become children of God not because of the worthiness of our contrition or of other works but freely for Christ's sake. By this faith terrified consciences are lifted up and hearts are made tranquil and are freed from the terrors of sin and of death, as Paul says [Rom. 5:1]: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." For if we were to set up our worthiness as a recompense for sin before the judgment seat of God, and our merits as a satisfaction for sin, the promise of reconciliation would become uncertain for us, and our consciences would be driven to despair, as St. Paul says [Rom. 4:15]: "The Law worketh wrath." What ought to be set up as the satisfaction for sin is Christ's merit and the free promise of mercy which is given for Christ's sake, as Paul says [1 Cor. 15:56f.]: "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

And faith which, as was said, comforts terrified hearts is engendered and strengthened by the preaching of the Gospel and by absolution, which applies the promise of grace to individuals severally. When consciences raise themselves up in this way through the preaching of the Gospel and through absolution (which is itself a preaching of the Gospel), they also receive the Holy Spirit, as Paul teaches in Galatians [3:14]: "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith," and also [Rom. 10:17]: "Faith cometh by hearing".

And since the Holy Spirit worketh with power, He then creates new promptings in our hearts, stirrings which agree with God's Law, namely, faith, the love of God, the fear of God, hatred of sin, the steadfast purpose of avoiding sin, and the other good fruits in accordance with the passage [Jer. 31:33]: "I will put My Law in their hearts." Therefore justification, which comes about through faith in the manner described, is renewal and regeneration.

This is the view both of the Scripture and of the church fathers concerning the remission of sins and faith. For Bernard also speaks thus, "You must above all things believe that you cannot have remission of sins except by

God's forgiveness; but you must add this: that you also believe that your own sins are forgiven by the same God. This is the testimony which the Holy Spirit brings home to your heart, saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"; for thus the apostle concludes that man is justified by grace through faith." These are the words of St. Bernard in his Sermon on the Annunciation, and many clear statements of this kind are found here and there in the foremost church fathers.

This faith of which we are speaking is not only a matter knowledge in a person's intellect, but it is also trust in a person's heart, by means of which our heart desires and receives Christ's benefits, and through Christ becomes full of peace, strives against doubt, conquers the terrors of sin and death, and draws the conclusion with all certainty that on account of our Mediator Christ we are now dealing with a placated and gracious God and that we are His children.

Therefore this faith embraces all articles of faith and among them also this article concerning the remission of sins since this is the good goal to which all the other articles concerning Christ are pointed. It is for this reason that God's Son became man, suffered, rose again, etc., that we might have remission of sins and life eternal for His sake. Therefore we are not speaking of such "faith" as the wicked and the devils have. For they do not believe all the articles of faith, because they do not believe in the remission of sins, but we are speaking of this fundamental faith which believes both the other articles of faith and this article that the remission of sins is given to us for Christ's sake.

In addition to these things we clearly and distinctly teach that in our entire life these two things ought to be conjoined: contrition and faith. For this faith cannot exist in those who in carnal security condemn God's judgment, give place to vile affections, and have not the contrition spoken of by Isaiah [66:2]: "To whom shall I have respect if not him who is poor in spirit and of a contrite heart and trembleth at My Word?" Again, contrition without this faith becomes despair. Therefore the church must be taught that this faith or trust which believes our sins are forgiven and that we are accounted righteous for Christ's sake is what God commands, since it has been commanded that we believe God's promise. For a promise requires faith (Rom. 4). And John says [1 John 5:10]: "He that believeth on Him may have everlasting life."

## **V. Good Works**

The third part of repentance is newness of life or the new obedience, as John the Baptist says [Luke 3:8]: "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance," and Isaiah [1:16]: "Cease to do evil,..." For we confess that upon our reconciliation there ought necessarily to follow on our part obedience unto God, that is, the good works commanded us by God. For although our acceptance into eternal life is bound up with our justification (that is, with the remission of sins and our reconciliation with God) and although good works are not the payment for eternal life, nevertheless they are necessary for salvation, because they are a debt which ought of necessity to follow our reconciliation, as Paul says [Rom. 8:12]: "We are debtors..." and Christ says [Matt. 19:17]: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," and Paul says concerning evil works [Gal. 5:21]: "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." It is necessary that the church be often admonished to put this doctrine concerning good works out into the clear light of day. It must teach clearly what kinds of works are demanded; secondly, how they can come about; thirdly, how they please God; fourthly, concerning mortal sins

by which impenitent sinners perish from the grace of God; fifthly, how necessary, worthy, or meritorious, good works are.

Therefore we teach, in the first place, that the works which are commanded by God are demanded; and that these commanded works are not only external, civil works but also spiritual activities, namely, the fear of God, faith, prayer, love, patience, hatred of sin, the steadfast purpose of avoiding sin, and similar spiritual activities and virtues, for the foundation of the Law of God ought to be laid in our hearts according to the passage [Jer. 31:33]: “I will put My Law in their hearts,” and Christ says [Matt. 5:20]: “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” This means that we ought not only to do external, civil good works, but we ought also to experience inner spiritual promptings which agree with God’s Law, namely, the fear of God, faith, prayer, as Paul says [Rom. 8:14]: “As many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” This newness merely begins in this life, but it ought to increase, and we ought to become more and more holy, as Paul says [2 Cor. 5:2,3]: “Desiring to be clothed upon... if so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked.” Therefore in those who are to be saved there ought to be this incipient newness of life, and it ought to be strengthened and grow.

Concerning the second point, we teach that such virtues as calling on God, loving Him, and the like cannot exist in us unless our hearts are first raised up by faith through the Gospel, since as long as they feel God’s wrath, they do not believe that their prayers are heard, and they do not love God, as it is written [Rom 10:14]: “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?” Therefore faith must be present— faith by means of which we not only are raised up and recognize that God has been reconciled to us, and whereby, as Paul says [Rom. 8:15], “we cry, Abba, Father”; but by which we finally really call on God and love Him. This very faith is the foremost work and the foremost worship of God, because it recognizes Christ as our Mediator. Beyond that, we have said that it was in order that these virtues might be effected in us that the Holy Spirit was given, who through the Word is received by faith, as has been said; for these virtues are wrought in us by the activity and aid of the Holy Spirit.

In the third place stands the question how this obedience, that is, newness of life and good works, pleases God. For it is very important and necessary that the church be correctly taught on this point, in order that it may understand both matters, namely, on the one hand, that no one keeps the Law satisfactorily and also, on the other hand, why obedience please God, even though it be far from perfect. The fathers of the church have diligently discussed both questions, but more recent teachers have invented many absurd ideas about them.

Therefore we hold that the obedience which is begun in the saints does not perfectly satisfy the Law of God. We also hold that in this life concupiscence still adheres to the saints, and even though it has begun to be mortified, nevertheless, it has not been entirely abolished. Now, concupiscence is by its very nature sin, even though it is not imputed to those who believe and strive against it. In addition, this concupiscence begets evil lusts. For how often do not even the saints doubt that God takes any notice of them? How often does not faith begin to totter? Who fears God as much as he ought? Who loves God with sufficient strength? Who submits to adversities with sufficient patience? Whose heart do not hatred and other evil desires occasionally invade? Who satisfies the demands of his calling? How often do the saints not murmur when they see the wicked and tyrants flourishing and enjoying all the advantages of life,, while they are severely tried by all manner of calamities? Such shortcomings are not to be minimized, but are by their nature actually sins; but they are not imputed to

believers. And because the devil is so powerful, how often does not our weak nature fall into his snares? Therefore the Scripture clearly bears witness to the fact that the saints do not satisfy the demands of the Law and that they have sin. 1 John 1[:8] states: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." Augustine and Jerome teach the same thing at length.

Therefore it is clear that our obedience does not satisfy the demands of the Law; nor can consciences find rest and support for themselves in obedience; nor can we set this obedience up against the judgment of God, as if it were the fulfillment of the Law—a fulfillment which does not permit any accusations of imperfection or of the natural weakness that hinders us from good works. It is necessary that this doctrine be taught in the church in order to avoid false trust in works and in our own worthiness, even as some have imagined that they possessed superfluous merits and have granted these merits to others in order that others might be saved because of those deeds. Let the saints learn true humility and flee to God's mercy according to the passage [Rom. 11:32]: "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all", and also the passage [Ps. 143:2]: "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." Since therefore it is established that the saints do not satisfy the demands of the Law but have sin, it is again necessary that true and firm consolation be set before them. Therefore let our conscience firmly hold that we are just, that is, have the remission of sins, or have been reconciled and accepted into eternal life, freely through grace for the sake of Christ, the Mediator, even though we are not worthy. But let us also believe thereafter that the incipient obedience is necessary and that, even though it is far from perfectly fulfilling the Law, nevertheless it is pleasing to God because we are in Christ, for whose sake the sin which still remains in us is remitted.

And this obedience in those who are reconciled by faith is now reckoned as righteousness and as a kind of fulfillment of the Law, not indeed as if it could be made to stand against God's judgment, according to the passage [1 Cor. 4:4]: "I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified," but it pleases God because we are in Christ, as Paul teaches Romans 6[:14]: "Now ye are not under the Law but under grace," that is, the Law no longer accuses you, even though you are not able to satisfy its demands, but now you are God's children, and therefore it does not accuse you, and as Paul teaches Romans 8[:1]: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Paul does not say that they have no sin, but that they now are not condemned because through Christ they are made children. For he adds [Rom. 8:3]: "When it was impossible for the Law to justify us, the Son was sent..." And so the statement that the Law is made possible through grace is correct and beneficial, but this statement includes two things: both that we are aided by the Holy Ghost and that the obedience begun in us pleased God, not because it is perfect but because of grace. Therefore we need to have this faith in our entire life; this faith ought to shine perpetually; it ought to comfort us against the weakness of our nature and lay hold on Christ, the Mediator, and draw the conclusion that we really possess the remission of sin and are children of God for His sake. Experienced consciences can easily judge that this doctrine and consolation is very necessary for the church. For Christians would be driven to despair if they had to think that only then do they please God when they satisfy the demands of the Law. Therefore the sin that still remains in believers is not imputed to them, because in repentance, that is, in the recognition of their own weakness and in true contrition, they lay hold of the Mediator Christ, as Paul says [Rom. 8:33]: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

But now we must add a discussion of the fourth point. When people indulge in sinful passions and give place to deeds which are contrary to God's Law, they do not remain in grace. These lapses are mortal sins, concerning

which we teach what the common consensus of the church catholic teaches and what Paul says [Gal. 5:21]: “they which do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” It is necessary therefore that those who have been reborn retain, together with true faith and at the same time, the righteousness of a good conscience; and it is necessary that they resist sinful passions and obey God’s Law. Therefore Paul says [2 Cor. 1:12]: “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience,” and [1 Tim. 1:5]: “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned,” and Romans 8[:13]: “If ye mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live.”

Regarding the fifth point, churches ought to be taught the necessity and worthiness of this obedience, that, although our obedience or the righteousness of a good conscience is not the payment for the sake of which eternal life is given (just as no one of the saints can conclude that any good work of his is a worthy deed on account of which he may have remission of sins and be accepted by God into eternal life, as also the Psalm [142:2] says: “In Thy sight shall no man living be justified”), nevertheless, this obedience or righteousness of a good conscience is necessary because it is a debt or duty which must follow reconciliation, as Paul says [Rom. 8:12]: “We are debtors,” and also [2 Cor. 5:3]: “Desiring to be clothed upon, if so be that, being clothed, we will not be found naked.” Therefore this incipient newness of life is necessary in those who are to be saved; also, since this is most certainly the commandment of Christ: “Repent,” and “Love ye one another,” it is certainly a bounden duty.

Moreover, since renewal comes into being in justification, this new life is obedience to God. Therefore, justification cannot be retained unless this incipient obedience is retained, according to the passage [1 John 3:10]: “Whoever doeth not righteousness is not of God,” and [1 John 3:8]: “He that committeth sin is of the devil.”

Now the value of this incipient obedience is great, for, although it is imperfect, nevertheless because the persons concerned are in Christ, this obedience is reckoned to be a kind of fulfillment of the Law and is righteousness, even as the Scripture often calls it thus: [Ps. 119:121]: “I have done judgment and justice,” and John says [1 John 3:7]: “He that doeth righteousness is righteous”, and James [2:24]: “We are justified not by faith only but by works.” This last passage ought not to be understood as if we obtain remission of sins and reconciliation on account of our works, but the meaning is that each of the two righteousnesses is necessary. First, faith is necessary, for by means of it we are justified before God, that is, by it we obtain remission of sins and reconciliation, or by it we are reborn and made children of God; and then also that other righteousness is necessary and owed as a debt, the righteousness of works, or the righteousness of a good conscience.

And when Christ says [Matt.19:17]: “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,” He is teaching that this obedience is a kind of fulfillment of the Law. But interpretation must be added to this passage, for from other places in the Scripture it is evident that no one can satisfy the Law of God. Therefore what must also be taught is how this phrase “keep the commandments” is to be understood. For the Gospel concerning Christ must be taken into consideration, namely, that the first justification must be sought by faith in Christ and that thereafter this incipient obedience pleases God and is considered a kind of fulfillment of the Law, as John [1 John 3:9]: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,” that is, that the Holy Spirit brings forth good works. And those good works please God, not because there is no trace of sin in man’s nature, but because we are now in Christ. In order, therefore, that we may know that such obedience in Christians, albeit imperfect, pleases God,

good works are glorified by the Holy Ghost with the most noble recommendations [in the Scriptures] and are called sacrifices and worship of God.

In addition to this, good works are meritorious according to that well-known passage [1 Cor. 3:8]: “Every man shall receive his own reward according to his labor.” For although the conscience is unable to conclude that eternal life is given on account of the worthiness of the works but knows that we are reborn as sons and heirs of God by grace and mercy, nevertheless these works in those who are children of God are deserving of rewards, both bodily and spiritual, and of degrees of reward. For if faith, which receives the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life, leans for support on the worthiness of the deeds, then it becomes uncertain, and consciences are driven to despair; but now faith must depend on Christ, the Mediator. Therefore Paul says [Rom. 6:23]: “For the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.” But since it is by means of this faith that hearts are quickened and renewed, therefore this incipient obedience is added to it and is indeed a duty and debt. And since faith is also a work and since incipient obedience must be added to it, the Scripture says, speaking in a legal manner, that God will render to each one according to his works, that is, according to righteousness and unrighteousness. Nevertheless, faith even though it is a work, receives reconciliation, not on account of our worthiness, but on account of God’s mercy.

## **VI. The Lord’s Supper**

As far as the tenth article of our confession is concerned, we firmly believe and teach that in the sacrament of the Lord’s body and blood Christ’s body and blood and truly, substantially, and really present under the species of bread and wine, and that under the same species they are truly and bodily presented and distributed to all those who receive the sacrament.

## **VII. Confession and Satisfaction**

As far as the eleventh article is concerned, we confess and teach that the promise of grace is applied to people individually in private absolution. Therefore we teach that in the churches private absolution ought of necessity be retained and that people ought to be taught to desire it. For that spoken word of absolution is a preaching of the Gospel, because Christ through the church’s ministry has commanded that it be proclaimed to all men, to individuals and to groups, and it is His will that we believe the Word of the Gospel which sounds forth through the minister as if we were hearing the voice of God sounding forth from heaven, as He testifies [John 20:23]: “Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them,” and also [Luke 10:16]: “He that heareth you, heareth Me.”

Therefore we retain that private confession which is made to the ministers of the church in order that absolution may be sought for the sake of its very rich consolation and also in order that the understanding and the blessing of the power of the keys be retained in the church. But private confession should be retained not only for those two reasons but for others as well, for in private confession the faith of the unlearned may be examined to see how well they are instructed, since the inexperienced are often in need of counsel. We teach, however, concerning this confession that consciences ought not to be burdened by enumeration of sins because such an enumeration is not commanded in the Gospel, as also outstanding writers state that the enumeration is not of divine right. In addition, that enumeration about which the Roman bishops have a rule is impossible because they demand an enumeration of all sins. For it is written [Ps. 19:12]: “Who can understand his errors?”

Furthermore, as far as satisfactions are concerned, since it is clear that the satisfactions of canon laws were formerly part of the rite of public penance in the church (the fathers themselves believed that satisfactions had been instituted for the sake of discipline and example, and did not believe that they merited remission of guilt, or compensated for eternal death or purgatory), we also think that more ought not to be attributed to these observances than the fathers who rightly understood them attributed to them. Nor ought more to be attributed to them than the Gospel allows. The Gospel teaches us that Christ alone is the Sacrifice, and that Christ's death alone is the oblation, satisfaction, and compensation, for the sake of which God remits to us guilt and eternal death.

But it is also true that genuine contrition mortifies the flesh, and new obedience ought to coerce the flesh by various exercises, as Paul says [1 Cor. 9:27]: "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection." These are not works which are not our duty, but they are works which we are in duty bound to do.

Also the distinction should be retained between the remission of guilt and the remission of temporal punishment. For since God often punishes sins by present and temporal punishments, it is very worthwhile that it be taught in the church that we not only receive eternal life when we repent but also that our repentance and good works even merit the remission or mitigation of temporal punishment and calamities, as Paul says [1 Cor. 11:31] that if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged by God, and Zachariah [1:3]: "Turn ye unto Me.. and I will turn unto you"; and Isaiah [58:7-11]: "Deal thy bread to the hungry...then thou shalt be a spring of water whose waters fail not," and God remitted the punishment of Nineveh because of its repentance [Jonah 3:10]. And it is concerning this remission of punishments that the passage can rightly be understood, [Tobit 4:11; 12:9]: "Alms delivers from death," that is, merits the remission of present punishments. These things ought to be emphasized in the churches, also in order that they may be incited to do good works and to exercise and strengthen their faith in such good works, seeking and asking of God the mitigation of present calamities.

### **VIII. The Right Use of the Sacraments**

Concerning the thirteenth article of our confession, we teach that the sacraments were instituted not only to be marks of Christian profession but, more than that, to be steadfast witnesses and efficacious signs of grace and of God's will toward us, that is, means through which God works invisibly in us and invisibly pours His grace into us.

Moreover we teach that the sacraments are to be used in such a way that, besides true contrition and repentance, faith also should be present; in fact, as we said above, we mean the faith by which we are justified, that is, the faith which does not only believe in general that God exists, etc., but the faith which also believes the present promises that are held forth, presented, and distributed through the sacraments. For it is not true and correct to say, as some do, that the sacraments confer grace by virtue of the mere performance of the rite without the good response of faith by the person who receives them, for in those who have come to their senses it is necessary that he who would receive them aright bring along the faith which believes these selfsame promised blessings that are offered in the sacraments. This use of the sacraments is very comforting to believing hearts and tender consciences.

## **IX. Ecclesiastical Order.**

Concerning the eighth and fourteenth articles, we unanimously teach that nobody should publicly teach or administer the sacraments in Christendom without a regular call by those who have the right and power to call and admit people to the ministry.

Moreover, since both the Christian sacraments and the Word of God have their power not because of the worthiness of the minister but because of the order, institution, and command of Christ, we also teach that they are just as efficacious when they are administered by wicked ministers as they are when they are administered by pious persons. Therefore we condemn those who deny that the Word and the sacraments may be received from evil ministers, as if the Word and the sacraments were both for that reason unprofitable and without effect.

## **X. Ecclesiastical Rites**

With regard to the fifteenth article and the last part of the seventh article of our confession we teach that bishops or pastors have the authority to establish ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies as well as such usages as feast days, ranks of clergymen, etc. Moreover, we teach that all things in the churches should be done decently and in order that such rites and ceremonies as may be observed without sin and which serve the cause of peace and order ought to be observed by everyone for the sake of peace and Christian love.

Moreover, we also teach that in this matter Christian freedom should be maintained, that is, that people should understand that they are to observe such usages not as if they were necessary for salvation, and that consciences should not be violated if sometimes such usages are not observed provided he who omits them does this with the right understanding and not with contempt for something that does not please him; for moderation is necessary in the use of Christian freedom lest the unlearned are thereby offended or frightened away from the correct doctrine of the Gospel by a misuse of our freedom. Therefore without special, cogent reasons the customary ecclesiastical rites ought not be altered, but the traditional usages that can be observed without sin should be observed for the sake of peace and unity.

Moreover, we also say that when bishops set up their rites with the idea that people should obtain grace and forgiveness of sins or satisfaction for sin through them, or when consciences are thereby bound and ensnared and people imagine that special worship is necessary for salvation and that they are sinning if they omit such observance (in this case no contempt for them and no offense by them being involved), we consider such a false conception contrary to the Gospel and the doctrine concerning faith, and we say that bishops do not have the authority to establish or demand observance of such usages.

Finally, we also teach that, just as it is not necessary that such ecclesiastical rites or ceremonies instituted by men should be observed uniformly in all places, since each country and church district has its own customs and usages which are not uniform, even so the true spiritual unity of the churches is not harmed or dissolved by such diversity, for it is sufficient for the maintenance of true unity that there be unity in the preaching of the Gospel and in the correct use of the sacraments and that the people live in peace with one another in accordance to the Gospel, as St. Paul says [Eph. 4:5]: "One faith, one baptism, etc."

## **XI. Civil Affairs**

Regarding the sixteenth article we teach, first, that Christ's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, that is, a kingdom which establishes in the hearts of men correct knowledge of God, fear, and faith, eternal righteousness, and everlasting life, and that therefore it does not destroy either the civil empire, local government, or domestic authority, but rather it confirms all of them and commands us to maintain them as the ordinance of God, as good creations of God.

For God wants us to employ and to be subject to all civil governments under which we live, and He commands us to show love by such obedience.

Secondly, since such government and civil authority are God pleasing, we teach that according to divine Law Christians may without sin hold civil office, sit as judges, decide matters by the imperial or other existing laws, punish evildoers according to common law, engage in just wars, serve as soldiers, buy, sell, possess property, take required oaths, be married, etc.

Finally, we teach that all Christians are obliged to be subject to civil authority in all things. If, however, rulers command what cannot be obeyed without sin, Christians must obey God rather than men. [Acts 5:29]

But with respect to traditions, rites, and ceremonies that were instituted by men, it is by no means necessary that they should be everywhere or entirely similar. For these were various and can be varied in keeping with the diversity of regions and customs.

## **XII. The Mass**

Concerning the lessons and prayers in the mass there is no controversy, for since Paul also wants some lessons from Holy Writ to be read in the public service— lessons that are beneficial for stirring up minds to fear and faith— and also wants prayers and giving of thanks to be added, this custom in the church ought not to be abolished but carefully preserved. For, first of all, it is very profitable that prayer be made in corporate worship, since Christ expressly gave promises to the church when He said [Matt. 18:19,20]: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Therefore Christ invites us with this very full promise to join the church in corporate prayer, for God wants Christians in the church to be so closely bound together one with the other, that one feels the needs of the others and prays for him, and God promises that He will hear their prayers. The public custom of the church ought to admonish us in public prayers, in the mass, and in other services that we may learn this and exercise this faith. In 2 Corinthians 1 [:11] Paul also urges that prayers be made by many in order that many might, in turn, thank God, since He would hear their prayers and have respect to their needs.

Secondly, the public example of the church is most beneficial. For it encourages many to be stirred up themselves to believe and to pray, especially if the people are instructed in sermons concerning the promises given to the church. For thus they will learn to know the example of others; and the custom of the church will benefit them for their edification, as Paul teaches 1 Corinthians 14.

Thirdly, the example of the church is also helpful in that it instructs individuals as to what things they should be concerned about and what they should ask for. For people who have not been instructed do not know what the public needs are. But in public services they not only hear that private gifts are to be sought in prayer but also learn that individuals ought to be concerned with matters of public interest and ought to pray for the entire church that it be freed from errors, scandals, dissensions, and wicked customs, in order that the true doctrine may be propagated and true worship may be rendered unto God, and we may be ruled and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Likewise they learn that God is pleased with prayers for affairs of the commonwealth, for peace, for good government, for the growth of crops, and for preservation from pestilence and similar evils.

Prayers of this sort in public services, in the mass, and in other gatherings we hold to be a God-pleasing and necessary institution. For it is God who commands that we call upon Him in all dangers and that people be taught in public services concerning such prayer in order that they may learn to trust God and to seek and expect help from Him.

But regarding the celebration of the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord in the mass, we fault those who think that the celebration of the mass is a service to be held for other people living and dead and that it merits for them the remission of guilt and punishment, and this by virtue of the mere performance of the rite. For these ideas were unknown to the ancient church, and they disagree with the Holy Scripture, obscure the doctrine concerning faith, and produce a trust in another man's deeds.

But when Christ said [Luke 22:19], "This do in remembrance of Me," He instituted this sacrament in order that in it true faith might make a memorial of His death and of the benefits which He merited for us by His death. And these benefits are through the sacrament granted to him who receives it when by means of this memorial he rouses up his faith and believes that Christ really gives us His benefits when He presents to us a guarantee which is to unite us to Himself, which has the purpose of preserving us as His members, and which is to cleanse us by His blood.

This faith, by means of which Christ's benefits are received, is the spiritual worship of God; and since to this faith there must be joined the giving of thanks, whereby our hearts truly thank God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and redemption, therefore the ancient church called this celebration of the sacrament the Eucharist, as Cyprian says most delightfully about those who receive the sacrament, "Piety, distinguishing between the things given and the things forgiven, gives thanks to the Giver of so rich a benefit," that is, piety considers both things: (1) how great is the magnitude of the benefit give to us, of grace and eternal life, and (2) the opposite, how great is the magnitude of our woes, of our sins and eternal death. Therefore enthusiastic thanksgiving arises when we see that such great sins are remitted by ineffable clemency and that besides, we are given the Holy Spirit and the glory of eternal life.

We hold that it was in this sense that this most holy ceremony was called a sacrifice by the church fathers, who certainly did not think that this rite performed for others merits remission of guilt and remission of punishment for them (and that by virtue of the mere performance of the rite!), but they thought that their faith ought to be exercised in the celebration of the sacrament and that thus thanks should be given.

Since, therefore, Christ instituted the celebration of the sacrament in such a way as to be a Communion in which the sacrament might be distributed to a number of people, and since the ancient church preserved this custom

for a long time and did not hold private masses, we hold that a rite in which the Communion of others besides the celebrant takes place is godly and in keeping with the Gospel.

It was at a later time that private masses were commonly celebrated with this idea of the celebration of the sacrament that it must be held for others in the church, so that it might earn the remission of guilt and punishment for them. Therefore such masses ought to be abrogated. And in order that these offenses may be removed and Christ's institution, Communion, be preserved, we hold that no one ought to be compelled to celebrate private masses. For since Paul says [1 Cor. 11:27] that those who misuse the sacrament are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, great care must be taken that a godly and holy celebration be restored, to the glory of Christ and the well-being of the church.

### **XIII. Of Both Kinds in the Sacrament**

There is no doubt that the ancient church in East and West celebrated the sacrament of Christ's body and blood under both kinds, namely, under the species of bread and species of wine. For Paul also bears witness that this was the custom in the church of the Corinthians. Christ instituted the sacrament not only for a part of the church, namely, for the priests, but established this celebration of the sacrament for the entire church. Extant statements of Jerome and of other fathers of the church also show that this custom continued for a long time in the church. Also Gelasius (in the chapter headed: *Comperimus*) ordered that the sacrament be received under both kinds. Hence the recent prohibition of such reception is a mere human tradition to alter, against their conscience, the custom that was transmitted by Christ and followed in the ancient church, when it is established that this practice is legitimate and godly.

### **XIV. The Marriage of the Priests**

Concerning virginity, continence, and marriage we follow and defend the clear teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7. And even as Christ [Matt. 19:12] praises the eunuchs who castrated themselves for the sake of the kingdom of God, so we also teach that the retention of virginity is a good work and beneficial for offering constant attention to studies and meditation, to prayer, and to ecclesiastical offices, even as Paul says [1 Cor. 7:32,33] that the that is married cares for the things that are of the world, whereas he that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord. For domestic concerns hinder the married person from being able to show that constant attention which is beneficial to studies and public duties; an unmarried person, however, is more free; therefore he is also able to apply greater concentration of mind in learning, in teaching, and in other functions and is less often diverted from these pursuits. And so it is advantageous to choose and have in the churches ministers who are unmarried. Those who seem to be suitable to a celibate life ought to be encouraged to preserve the gift of God for the benefit of the church with diligence and temperance, and they ought to be instructed that this estate pleases God and has great rewards.

But since Christ Himself bears witness that not all are suited to perpetual celibacy, therefore we hold that marriage ought not to be forbidden those who are not suited for celibacy; neither can it be prohibited by human vows or law, because human laws and vows are not able to free us from the divine law and the right of nature. Now this is the divine law [1 Cor. 7:2,9], that every man who does not have the gift of continence have his own wife in order to avoid fornication. And the right of nature is a desire for union in keeping with sane thinking. To

this natural drive there has been added human concupiscence, which inflames nature all the more, so that there is all the more need of marriage as a kind of remedy.

The law, however, which prohibits the marriage of priests, is a purely human tradition. Indeed, this new tradition which forbids the marriage of priests and which, if one was married, dissolves the marriage was not begun by the councils but only by the Roman bishops.

Purity before God, however, consists in not polluting one's conscience but in obeying God. Therefore impure celibacy is not purity, whereas marriage is purity, since it is sanctified by the Word of God. Thus Paphnutius said that conjugal custom is continence. For we well know that this kind of life pleases God and gives full scope for the exercise of godliness, and for that reason the church for a long time not only in the East but also in the West had priests who were married. And history books bear witness to the fact that this custom was changed in Spain and Germany only by force. To this day the Greek churches have married priests. And so marriage is not impurity or a state unbecoming to ministers of the churches. But what sad examples and how much shameful impurity the law of the Roman bishop has imposed on the churches is no secret. And since a divine law prescribes marriage for those who cannot show continence, we judge that the papal prohibition concerning marriage is illegitimate and that the marriage of priests ought to be permitted.

## **XV. Monastic Vows**

There are many weighty reasons why there is need to support from public funds for students and godly persons who prepare for the study of theology, so that from their midst the teachers of the church may be taken. For since, on the one hand, poor people are not able to raise the expenses of studies from their own resources, while, on the other hand, rich people often turn to other professions in which great honors and great rewards in the state are offered, it is necessary that the church take care that some persons be supported by its public revenues who will devote themselves to sacred studies and the other arts which the church has need of. Unless this happens, churches in many places will be lacking pastors. This is the rightful concern also of kings and princes, who should provide expenses for teachers and students. That is why Isaiah [49:23] calls kings nursing fathers and queens nursing mothers, for he wishes to teach that kings and states ought to protect teachers and provide for their expenses. So it is not unjust that those whose studies are destined for the benefit of the church should in turn be supported by the churches, as Paul says [1 Cor. 9:7], "Who goeth a warfare anytime at his own charges?"

The foundations in colleges and monasteries appear to have been made with this purpose that there might be a certain group of people engaged in sacred studies, from whose midst teachers could be chosen. This fact is borne witness to by the laws in the Codex and by stories in history books.

Therefore it is for the benefit of this practice that colleges and monasteries should be preserved after false opinions and ungodly practices have been reformed.

For it is not sufficient that the young men who must one day become the rulers of the church merely learn their academic branches; it is also necessary that by means of a certain discipline and by means of godly practices they should be accustomed to love for ceremonies and worship, because those who are not accustomed to such diligent exercise of worship often are more worldly than is seemly.

In addition, the church has need of learned and experienced pastors. For living close to men who are learned and experienced in spiritual matters contributes very much to the solidarity of teaching and to the formation of sound judgments. For no one is able to attain sound doctrine apart from such common life. And if pastors will be entirely lacking in the churches, or if they will be unlearned and untrained recruits, what shall we think of the future state of the church? Desolation and barbarity will rule the future once academic achievement has been lost and training has become extinct.

Paul [1 Tim. 3:6] forbids the choosing of novices because he knows there always is need of experienced and trained teachers. Gregory Nazianzen deplores the calamity that befell the church because such as had not taught before were suddenly made teachers— set up not because of their training but by majority vote. Basil says that he can still hear ringing in his ears the teaching of the fathers who were his superiors and whose lectures he heard. Therefore it is very much to be desired that there be monasteries in which Christian doctrine may flourish and be propagated, in which the young may be rightly educated and prepared for the ministry of the church, in order that they can be considered learned and trained teachers of the churches. Such were once in olden times the bishops' schools, in which Christian teaching was long preserved, as appears in the histories and the other books of Ambrose and of Augustine.

Thereafter, when the study of Christian teaching was neglected in such communities, a great change in Christian doctrine ensued— a change which harmed the church to no light degree. Hence let us preserve the organization of the colleges and monasteries, but let the opinions held there be improved; let superstition be removed, let ungodly practices be abolished, and let the study of Christian teaching be renewed for the benefit of the church. For we judge that those opinions are godless which hold that monastic vows merit the remission of sins and eternal life or which hold that they are things that justify or that constitute Christian perfection.

And although proper vows should be kept, monastic vows are nonetheless illicit if they are made under the false conviction that those works which have been invented without Gods' command are not *adiaphora*, matters of indifference, but worship of God and that they merit remission of sins and eternal life. Therefore they are vows that are not binding.

As for what is cited from Paul to the contrary concerning the widows [1 Tim. 5:12] who have cast off their first faith as non-binding, even if at that time there had been vows, that passage can nevertheless not be applied to monastic vows of the present time. Since they are made with godless intention, they are not valid vows. For they transfer the glory of Christ to human observances and obscure the true worship of God in the church, namely, faith in Christ and the good works of one's calling. For who did not place monks' observances ahead of the functions of a magistrate and of a housefather? For these works which were so profane and unclean seemed scarcely excusable. Faith was truly obscured because people were not teaching that the remission of sins is given freely for Christ's sake, but they attributed this honor to their own observances.

And the rest of the church imitated these examples and opinions and superstitiously believed that the works of human tradition were a service to God and that they merited remission of sins and life everlasting. Since now the Gospel condemns these opinions, it is evident that monastic vows made with such convictions are not binding.

Furthermore, all people are not suited to perpetual continence. But a vow ought to be made in matters that are possible.

It is clear that many young boys and girls were shoved and forced into the monasteries in order to make vows prior to a reasonable age. How great a danger there is in that sort of affair is no secret.

Therefore permission to leave the monasteries must be granted to those who prefer to live in another kind of life.

Those also act rightly who leave the monasteries where they are forced to observe godless activities, such as abuses in the Mass, indulgences, and very many other things. If, however, those who are suited to monastic life prefer to live in those communities, provided the opinions and activities are improved and provided they wish to take part in the observances as *adiaphora*, we do not have anything against this; for we judge that many saintly people lived godly lives in monasteries in this spirit. In fact, it is much to be desired that there be such communities of learned and pious men in whose midst the study of Christian doctrine is cultivated for the general benefit of the church and in which young persons are not only educated in Christian doctrine but also trained in godliness by pious practices and by the usual training in ritual, provided, of course, that those who have been caught by vows are not forced to remain in them to the jeopardy of their consciences. This kind of common life, since it had been intended to benefit the church, to teach and to train those groups from whose midst the teachers of the churches could be taken, would be godly and God-pleasing; for it would be service commanded by God. For the command of God is that those who will enter the ministry be taught and trained, and God approves a discipline of ordered life that is directed to this goal.

Communities in which girls may learn the arts and the Christian teaching of piety may also exist; but girls who desire to marry ought not be retained in cloisters, nor should they be burdened further with vows. For Paul's instruction is to be heeded when he counseled virginity in such a way that snares be not put upon consciences.

## **XVI. The Saints**

This concerns the twenty-first article of our confession. We do not reject the remembrance of saints and the celebration of their days but consider that it is beneficial and Christian to keep them in remembrance for the following reasons.

First, we ought to learn from them that God wanted to set before His Christendom examples in whom He might show that He pleases to be gracious to all who repent, that He wants them to be saved, and that He wants us to give thanks for such examples and thereby strengthen our faith. When, for instance, we hear what awful sins were remitted to Peter, we should take comfort and believe that God will forgive us also if we repent. Also we should thank God that He has given the church not only such examples but also profitable teachers, prophets, apostles, bishops.

Secondly, it is profitable to hold before the people examples of faith and of other virtues, so that we may follow after them, each one in his own calling; for these examples serve to encourage and teach, so that when we, for these example, hear that God with great miracles protected and exalted kings who put away idolatry, we are strengthened by such examples to promote God's honor all the more seriously and to expect help from Him.

When we hear of the martyr's steadfastness, we are more content to obey God as they did and to suffer persecution so much more patiently.

Thirdly, we should thank God that He gave these gifts to the saints, and they should be praised for having used God's gifts so well that they resisted the desire of the flesh to misuse them, and that they used such gifts for the benefit of other people and of the churches. Thus the praise and merit which belongs to virtues and good works should be spoken of.

This veneration of the saints we permit in the sense that only St. Basil and St. Jerome speak of it, for Basil speaks thus in his sermon concerning the Martyr Gordius: "The saints do not need our laudation for their salvation; we, however, need to remember them in order to follow their example." In another sermon he says: "To praise and bless the martyrs is the same thing as to admonish the church to follow their examples and their virtues." As for the invocation of the saints, there is no command and no example of this in Holy Scripture, nor was this taught by the ancient fathers. Hence those who do not invoke the saints are not contradicting the Holy Scriptures nor the ancient church.

More than that, trust in a mediator or reconciler is something which belongs to Christ alone and not to the saints, for Christ's merit alone avails for our sins, and the heavenly Father has set Him alone before us as the one Mediator and Priest and has promised to hear us for the sake of this Christ.

## **XVII. Images**

Images of Christ and of the saints, that is, representations of their story by means of paintings and the like in churches and elsewhere, have, as Gregory says, been the books of the illiterate, that is, they explain the story like a written book. In itself this is a matter of indifference concerning which Christians should not quarrel.

Since, then, such representation provides for the illiterate the advantage of seeing and learning the stories as if from books, we do not reject pictures in themselves, nor do we abolish them; we do, however, reprove their misuse.

For we teach that images are not to be worshiped; nor is it to be thought that they have power; nor should people think that setting up images of God or of the saints is serving God, or that God is more gracious or does more than otherwise if He is invoked before such an image.

For God wants men to grasp Him only in faith through His Word and His sacraments; therefore it is a wicked error to bind God to certain images without God's Word. It is also a wicked error to think that a deed performed in front of such an image pleases God more than if done elsewhere; for we should believe that God in all places hears those who earnestly call upon Him. Hence Isaiah [66:1] reproves those who do not believe that God everywhere hears those who call upon Him in true spiritual worship, for he says that, even though the heaven is the Lord's throne, yet God dwells "in him that is poor and of a contrite spirit". Christ says [John 4:21, 23]: "Ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father...but...in spirit and in truth," and Paul says [1 Tim. 2:8]: "I will that men pray everywhere".

<http://northerncatholicarchives.wordpress.com/2011/02/08/wittenberg-articles-1536/>