

THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS
CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA

Augsburg Confession (1530)

ADDRESS TO THE EMPEROR, CHARLES V.

Most invincible Emperor, imperial Majesty, and gracious Sir: — When your Majesty proclaimed a diet of the Empire at Augsburg, to consult about the best means of defence against the Turk, that ancient, inveterate, and most bitter enemy of the Christian name and religion, — how it might be possible to resist the ambitious purposes of that enemy, by strong and inexhaustible munitions of war; — and then to consult also about the dissensions in reference to our holy religion and Christian faith, — how the opinions and sentiments of contending parties on the subject of religion, might be mutually expressed, explained, and considered among themselves in your presence, with moderation mildness, and affection; that the errors which have been discussed or avowed by each party in their writings, being abandoned or corrected, those opinions might be settled and reduced to one plain standard of truth and Christian harmony; that one pure and true religion being cherished and preserved among us, we may be able to live in harmony and concord in one Christian church also, in the same manner as we subsist and serve under one Christ. And as we, the

undersigned Elector and Princes, with others who have adhered to us, and other electors, princes, and estates besides, were summoned to the appointed diet, that we might obediently observe your Majesty's order, we have come with haste to Augsburg, and, we wish it said without boasting, have appeared here among the first.

When therefore your Imperial Majesty, among other things, caused it to be proposed to the electors, princes, and other estates of the empire, at the very commencement of the diet here at Augsburg, that the several estates, in conformity with your imperial edict, should prepare and submit their opinions and sentiments in the German and Latin languages, — having held a consultation on Wednesday, we returned our answer, that we on our part would present the articles of our Confession to your Imperial Majesty on the succeeding Friday. So in obedience to your Majesty's demand, we now offer in defence of our religion, the Confession of our adherents and ourselves, the doctrine of which, drawn from the Holy Scriptures and the pure word of God, we have hitherto continued to deliver in our provinces, dukedoms, principalities, and cities, and have discussed in our churches.

For if the other electors, princes, and estates of the empire, by similar writings in Latin and German, according to the above-mentioned proposition of your Majesty, shall produce their opinions on the subject of religion, we, here in the presence of your Imperial Majesty, as our most gracious master, shall present ourselves ready to consult on friendly terms with those princes and our adherents, about the possible methods and means by which we may come to an agreement, so far as it can be honourably done; and having peaceably discussed the subjects of difference between ourselves and the opposition free from odious strife, the dissension may be suppressed, through the grace of God, and rendered subservient to one

true, harmonious religion; — that, as we all subsist and serve under one Christ, and ought to acknowledge one Christ, according to the tenor of your Majesty's edict, all opinions likewise may be conformed to the standard of divine truth, — an event which we implore from God in our most fervent supplications.

But relative to the other electors, princes, and estates, as the opposite party, if this conference on the subject of religion, conducted after the manner in which your Majesty wisely required it to be, — by mutual exhibition and deliberate comparison of written opinions among ourselves, — shall not conduce to a reconciliation of Christian harmony, consistent with the will of God and the dictates of conscience, as your Imperial Majesty, other electors, and estates of the empire, and all, whoever are influenced by a pure love and zeal for religion; whoever may have heard this discussion with an impartial spirit, will hold it honourable to know, and graciously acknowledge this Confession of our adherents and ourselves.

Your imperial Majesty graciously intimated, not on a single occasion but frequently, to the electors, princes, and other estates of the empire, and caused it to be publicly read and recited from a copy of your Majesty's instructions, written and communicated to them at the diet of Speyer, held in 1526, that your imperial Majesty, for certain reasons then specified, was neither willing nor able to make any decision or determination as to this difficulty in religion, but that your Majesty desired, as a matter of duty, to use your best exertions with the Roman Pontiff for convening a general council. The same likewise was more fully declared, a year ago, in the last public diet which was held at Speyer. At that time your imperial Majesty, through lord Ferdinand, king of Bohemia and Hungary, our friend and

gracious master, and also through your Majesty's speaker and commissaries, caused this to be declared among other things, that your Majesty had considered the resolution of the deputy, counsellors, and officers of the imperial government, and of those delegated by other estates, who had assembled at Ratisbon, and that your Majesty deemed it expedient to convene a diet; and because the subjects then under negotiation between your Majesty and the Roman Pontiff, were near an amicable adjustment, your Majesty did not doubt but that the Pope might be induced to convoke a general diet. So earnestly did your Majesty strive that the chief Pontiff above-mentioned might agree with your Majesty to assemble such a diet, proclaimed by letters issued on the earliest occasion.

In the event, therefore, that the dissension between us and the opposition, shall not be settled in a friendly and affectionate manner, we propose in all obedience, that we appear before your imperial Majesty, numerously attended, and plead our case in such a general, free, and Christian council, the convocation of which has always been solicited with one consent, and voted for with unanimous voices, by the electors, princes, and other estates of the empire, in all the imperial diets which have been held during your Majesty's reign. Long ago in a becoming manner and in legal form, have we challenged them to a general conference of this kind, and appealed at the same time to your imperial Majesty in this great and momentous design. In this appeal to your Majesty for a general diet we continue to persist; nor do we intend nor are we able to abandon it, in this or any other address, unless the difficulty between us and the opposition, according to your Majesty's last proclamation, shall be settled, allayed, and subdued to Christian harmony. And here too do we solemnly and publicly attest the truth of this declaration.

ARTICLES OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE

— ARTICLE I | OF GOD —

First. — With unanimity, it is held and taught, agreeably to the decree of the council of Nicaea, that there is one divine essence only, which is called, and truly is, God, but that there are three persons in this one divine essence, equally powerful, equally eternal, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, who are one divine essence, eternal, incorporeal, indivisible, infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness, the Creator and preserver of all things visible and invisible. And by the word person, is not understood a part or quality of another, but that which subsists of itself, precisely as the Fathers have employed this term on this subject.

All heresies are, therefore, condemned, which are in opposition to this Article: as those of the Manicheans who have adopted two gods, the one good, the other evil. Likewise those of the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mahomedans, and the like; also those of the ancient and modern Samosatrenians, who adopt but one person, and sophistically explain these two, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and assert, that they must not be distinct persons, but that the Word signifies the oral word or voice, and that the Holy Ghost is the motion created in the creatures.

— ARTICLE II | OF ORIGINAL SIN —

We teach, that since the fall of Adam all men who are naturally engendered, are conceived and born in sin; that is, that they all are from their mother's womb, full of evil desires and propensities, and can have no true fear of God, no true faith in God, by nature; and that this innate disease, or original sin, is truly sin, and condemns all those under the eternal wrath of God, who are not born again by baptism and the Holy Spirit.

Hence, we condemn the Pelagians and others, who deny that original corruption is sin, by which, to the disparagement of the merits and sufferings of Christ, they assert, that the nature becomes pious through its natural powers.

— ARTICLE III | OF THE SON OF GOD —

Likewise, it is taught, that God the Son, became man, was born of the blessed Virgin Mary; and that the two natures, human and divine, inseparably united in one person, are one Christ, who is true God and man, was really born, truly suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried, that he might be a sacrifice, not only for original sin, but also for all other sins, reconciling the wrath of God. Further, that this same Christ descended into hell, and truly arose from the dead on the third day, ascended to heaven, and sits at the right hand of God,

that he may perpetually reign over all creatures, and govern them; and through the Holy Spirit sanctify, purify, strengthen, and console all those who believe in him; and may give unto them life, and various gifts and blessings, and protect and defend them against the devil and the power of sin.

Also, that finally this same Christ will return visibly, to judge the living and the dead, etc., according to the Apostolic Creed.

— ARTICLE IV | OF JUSTIFICATION —

It is taught further, that we cannot obtain righteousness and the forgiveness of sin before God by our own merits, works, and atonement; but that we obtain the remission of sins, and are justified before God, by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith; if we believe that Christ suffered for us, and that sins are remitted unto us for Christ's sake, and righteousness and eternal life are bestowed on us. For, God accounts and imputes this faith to us as righteousness before himself, as Paul says. (Romans 3, 4)

— ARTICLE V | OF THE MINISTRY —

For the purpose of obtaining this faith, God has instituted the ministry, and given the Gospel and the sacraments, by which, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who in his own time and place, works faith in those that hear the Gospel, which teaches, that through the merits of Christ, and not through our own merits, we have a merciful God, if we believe these things.

By this are condemned the Anabaptists and others, who teach, that we receive the Holy Spirit through our own preparation, thoughts, and works, without the external word of the Gospel.

— ARTICLE VI | OF NEW OBEDIENCE —

It is also taught, that such faith must bring forth good fruits and good works, and that we must do all manner of good works, as God has commanded, for God's sake; yet must not put any confidence in those works, as if they merit favour in the sight of God; for we receive forgiveness of sins and justification through faith in Christ, as Christ himself says in Luke 17:10: *“So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’”* Thus do also the Fathers teach.

For Ambrose says: *"Thus it has been ordained by God, that whosoever believes in Christ shall be saved, and not through works, but without merit through faith alone, has he forgiveness of sins."*

— ARTICLE VII | OF THE CHURCH —

It is taught likewise, that there ever shall be and continue one holy Christian church, which is the congregation of all believers, among whom the Gospel is preached in purity, and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For this is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church, that the Gospel is preached therein, according to its pure intent and meaning, and that the sacraments are administered in conformity with the Word of God. And for the true unity of the Christian church, it is not necessary, that uniform ceremonies instituted by men, should be everywhere observed. As Paul says in Ephesians 4:4-5: *"There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call — one Lord, one faith, one baptism."*

— ARTICLE VIII | WHAT THE CHURCH IS —

Further; although the Christian church is properly nothing else than the congregation of all believers and saints, yet, as in this life there are many hypocrites and false Christians,— open sinners remaining even among the pious, the sacraments, however, are effectual, even if the preachers, by whom they are administered, be not pious. As Christ himself says in Matthew 23:2: *“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat”* etc.

On this account are condemned the Donatists, and all such as teach contrary to this principle.

— ARTICLE IX | OF BAPTISM —

Respecting baptism it is taught, that it is necessary; that grace is offered through it; and that children also ought to be baptised, who through such baptism are presented to God, and become pleasing to him.

Therefore the Anabaptists are condemned, who teach that infant baptism is not proper.

— ARTICLE X | OF THE EUCHARIST —

Concerning the holy Supper of the Lord it is thus taught, that the true body and blood of Christ are truly present under the form of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and there administered and received. The opposite doctrine, therefore, is rejected.

— ARTICLE XI | OF CONFESSION —

In reference to confession, it is thus taught, that private absolution ought to be retained in the church, and should not be discontinued; it is, however, not necessary to enumerate all transgressions and sins in confession, as this, indeed, is not possible. Psalm 19:12: *“Who can discern his errors?”*

— ARTICLE XII | OF REPENTANCE —

Concerning repentance it is taught, that those who have sinned after baptism, may at all times obtain the forgiveness of sins, if they repent; and that the church should not refuse to

grant absolution unto them. And genuine and true repentance properly consists in feeling contrition and regret, or dread on account of sin; and besides, in having faith in the Gospel and absolution that the sins are forgiven, and that through Christ grace is obtained, — a faith which again consoles and pacifies the heart.

Afterwards, improvement of conduct also should follow, and abstinence from sin; for these should be the fruits of repentance, as John says in Matthew 3:8: “*Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.*”

Here are condemned such as teach, that those who have once been justified, cannot fall again.

On the other hand, the Novatians also are here condemned, who refused absolution to those who had sinned after baptism. In like manner are condemned those who teach, that forgiveness of sin is obtained, not through faith, but through our own meritorious deeds.

— ARTICLE XIII | OF THE USE OF THE SACRAMENTS —

Concerning the use of the sacraments, it is taught, that the sacraments have been instituted not only in order that they may be marks by which Christians may be known externally, but

that they may be signs and evidences of the divine will towards us, for the purpose of exciting and strengthening our faith; therefore they also require faith, and then are they properly used, when they are received in faith, and when faith is strengthened by them.

— ARTICLE XIV | OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT —

Concerning church government, it is taught, that no one should teach or preach publicly in the church, or administer the sacraments without a regular call.

— ARTICLE XV | OF CHURCH RITES AND ORDINANCES —

Concerning ecclesiastical rites instituted by men, it is taught, that, those should be observed which may be attended to without sin, and which contribute to the promotion of peace and good order in the church: as, certain holidays, festivals, and the like. Respecting these things, however, instruction is given, lest our consciences be encumbered with the idea that such observances are essential to salvation. It is taught, moreover, that all ordinances and traditions instituted by men, for the purpose of reconciling God and meriting grace, are contrary to the Gospel and the doctrine of faith in Christ; wherefore, monastic vows, and

traditions concerning the difference of meats, days, etc., intended for the purpose of meriting grace, and making satisfaction for sins, are impotent and contrary to the Gospel.

— ARTICLE XVI | OF POLITICAL AND CIVIL GOVERNMENT —

Concerning polity and civil government, it is taught, that all authority in the world and established governments and laws, are good arrangements created and instituted of God; and that Christians may hold either legislative, judicial, or executive offices, without sin; and may decide cases, pronounce judgments, and punish transgressors, agreeably to imperial or other customary laws; may wage just wars, and serve in them; make lawful contracts; take oaths, when required; may hold property; marry and be married, etc.

Here are condemned the Anabaptists, who teach, that none of these things just mentioned, are congruous with Christianity.

Those likewise are condemned, who teach, that Christian perfection consists in deserting house and property, wife and children, personally, and abstaining from them; whereas in these alone consist true perfection, true fear in God, and true faith in God. For the Gospel does not teach an external, temporal, but an internal, everlasting manner and righteousness of heart, nor does it invalidate civil government, polity and matrimony, but it requires the observance of all of these, as true ordinances of God. And in such stations each one

according to his vocation should manifest Christian love, and genuine good works. Christians are, for that reason, under obligation to submit to government and to obey its commands in all things that may be performed without sin; but if government should command something that cannot be obeyed without sin, "*We must obey God rather than men.*" (Acts 4:19 and 5:29)

— ARTICLE XVII | OF CHRIST'S RETURN TO JUDGMENT —

It is also taught, that on the last day our Lord Jesus Christ will come to raise and to judge all the dead, to give unto the elect and faithful eternal life and endless joys, but to condemn impious men and devils to hell and everlasting punishment.

The Anabaptists are therefore condemned, who teach that devils and condemned men shall not suffer everlasting pain and torment.

Here are condemned in like manner certain Jewish doctrines, which are circulated even now, that prior to the resurrection of the dead, the holy and pious alone will occupy a temporal kingdom, and that all the wicked will be exterminated.

— ARTICLE XVIII | OF FREE WILL —

Concerning free will it is taught, that to some extent man has freedom of will to live apparently honest, and to choose between things which reason comprehends; but without grace, assistance, and the operation of the Holy Spirit, he is unable to become pleasing to God, or to fear God in heart, or to believe in him, or to cast out of his heart the innate evil propensity; but these things are effected through the Holy Spirit, which is given through the word of God; for Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:14: *“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”*

And in order that it may be known, that nothing novel is taught in this Article, the expressive words of Augustine, concerning free will, are introduced here, as now transcribed from the third book Hypognosticon: — *“We acknowledge, that in all men there is a free will; for they all, indeed, have natural innate understanding and reason; not that they are able to act in something pertaining to God, as to love and fear God from the heart, but only in external works of this life have they freedom to choose good or evil. By good I mean, that which nature is able to perform, as to labour in the field, or not, to eat, to drink, to visit a friend, or not, to clothe or unclothe, to build, to take a wife, to carry on a trade, and to do any similar act that is useful and good; all of which, however, neither take place nor subsist without God, but all take place of him and through him. On the contrary, from his own choice man may also take evil in hand, as to bow down before an idol, to commit murder,”* etc.

— ARTICLE XIX | OF THE CAUSE OF SIN —

Concerning the cause of sin it is taught among us, that, although God, the Almighty, has created and preserves all nature, yet the perverted will, however, works sin in all evildoers and despisers of God, even as the will of the devil and of all wicked men, which, as soon as God withdraws his aid, turns itself from God unto evil, as Christ says in John 8:44: *“When he lies, he speaks out of his own character”*

— ARTICLE XX | FAITH AND GOOD WORKS —

Our party are falsely accused of having prohibited good works; but their writings on the ten commandments and other subjects, show that they have given good and useful instructions and admonitions upon true Christian duties and works, concerning which prior to this time little had been taught, but almost in every sermon was urged continually the necessity of puerile and needless works, as rosaries, worship of saints, monastic vows, pilgrimages, stated fasts, holidays, brotherhoods, etc. Works so needless, even our adversary do not extol so highly now any more as formerly, besides they have also learned to treat of faith now, concerning which in former times they had preached nothing at all; they teach now, however, that we are not justified before God by works alone, but add faith in Christ, saying faith and works justify us before God, — a doctrine which may afford more consolation than a doctrine teaching confidence in works alone.

Now since the doctrine concerning faith, which is the principal article in the Christian creed, has not been inculcated for so long a time, as all must confess, but the doctrine concerning works alone having been preached everywhere, the following instructions are offered by our divines on this subject:

First, that our works cannot reconcile us to God, and merit favour, but these things are effected through faith alone, if it is believed, that our sins are forgiven us for Christ's sake, who alone is the Mediator reconciling the Father. He, therefore, that expects to effect these things by works, and to merit grace, contemns Christ, and seeks a way of his own to God, contrary to the Gospel.

This doctrine concerning faith, is clearly and explicitly inculcated by Paul in many places, especially in Ephesians 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 a result of works, so that no one may boast."* etc. And that no new signification is introduced here, may be shown from Augustine, who has treated this subject profoundly, and in like manner teaches, that we obtain grace and are justified before God through faith in Christ, and not by works; as his whole book *"De Spiritu et Littera"* clearly shows. Although this doctrine is despised very much among the inexperienced, yet it will be found, that it is very consoling and salutary to timid and alarmed consciences; for our consciences cannot attain tranquillity and peace by works, but through faith alone, when they feel in themselves an assurance that for Christ's sake they have a merciful God, as Paul says in Romans 5:1: *"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Heretofore this consolation was not

administered in sermons, but our poor consciences were driven upon works of their own, and various works were taken in hand; for conscience drove some into monasteries, with the hope of acquiring grace there by a monastic life, others devised works of another kind for the purpose of meriting grace, and of making satisfaction for sins. Many of these have experienced, that peace could not be attained by these things. It was, for this reason, necessary to preach and enforce with diligence this doctrine concerning faith in Christ, that it might be known that through faith alone, without merit, the grace of God is secured.

It is also inculcated, that such faith is not here spoken of, as even devils and the ungodly possess, who likewise believe the history, that Christ has suffered and arisen from the dead; but true faith is spoken of, — that which believes that we obtain grace and the forgiveness of sins through Christ. And he, then, who knows that he has a merciful God through Christ, thus knows God, calls upon him, and is not without God, as the Gentiles. For the devil and the ungodly do not believe this article concerning the remission of sins; for that reason, they are enemies to God, are unable to call upon him, or to hope for anything good from him; and thus, as just now shown, the Scripture speaks of faith, and does not style faith such a knowledge as devils and wicked men possess; for thus it is taught concerning faith in Hebrews 11:1. It is not faith to have merely a knowledge of the histories, but to have confidence in God, to receive his promises. And Augustine also reminds us, that we should understand the word faith in Scripture, to be a confidence in God, that he is merciful to us, and not a mere knowledge of such history, — a knowledge which devils also possess.

It is taught further, that good works should and must be performed; not that we should place confidence in them, in order to merit grace, but to the glory of God and in accordance with

his will. Faith alone ever secures grace and forgiveness of sins. And because the Holy Spirit is given through faith, the heart becomes qualified to perform good works. For before this, while it is without the Holy Spirit, it is too weak; besides it is in the power of Satan, who urges frail human nature to many sins. As we see among the philosophers who undertaking to live honourably and unblameably, did not affect it, however, but fell into many great and open sins; so it happens with man, if he is without true faith and without the Holy Spirit, and governs himself alone by his own human powers. Wherefore, the doctrine concerning faith is not deserving of censure for the prohibition of good works, but should much rather be applauded for teaching the performance of good works, and for offering assistance by which good works may be performed. For without faith and out of Christ, human nature and ability are much too weak to do good works, to call upon God, to have patience in sufferings, to love our neighbour, to execute with assiduity commanded offices, to be obedient, to avoid evil lusts. Such exalted and righteous works cannot be performed without the assistance of Christ, as he himself says in John 15:5: *“Apart from me you can do nothing.”*

— ARTICLE XXI | OF THE WORSHIP OF SAINTS —

Concerning the worship of saints, it is taught by our party that we should remember the saints, so that we may strengthen our faith, when we see how favours were conferred on them, and how assistance was afforded them through faith. Besides, that examples may be had from their good works for each one according to his vocation; even as your imperial Majesty in waging war against the Turks, may follow successfully and devoutly the example

of David; for both are royal offices, whose shelter and protection subjects require. But by Scripture it cannot be shown, that we should invoke the saints, or seek help from them. For there is but one Reconciler and Mediator appointed between God and man: Jesus Christ; (1 Timothy 2:5) who is the only Saviour, High Priest, Propitiator, and Intercessor before God. (Romans 3:25 and 8:34). And he alone has promised that he will hear our prayers. And this is the highest worship according to the Scripture, that from the heart we seek and call on this Jesus Christ, in every necessity and affection. 1 John 2:1: *“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”*

This is about the substance of the doctrine which is preached and taught in our churches, for the rightful Christian instruction and comfort of conscience, and for the improvement of believers. For, as we did not feel willing to place in the highest and greatest danger before God our own souls and consciences, by the abuse of the Divine name and word, or to entail and transmit upon our children and descendants any other doctrine than that commensurate with the pure divine word and Christian truth; and as these doctrines are clearly grounded in the Holy Scripture, and besides, are also neither contrary nor in opposition to the universal Christian, or to the Roman church, so far as may be observed from the writings of the Fathers, we think that our adversaries cannot disagree with us in the foregoing articles. Those therefore act altogether unfriendly, hastily, and contrary to all Christian unity and love, who resolve in themselves, without any invariable grounds of divine command or writing, to exclude, reject, and avoid all of our party as heretics, because their errors and contentions are principally about certain traditions and misuses. If, then, there is no real error or deficiency in the principal articles, and if this our Confession is divine and Christian, with reason the bishops should demean themselves more mildly, even if there might be a

deficiency among us on account of traditions; and yet we hope to assign indisputable grounds and reasons, why some traditions and abuses have been corrected among us.

ARTICLES CONCERNING WHICH THERE IS DISSENSION, AND IN WHICH ARE RELATED THE ABUSES WHICH HAVE BEEN CORRECTED

Since, then, with respect to these Articles of faith, there is nothing taught in our churches contrary to the Holy Scripture, or the universal church, but merely some abuses have been corrected, some of which in the course of time, have crept in of themselves, others have been established by force, necessity requires of us to relate these, and to allege reasons why alteration was permitted in them, in order that your imperial Majesty might know, that in this matter we have not acted in a manner unchristian or malicious, but that we were urged to permit such alteration by the command of God, which should justly be esteemed higher than all customs.

— ARTICLE XXII | OF BOTH ELEMENTS IN THE SACRAMENT —

Among us, both elements in the sacrament, are administered to the laity, because this is a clear command and precept of Christ as found in Matthew 26:27: *“Drink of it, all of you.”* Here Christ commands with clear words concerning the cup, that they all should drink out of it.

And in order that no one shall be able to cavil at these words, and explain them, as if they pertained to the priests alone, Paul informs us in 1 Corinthians 11:25, that the whole congregation of the Corinthian church, used both elements. And this custom continued in the church for a long time, as can be shown by history and the writings of the Fathers. Cyprian mentions in many places, that in his time the cup was administered to the laity. Thus says St. Jerome, the priests who administer the sacrament, distribute the blood of Christ to the people. And pope Gelasius himself commands, that the sacrament should not be divided (Distinct. 2, de Consecrat. cap. Comperimus. Neither can any canon be found, which commands that one element alone should be received. Nor can it be ascertained by anyone, when or by whom the custom of receiving one element was introduced, although cardinal Cusanus mentions the time when this method was approved. Now it is evident that such custom, introduced contrary to the command of God, and in opposition to the ancient canons, is wrong. Wherefore, it was improper to oppress the consciences of those who wished to use the holy sacrament according to the institution of Christ, by compelling them to act contrary to the order of Christ our Lord.

And since the dividing of the sacrament is contrary to the institution of Christ, the usual processions with the sacrament are discontinued among us.

— ARTICLE XXIII | OF THE MARRIAGE OF PRIESTS —

There have been very great complaints in the world, among individuals both of high and low rank, concerning the excessive lasciviousness, the dissolute conduct, and life of the priests, who were unable to observe continence, and who had also arrived at the highest excess with such abominable vices. For the purpose of avoiding such gross and detestable offences, adultery, and other acts of sensuality, several priests among us have entered the matrimonial state. These allege that, in taking this step, they have been urged and actuated by the dictates of conscience, as the Scripture clearly enjoins, that marriage was instituted of the Lord God to prevent fornication, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:2: *“But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.”* Again, in 1 Corinthians 7:9: *“it is better to marry than to burn with passion”*, and according to the declaration of Christ in Matthew 19:11, that *“not everyone can receive this saying”*. In this passage Christ himself, who well knew what was in man, declares that few persons have the gift to live continent; *“male and female he created them”* (Genesis 1:27). Now experience has abundantly shown, whether it is within human power or ability, without a special gift or grace of God, to alter or modify the creatures of God the high Majesty, by human purposes or vows. For it is clear, what good, what decent, chaste lives, what Christian, honest, or blameless conduct, have followed from this in many individuals, —

what abominable, hideous disquietudes and torment of their consciences, many have experienced in the close of their lives; and many of them have confessed it themselves. Since, then, the word and law of God cannot be altered by any human vows or enactments, from these and other reasons and authorities, the priests and other ecclesiastics have entered into the conjugal state.

So it may be shown likewise from history and the writings of the Fathers, that formerly in the Christian churches, it was customary for priests and deacons to have wives; wherefore Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:2: "*An overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife.*" It is but four hundred years since the priests in Germany were driven by force from a state of matrimony to vows of continence, and they opposed that measure so generally, so very earnestly and rigorously, that the archbishop at Mayence, who published this new papal edict, was well nigh being murdered in a throng in an insurrection of the whole priesthood. And directly in the beginning, in a manner so precipitately and arbitrarily was that decree taken in hand, that the pope at that time did not only forbid unto the priests future marriage, but also dissolved the marriage of those who had already been in that state for a long time, — an action which was not only contrary to all divine, natural, and civil rights, but in opposition also to the canons which the popes themselves made, and to the most celebrated councils.

In like manner among individuals of high standing, piety, and intelligence, have similar opinions and sentiments been heard frequently, — that this compulsory celibacy and prohibition of matrimony, (which God himself instituted and left optional,) has never been productive of any good, but has been the source of many great and pernicious vices, and of

many provocations. And even one of the popes, Pius II., himself, as his history shows, often mentioned these words, and permitted them to be written: *“There may be some reasons, indeed, why marriage should be forbidden the ecclesiastics; but there are much higher, greater, and weightier, reasons why marriage should be left optional with them.”* And doubtless, pope Pius, as an intelligent and wise man, spoke these words from mature consideration.

Wherefore we would in submission to your Imperial Majesty, comfort ourselves with the hope, that your Majesty, as a Christian and highly esteemed Emperor, will reflect that now in these latter days, of which the Scripture makes mention, the world becomes still more degenerate, and mankind weaker and more defective.

For these reasons, it is highly necessary indeed, useful, and Christian, to be mindful lest by the prohibition of marriage, lasciviousness and vices more wicked and shameful be promoted in the German states. For no one is able to remedy or ameliorate these matters better or more wisely than God himself, who has instituted marriage for the purpose of assisting human weakness, and of restraining licentiousness. Thus say the ancient canons too, that severity and rigour must on some occasions be mitigated and relaxed, on account of human weakness, and for the purpose of guarding against, and of avoiding greater evils.

Now such a course would, in this case, be Christian and very necessary. For what injury could result to the Christian church in general, especially to the ministers and others, who are to serve in the church, from the marriage of priests and ecclesiastics? There will indeed,

be a want of priests and ministers hereafter, should this rigorous prohibition of marriage be continued longer.

Now, since it is founded upon the divine word and commandment for priests and ecclesiastics to enter into a state of matrimony, besides since history shows that the priests did live in a state of matrimony; since also the vows of continence have produced a very great number of offences so detestable and unchristian, adultery so excessive, licentiousness so terrible and unheard of, and vices so abominable, that even some of the courtesans among the dignitaries at Rome, have often confessed these things, and admitted with sorrow that as these vices in the clergy were so abominable and predominant, the wrath of God would be excited; — it is indeed lamentable, not only that the Christian state of matrimony has been forbidden, but even in some places subjected to the most severe punishment, as if it were a heinous crime.

Matrimony is moreover commended highly, in the laws of your Imperial Majesty, and in every empire in which justice and law prevail. But in the present time innocent people are beginning to be tortured on account of their marriage alone, priests likewise who should be spared in preference to others, — a thing which is not only contrary to divine laws, but also to the canons. The apostle Paul denominates that a doctrine of devils, which forbids marriage in 1 Timothy 4:1-3. And Christ himself says in John 8:44: *“The devil was a murderer from the beginning.”* All these things concur well to prove that to be a doctrine of devils, which forbids marriage, and attempts to enforce the prohibition by the shedding of blood.

But as no human law is able to abrogate or change a command of God, so also no vow is able to change his command. Wherefore Cyprian advises, that those women who do not keep their vowed chastity, should marry, and he says in L. I. Epistle. II. thus: *“But if they will not preserve their chastity, or if they are unable, it is better to marry, than to fall into the fire through their lusts; and they should conduct themselves well, that they may not occasion offence to the brothers and sisters.”*

In addition, all the canons extend more lenity and justice to those who have taken vows in youth, the priests and monks, for the most part, having entered into such state in their youth, through ignorance.

— ARTICLE XXIV | OF THE MASS —

It is alleged unjustly against our party, that they have abolished the mass. For it is evident that the mass (not to boast) is celebrated with greater devotion and seriousness among us, than among the adversaries. So the people also are repeatedly instructed with diligence concerning the holy sacrament, with regard to the purpose for which it was instituted, and the manner in which it is to be used. viz. to comfort alarmed consciences, by which means the people are drawn to communion and mass. Besides, instruction is also given against wrong doctrines concerning the sacrament. Nor has any perceptible change taken place in

the public ceremonies of the mass, except that at several places German hymns (for the instruction and exercise of the people) are sung besides the Latin songs; as all ceremonies should especially serve the purpose of teaching the people what is necessary for them to know concerning Christ.

But as the mass prior to this time, was abused in various ways; as it is clear, that a fair was made out of it, that it was bought and sold, and that it has been celebrated for the most part in all churches for the sake of money, — such abuse, even before this time, has been repeatedly censured by individuals of learning and piety. Now as the ministers among us have preached concerning this thing, and the priests have been reminded of the terrible menaces, which should justly move every Christian, that, whoever partakes of the sacrament unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of Christ, 1 Corinthians 11:27, thereupon these mercantile and solitary masses, which hitherto have been celebrated out of compulsion for the sake of money and the prebends, have ceased in our churches.

Besides, the abominable erroneous doctrine that Christ our Lord by his death has atoned for original sin only, is also repressed, and that he has instituted the mass as a propitiation for other sins. And thus the mass has been converted into an oblation for the living and the dead, in order to take away sins and reconcile God. From this, it further followed, that it was called in question, whether a mass held for many merits as much as if a particular one is held for each individual. Thence originated the numberless multitudes of masses, as men wished by that work to obtain from God all that they needed, and thereupon the faith in Christ and the true divine service were neglected.

Wherefore instruction is given on this subject, as necessity undoubtedly required, in order that it may be known, how the sacrament would be rightly made use of. And first, the Scripture testifies in many places that there is no sacrifice for original sin or for other sins, but only the death of Christ alone. For thus it is written, Hebrews 9:26-28, and Hebrews 10:10-14: *“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”* It is an unheard-of innovation, to teach in the church, that the death of Christ atoned only for original sin, and not also for other sins; hope is therefore entertained, that it will be generally perceived that such error was not unjustly censured.

Secondly, St. Paul teaches in Romans 3:25 that we obtain grace before God, through faith, and not by works. This abuse of the mass is evidently opposed to this doctrine, if by that work we expect to obtain grace; as it is well known that the mass has been used for the purpose of removing sins, and of obtaining grace and favour before God, not only in behalf of the priest for himself, but also for the whole world for the living and the dead.

Thirdly, this holy sacrament was instituted, not for the purpose of making a sacrifice for sins, (for the sacrifice has already been made,) but for the purpose of exciting our faith, and of consoling the consciences, which are admonished through the sacrament, that grace and the forgiveness of sins are promised to them by Christ. Wherefore this sacrament requires faith, and without faith it is used in vain.

Since, then, the mass is not a sacrifice for others living or dead, to take away their sins, but since it should be a communion, in which the priest and others receive the sacrament for themselves, this custom is observed among us, that on holidays (and also at other seasons when communicants are present) mass is celebrated, and unto those who desire it the sacrament is administered. Thus the mass continues among us in its proper application, as it was observed originally in the church, as may be shown from St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:33, and likewise from many writings of the Fathers. For Chrysostom mentions how the priest stands daily, requesting some to come to communion, and forbidding others to approach. The ancient canons also show, that one officiated, and the other priests and deacons communed. For thus read the words of the canon of Nicaea: *“The deacons in order after the priests, should receive the sacrament from the bishop or the priest.”*

Now since no innovation has been introduced, inconsistent with the custom of the primitive church, and no perceptible change has taken place in the public ceremonies of the mass, except that the unnecessary masses celebrated perhaps through abuse, — the parish masses too, have discontinued, this manner of holding masses should not in justice be condemned as unchristian and heretical. For in former times mass was not celebrated daily in large churches in which a great number of people had assembled, on the days the people congregated; as Tripartita historia lib. 9, testifies, that in Alexandria, on Wednesdays and Fridays the Scriptures were read and explained, and all other divine services were held, without the mass.

— ARTICLE XXV | OF CONFESSION —

Confession is not abolished by the ministers of our party. For the custom is retained among us, not to administer the sacrament unto those who have not been previously examined and absolved. The people moreover are diligently instructed with regard to the comfort afforded by the words of absolution, and the high and dear estimation in which it is to be held; for it is not the voice or word of the individual present, but it is the word of God, he who forgives sins; for it is spoken in God's stead, and from his command. Concerning this command and power of the keys, how comfortable, how useful they are to alarmed consciences, is taught with the greatest assiduity, besides how God requires confidence in this absolution, no less than if the voice of God resounded from heaven, to comfort us and to assure us, that through such faith we obtain the remission of sins. Concerning these useful points, the priests, who taught respecting confession, have not uttered a single word heretofore, but merely tormented our consciences with long enumerations of sins, with expiations, with indulgences, with pilgrimages, and the like. And many of our adversaries have acknowledged themselves, that this party write and discourse concerning true Christian repentance, with greater propriety than had been done before for many years.

And thus it is taught respecting confession, that no one should be forced to enumerate sins by name; for that would be impossible, as the Psalmist says: *"Who can discern his errors?"* (Psalm 19:12). And Jeremiah says in Jeremiah 17:9: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"* Poor, frail human nature is rooted so deeply in sin, that it is unable to perceive or to acknowledge all of them; and should we be absolved of those only, which we are able to enumerate, it would avail us but little. It is, therefore,

unnecessary to urge people to enumerate their sins by name. Thus the Fathers also maintained, as may be shown from *Distinct. 1, de Pænitentia*, where the words of Chrysostom are quoted: *“I say not that thou shouldest betray thyself publicly, or accuse thyself before another one, or present thyself as culpable, but obey the prophet, who says: ‘Commit thy way unto the Lord,’ Psalm 37:5. Therefore confess unto God the Lord, the righteous judge, in thy prayer, do not relate thy sins with the tongue, but in thy conscience.”* Here it may be seen clearly, that Chrysostom does not urge sins to be enumerated by name. The *Glossa in Decretis de Pænitentia, Distinct. 4*, also teaches that confession is not commanded in the Scriptures, but it was instituted by the church. Yet by the ministers of our party, it is taught with diligence, that confession because of absolution, which is the chief part in it, should be retained for the purpose of consoling alarmed consciences, and for some other reasons.

— ARTICLE XXVI | OF DIVERSITY OF MEATS —

Formerly it was held, preached, and written, that the diversity of meats and the like ceremonies instituted by men, were useful, in order to merit grace and to make satisfaction for sin. Hence new fasts, new ceremonies, new orders, and the like, were daily devised and strenuously insisted upon, as if they were necessary services to God, through which grace might be merited if they were observed, but that the neglect of them was attended with great sin. From this many scandalous errors originated in the church.

In the first place, by this means, the grace of Christ and the doctrine concerning faith were obscured, which doctrine with great solemnity the Gospel inculcates, and urges with earnestness that the merit of Christ should be highly and dearly esteemed, and that it should be known that faith in Christ is to be placed far above all works. St. Paul, for that reason, inveighs bitterly against the Mosaic law and human traditions, in order that we might learn, that we are not justified before God by our works, but alone through faith in Christ, and that we obtain grace for Christ's sake. This doctrine was almost entirely suppressed, by teaching that grace must be merited by laws, fasts, diversities of meats, habits, etc.

Secondly, such traditions even obscured the command of God. For these traditions were elevated far above his command. Those alone were believed to live as Christians, who observed these holidays, and prayed, and fasted, and dressed in this peculiar manner, which was styled a spiritual, Christian life.

Moreover, other useful good works were regarded as worldly and sensual, viz. those which each one according to his vocation, is under obligation to do: as, the father labouring to support his wife and children, and to bring them up in the fear of God, the mother bearing children and attending to them, the prince and other authorities ruling the country and the people, etc. Such works commanded of God, had to be considered a mere worldly and imperfect matter, but these traditions had to be styled by the magnificent name, of being holy and perfect works only. For these reasons, there was neither limit nor end to the making of such traditions.

Thirdly, these traditions became exceedingly cumbrous to the consciences of men. For it is not possible to observe all traditions, and yet the people were of opinion, that they are necessary services to God. And Gerson asserts in his writings that by this many were driven to despair, and some put an end to their own existence; because they heard no consolation from the grace of Christ. For, how the consciences of men were entangled is seen from the Summists and theologians, who attempted to sum up the traditions, and sought *Epieikeia* in order to assist those consciences. So complicated an undertaking did they find it, that in the meantime the salutary Christian doctrines of subjects more important, of faith, of consolation in affliction, and the like, were totally neglected. Accordingly, many pious men of those times complained that these traditions excited much contention in the church, and by that means prevented pious men from attaining the true knowledge of Christ. Gerson and several others have uttered bitter complaints on this subject. And it also met the displeasure of Augustine, that men encumbered their consciences with so many traditions; for that reason, he advises on this subject, that they should not be regarded as necessary things.

Wherefore we did not treat on these matters, through malice or in contempt of ecclesiastical power, but necessity required instruction concerning the errors aforementioned, which had grown out of the misapprehension of these traditions. For the Gospel enforces, that the doctrine concerning faith should and must be inculcated in churches, which cannot, however, be understood where the opinion prevails that men merit grace by works of their own appointment. And with respect to this subject, it is taught that no one is able by the observance of devised human traditions, to merit grace or to reconcile God, or to atone for sins; and for that reason, no necessary service of God should be made out of them. Reasons in addition, are alleged from the Scripture. Christ excuses the apostles for not

observing the usual traditions, saying in Matthew 15:3-9: *"In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."* Now as he calls this a vain service, it cannot be necessary. And immediately afterwards he says in verse 11: *"It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person."* Again Paul says in Romans 14:17: *"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking."*, Colossians 2:16-20: *"Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath"* etc. In Acts 15:10-11 Peter says: *"Why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."* Here Peter forbids that the consciences of men should be burdened any further with external ceremonies, either those of Moses or of others. And 1 Timothy 4:1-3. Those prohibitions which forbid meats and matrimony are called *"teachings of demons"*. For it is diametrically contrary to the Gospel, either to institute or perform such works for the purpose of meriting the remission of sins, or under the impression that no one can be a Christian without these services.

The charge, however, alleged against our party, that they forbid discipline and mortification of the flesh, as Jovian did, will be disproved by their writings. For they have ever given instruction concerning the holy cross, which Christians are under obligation to bear; and this is true, sincere, and not fictitious mortification. Moreover, it is taught in like manner, that each Christian is under obligation to restrain himself by bodily exercise; as fasting and other exercises, so that he give no occasion to sin, not meriting grace however by these works. This bodily exercise should be urged not only on certain fixed days, but continually. On this subject Christ says in Luke 21:34: *"But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you"*

suddenly like a trap.” Again in Matthew 17:21 (Mark 9:29): *“But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting.”* And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27: *“But I discipline my body and keep it under control”*. By this he shows, that mortification is designed, not for the purpose of meriting grace, but for the purpose of keeping the body in a suitable condition, that it might not impede what each one according to his calling is commanded to perform, and thus fasting is not rejected, but the making of a necessary service out of it, upon fixed days and particular meats, to the confusion of the consciences of men.

Many ceremonies and traditions are likewise observed by our party; as, the order of the mass, and other hymns, festivals, etc, which are calculated to promote order in the church. But relative to this subject the people are instructed, that such external service does not make them pious before God, and that it should be observed without encumbering the consciences, so, that if anyone omit it without giving offence, he does not sin in that case. This freedom in external ceremonies the ancient Fathers have likewise retained. For in the East, the Paschal was held at a different time from that at Rome; and when some were disposed to consider this want of uniformity as a division in the church, they were reminded by others, that it was not necessary to observe uniformity in such customs. And thus says Irenaeus: *“Want of uniformity in fasts does not divide the unity of faith.”* So also in Distinct. 12, it is written concerning the want of uniformity in human ordinances, that it is not contrary to the unity of Christendom. And Tripartita Hist. lib. 9, sums up many dissimilar church customs, and forms a useful Christian saying: *“It was not the intention of the Apostles to institute holy-days, but to teach faith and charity.”*

— ARTICLE XXVII | OF MONASTIC VOWS —

In order to speak of monastic profession, it is necessary, in the first place, to consider how it has been viewed hitherto; what regulation they had in monasteries, and that very many things are daily done in them not only contrary to the word of God, but also in opposition to the papal directions. In the time of St. Augustine monastic life was optional; subsequently, when the right discipline and doctrine were corrupted, monastic vows were devised, and by these as by a devised incarceration, they wished to re-establish discipline.

In addition to these monastic vows, many other things were introduced, and with these burdens and fetters, many persons were oppressed, even before they had arrived at years of maturity.

So, many persons likewise entered into such monastic life through ignorance, who, although they were not of years too immature, did not sufficiently consider and weigh their abilities. All these, thus involved and ensnared, are urged and forced to remain in such bonds, although even the papal regulations would liberate many of them. And it was more oppressive in nunneries than in monasteries, yet it would seem fit that females, as the weaker, should have been spared. This severity likewise met the displeasure of many pious persons in former times; for they well knew that both boys and girls were often thrust into these monasteries merely for the purpose of being supported. They saw also how evil this course of procedure proved, what offences, what burdens of conscience it produced, and many people complained, that in a matter so perilous the canons were not regarded at all. Besides

this, an opinion obtained concerning monastic vows, which was very prevalent, and which was displeasing even to many monks, who were possessed of some little reason.

For they allege, that monastic vows are equal to baptism, and that by monastic life remission of sins and justification may be merited before God, yea, they add still further, that by monastic life not only righteousness and holiness are merited, but also that by it the commands and counsels comprehended in the Gospel, are kept; and thus monastic vows were commended more highly than baptism. Again, that men merit more by monastic life than by all other offices which God has ordered; as that of parson and minister, government, prince and lord, and the like, all of whom according to the command, word, and precept of God, serve in their vocations without fictitious sanctimoniousness. None of these things can be denied, for they are extant in their own books. Moreover, he that is thus ensnared and enters into convent, learns but little concerning Christ.

Schools were kept once in monasteries, for the purpose of teaching the Holy Scriptures and other arts which are useful to the Christian church, so that ministers and bishops could be selected from them. But now there is a different custom. For formerly they assembled in monastic life with a view to learn the Scripture, but now they falsely pretend that monastic life is of such a nature, that men merit the grace of God and holiness before God by it, yea, that it is a state of perfection, and they exalt it far above other states which God has instituted. We cite all these things, free from all calumination, in order that it may be the better understood and comprehended how, and what our party preach and teach.

First, among us, they teach concerning those who contract in marriage, that all those who are not constituted for a single state, have power and legal authority to marry. For vows cannot annul the order and command of God. Thus reads the command of God in 1 Corinthians 7:2: *“Because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.”* And not only the command of God, but also his creation and order, urge and enforce all those to a state of matrimony, who are not endowed with the gift of continence, by a peculiar work of God, agreeably to this declaration of God himself as found in Genesis 2:18: *“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”*

Now, what can be alleged against this? They may applaud vows and duty as highly as they please, and adorn them as much as possible, yet it cannot be maintained that God's command can thus be annulled. The doctors say, that vows, even in opposition to the authority of the pope, are not binding, how much less, then, should they bind, and have power and effect against the commands of God?

If the obligation of vows had no other reason for their being annulled, the popes would not have granted dispensations against them; for it is not proper for any man to annul obligations which grow out of divine rights. Wherefore the popes have considered well, that in these obligations equity should be employed, and have often granted dispensations; as with the king of Arragon, and many others. Now, if for the preservation of temporal things, dispensations have been granted, more justly should they be granted on account of the necessity of souls.

Secondly, why do the opposite party urge so strenuously that vows must be kept, and do not first consider whether the vow is of a proper nature? For vows should in possible cases be free and unconstrained. But how far perpetual chastity exists in human power and ability, is well known. Nor are there many, either of males or of females, that have taken monastic vows of themselves, freely and with due consideration. Before they arrive at a proper understanding, they are persuaded to monastic vows. Sometimes they are also urged and forced to them. For that reason it is not just, to insist so obstinately and strenuously about the obligation of vows, seeing that all must confess, that it is contrary to the nature and essential character of a vow, to vow it unwillingly and without due counsel and consideration.

Some canons and papal regulations rescind the vows which were made previous to the fifteenth year. For they maintain, that before that age no one has knowledge sufficient to enable him to determine upon the order and regulation of a whole life.

Another canon allows still more years for human weakness. It forbids the taking of monastic vows under the eighteenth year. From this the greater part would have excuse and reason to withdraw from monasteries; for the greater part in their childhood entered them before that age. Finally, if even the breaking of monastic vows might be censured, yet it could, however, not follow from this, that their marriages should be dissolved. For St. Augustine says in 27 Quæst., 1 Cap., Nuptiarum, *“that such marriages should not be dissolved.”* Now, St. Augustine stands in high repute in the Christian church, although some have since maintained otherwise.

Although the command of God concerning marriage, absolves very many from their monastic vows, yet our writers allege many other reasons, why monastic vows are ineffectual and frangible. For every species of worship, chosen and instituted by men, without the precept and command of God, in order to obtain righteousness and divine grace, is contrary to him, and in opposition to his command and to the Gospel. As Christ himself says in Matthew 15:9: *“In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”* So St. Paul also teaches everywhere, that men should not seek righteousness from services of God, devised by men, but that righteousness and holiness in the sight of God come from the faith and trust in which we believe, that God accepts us graciously for the sake of Christ his own Son. Now, it is clear, that the monks have taught and preached that their fictitious sanctimoniousness atones for sin, and obtains righteousness and the grace of God. What else is this, but diminishing the glory and honour of the grace of Christ, and denying the righteousness of faith? Wherefore it follows that such customary vows are unjust and false services of God. For that reason, they are also not binding. For an ungodly vow, and this taken contrary to the command of God, is void, and the canons teach also that an oath shall not be a bond to sin.

St. Paul says in Galatians 5:4: *“You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.”* Therefore those also who wish to be justified by vows, are apart from Christ, and fail to obtain the grace of God. For these rob Christ of his honour, who alone justifies, and thus they bestow such honour on their vows and monastic life.

Not can it be denied, that the monks have taught and preached that by their vows and monastic habits, and conduct they are justified and merit the forgiveness of sins, and, indeed, they have invented things still more absurd, and have asserted, that they impart their good works to others. Now, if someone would press the matter and bring all these in array against them, how many things could be collected, of which the monks themselves are now ashamed and which they do not desire to be done! Besides these things, they have also persuaded the people, that their self-devised spiritual orders, are Christian perfection. This is, indeed, commending works as a justifying source. It is not a small offence in the Christian church, to appoint for the people a species of worship, which men have devised without the command of God, and to teach that such worship makes men pious and just before God. For the righteousness of faith, which should be chiefly inculcated in the church, becomes obscured, when the eyes of the people are bedazzled with this strange, angelic spirituality and false pretence of poverty, meekness, and chastity.

Moreover, by this means the commandments of God and the rightful and true service of God, are obscured, when the people hear that the monks alone are in a state of perfection. For Christian perfection consists in fearing God from the heart and with earnestness, and also in preserving sincere reliance, faith, and trust, that for the sake of Christ we have a gracious and merciful God, that we may and should ask and desire of him what is necessary for us, and confidently expect help from him in every tribulation, according to each one's calling or station in life; that we also should in the meantime perform good works towards others with diligence, and attend to our occupations. In this consist true perfection and rightful service of God, not in mendicancy, or in a black or grey hood etc. But the common people are led into many pernicious views by false commendation of monastic life. If they hear a single state applauded beyond measure, it follows that they are perplexed with

cumbrous consciences in their matrimonial relations. For from this, if the common man hears that the mendicants alone are perfect, he is not able to perceive that he may possess property, and carry on an occupation without sinning. If the populace hear that it is merely an admonition not to exercise revenge, it follows that some will think it no sin to exercise revenge without a legal process. Others are of opinion that revenge does not at all become a Christian, not even the government. Many examples are on record, of persons who abandoned their wives and children and business, and shut themselves up in monasteries. This they said, was fleeing out of the world, and seeking a life more pleasing to God than their previous one. Nor were they able to understand, that men should serve God in those commandments which He has given, and not in the commandments devised by men. Now, this is a good and perfect state of life, which is founded on the command of God, but that is a dangerous state of life, which is not founded on his command.

Concerning these things, it was necessary to instruct the people properly. Gerson, in former times, has also censured the error of the monks, concerning perfection, and he intimates that in his day it was a new doctrine that monastic life should be a state of perfection. Many ungodly views and errors attach to monastic vows, that they justify and make holy in the sight of God; that they are exalted as Christian perfection; that by them both the counsels and commands of the Gospel are fulfilled; that they have a superabundance of works which men do not owe to God.

Since, then, all these things are false, vain, and fictitious, monastic vows are invalid and void.

— ARTICLE XXVIII | OF THE POWER OF THE BISHOPS OR CLERGY —

Concerning the power of bishops much has been written in former times, and some have improperly mingled together civil and ecclesiastical power. From this inordinate commixture extensive wars, rebellions, and insurrections have been produced, by the pontiffs having, under pretence of their power, given unto them by Christ, not only established new modes of worship, and oppressed the consciences of men with reservations of certain cases and with violent excommunications, but also presumed to dethrone kings and emperors at pleasure, and to place others in their stead. This presumption has long since been censured by learned and pious men. Hence our party, for the purpose of consoling the consciences of men, have been compelled to point out the lines of distinction between civil and ecclesiastical power. And they have taught, that both civil and ecclesiastical power, on account of God's commandment, ought to be honoured and observed with all due devotion, as the two highest gifts of God on earth.

Accordingly, they teach, that the power of the keys or of the bishops, according to the Gospel, consists in a power and commission from God to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to attend to and administer the sacraments. For Christ sent forth the apostles with the command in John 20:21-23: *“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”* This power of the keys or of the bishops is to be exercised and carried into effect alone by the doctrine and preaching of the word of God, and by the administration of the sacraments to many or to individual persons, according to the call. For by this means are conferred, not corporeal, but

eternal things and treasures; as, eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. These blessings cannot be obtained otherwise than by the office of the ministry, and by the administration of the holy sacraments. As St. Paul says in Romans 1:16: *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."* Inasmuch then as the power of the church or of the bishops confers eternal gifts, and is exercised and exerted only by the ministry, it cannot by any means interfere with polity and civil government. For the latter relates to matters entirely different from the Gospel, and protects with its power not the souls of men, but their bodies and possessions against external violence, by the sword and bodily penalties.

For that reason, these two governments, the civil and ecclesiastical, ought not to be mingled and confounded. For the ecclesiastical power has its command to preach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments, and it ought not to interfere with a foreign office, it ought not to dethrone or make kings, it ought not to abolish or disturb civil laws and obedience to government, it ought not to make and appoint laws for civil power concerning political matters. As Christ himself also has said in John 18:36: *"My kingdom is not from the world."* Again in Luke 12:14: *"Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?"* And St. Paul says to the Philippians 3:20: *"Our citizenship is in heaven"*. And in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: *"For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ"*.

In this manner, our party distinguish between the two powers, the civil and ecclesiastical, and recommend both of them to be held in honour as the highest gifts of God on earth. But if

bishops have any civil power, they possess it not as bishops from divine rights, but from human imperial rights, conferred by emperors and kings, for the civil management of their own possessions, and it has nothing at all to do with the office of the Gospel. Wherefore the episcopal office, according to divine rights, is to preach the Gospel, to remit sins, to judge of doctrine, and to reject that doctrine which is contrary to the Gospel, and to exclude from the Christian community, the wicked, whose impious conduct is manifest, without human power, but by the word of God alone, and in that case, the parishes and churches are under obligation to be obedient to the bishops, agreeably to the declaration of Christ in Luke 10:16: *"The one who hears you hears me."* But if they teach, appoint, or establish anything contrary to the Gospel, we have the command of God in such case, not to be obedient, as found in Matthew 7:15: *"Beware of false prophets."* And St. Paul to the Galatians 1:8: *"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed."* And in 2 Corinthians 13:8: *"For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth."* Again, 2 Corinthians 13:10: *"For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down."* Thus the ecclesiastical law commands in like manner 2 q. 7 in cap. Sacerdotes and in cap. Oves. And St. Augustine writes in the epistle against Petilia, that *"We should not obey those bishops who have been duly elected, if they err, or teach or ordain anything contrary to the holy, divine Scripture."*

But, since the bishops have other power and jurisdiction in certain matters, as those relating to marriage or tithes, they derive it from the power of human laws. But if the ordinaries are negligent in such office, the princes, though they do it freely or reluctantly, are under

obligation in that case, for the sake of peace, to put into execution the law on their subjects, for the prevention of discord and disturbance in the countries.

Further, it is called in question, whether bishops have power also to establish in the church, ceremonies and the like ordinances concerning meats, holy-days, and concerning different orders of ministers. Those who attribute that power to bishops, cite this passage of Christ in John 16:12-13: *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth."* In addition, they introduce the example also, in Acts 15:20, where they have forbidden: *"things strangled and blood."* So it is alleged also, that the Sabbath was changed into Sunday, contrary to the ten commandments, as they regard it, and no example is urged and alleged more strenuously, than the change of the Sabbath, and they wish to maintain by that, that the power of the church is great, since it dispensed with a precept of the ten commandments, and has effected somewhat a change in them. But relative to this question our party teach, that the bishops have no power to appoint and establish anything contrary to the Gospel, as has already been stated, and as the ecclesiastical laws throughout the ninth Distinction teach. Now it is evidently contrary to the command and word of God, to enact or command laws with a view to atone for sins and to merit grace by them; for it calumniates the honour of Christ's merit, if we presume to earn grace by such ordinances. It is also clear, that on account of this opinion human traditions innumerable have prevailed in Christendom, and by this means the doctrine of faith and the righteousness of faith, were entirely suppressed — new holy-days, new fasts were daily commanded, new ceremonies, and new reverences of the saints were instituted, in order to merit grace and all blessings from God, by such works. Again, they who establish human traditions, act contrary to the command of God, by placing sins in meats, in days, and the like things, and by thus encumbering Christendom with the

servitude of the law, even as if there must be among Christians such a divine service, to merit the grace of God, as the Levitical service of God, which He should have commanded the Apostles and bishops to establish, as some write concerning it. And there is no doubt, but that some of the bishops have been deceived by the example of the law of Moses; hence originated those innumerable traditions, that it is a mortal sin, to do any manner of work on holy-days, even without offence to others; that it is a mortal sin to neglect the canonical hours; that certain meats pollute the conscience; that fasting is a work, by which God may be reconciled; that sin in a case reserved, will not be forgiven, except the reserver of the case be first entreated; notwithstanding, the ecclesiastical laws do not speak of the reservation of the sin, but of the reservation of the church-penalty.

Whence, then, have the bishops power and authority to impose such traditions upon Christendom, to ensnare men's consciences? For St. Peter in the Acts of the Apostles, forbids the *“yoke to be put upon the neck of the disciples”* in Acts 15:10. And St. Paul to the Corinthians says that power was given to him for edification, and not for destruction in 2 Corinthians 13:10. Why, then, do they multiply sins by such traditions? We have clear declarations from the divine writings, which forbid the establishment of such traditions, in order to merit the grace of God, or as if they were necessary to salvation. Thus says St. Paul in Colossians 2:16-17: *“Let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.”* Again, Colossians 2:20-23 reads: *“If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations — “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” (referring to things that all perish as they are used) — according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and*

severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.” Again, St. Paul to Titus 1:14 forbids publicly, the giving heed to *“Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.”*

So also Christ himself speaks of those who urge the people to human commandments in Matthew 15:14: *“Let them alone; they are blind guides”*, and rejecting such service, says in Matthew 15:13: *“Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up.”* Now, if the bishops have power to encumber the churches with incalculable traditions, and to ensnare men's consciences, why then does the holy Scripture so often forbid the making and observing of human traditions? Why does it style them the doctrines of devils? Shall the Holy Ghost have forewarned all these things in vain?

Wherefore, since such ordinances, instituted as necessary, in order to reconcile God and to merit grace, are in opposition to the Gospel, it is by no means suitable for the bishops to enforce such services. For the doctrine of Christian liberty must be retained in Christendom, that the servitude of the law is not necessary to justification, as St. Paul writes to the Galatians 5:1: *“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”* For the chief article of the Gospel, that without our merit we obtain the grace of God through faith in Christ, must be maintained, and that we do not merit it by services instituted by men.

What, then, should be held concerning Sunday and other similar church ordinances and ceremonies? To this our party make the following reply: That the bishops or pastors may

make regulations, in order that things may be carried on orderly in the church, not in order to obtain the grace of God, nor yet in order to atone for sins, or to bind the consciences of men with them, to hold them as necessary services of God, and to regard them, as if they commit sin, if they break them without offence to others. Thus St. Paul to the Corinthians ordains, that the women in the congregation should cover their heads in 1 Corinthians 11:5. Again, that the preachers should speak in the congregation not all at the same time, but in order, one after another.

It is proper for the Christian congregation to observe such regulation for the sake of peace and love, and in this case to be obedient to the bishops and pastors, and to observe it so far, that one offend not another, in order that there may be no disorder or unseemly conduct in the church; yet so that the consciences of men be not encumbered with the idea that these things are held as necessary to salvation, and that they commit sin, if they violate them even without offence to others; as, no one says that a woman commits sin, who goes abroad bareheaded, without offending the people. In like manner is the regulation concerning Sunday, concerning Easter, concerning Pentecost, and the like holy-days and rites. Those, then, who are of opinion, that the regulation of Sunday instead of the Sabbath, was established as a thing necessary, err very much. For the Holy Scripture has abolished the Sabbath, and it teaches that all ceremonies of the old law, since the revelation of the Gospel, may be discontinued. And yet as it was of need to ordain a certain day, so that the people might know when they should assemble, the Christian church ordained Sunday for that purpose, and possessed rather more inclination and willingness for this alteration, in order that the people might have an example of Christian liberty, that they might know, that neither the observance of the Sabbath, nor of any other day, is indispensable.

There are many injudicious disputations relative to the change of the law, relative to the ceremonies of the New Testament, relative to the alteration of the Sabbath; all of which have sprung from the false and erroneous opinion, that there must be in Christendom a divine service commensurate to the Levitical or Jewish service of God, and that Christ had commanded the apostles and bishops to devise new ceremonies, which might be necessary to salvation. These errors obtained in Christendom when the righteousness of faith was not clearly and purely taught and preached. Some argue thus concerning Sunday, that it must be kept, although not from divine authority, prescribing form and measure how far labour may be performed on that holy-day. But what else are such disputations, but snares of conscience? For although they presume to modify and mitigate human traditions, yet no epieikeian or mitigation can be attained, so long as the opinion exist and continue, that they are necessary. Now this opinion must remain, if men know nothing of the righteousness of faith, and of Christian liberty. The Apostles have commanded to abstain from blood and things strangled. But who observes it now? Yet they do not, however, sin, who do not observe it; because even the Apostles themselves did not wish to burden the conscience with such servitude, but they have prohibited it for a time, on account of offence. For we must have regard in this ordinance to the chief article of the Christian doctrine, that it be not abrogated by this decree.

Scarcely any of the ancient canons are observed agreeably to their purport, and many of these ordinances are going out of use daily, even among those who maintain such traditions with the greatest diligence. The consciences of men can neither be advised nor helped, where this alleviation is not observed, that we know that such observance of traditions is not held as necessary, and that it is harmless to the conscience, even if such traditions cease.

But the bishops might easily preserve obedience, if they would not urge upon the keeping of those traditions, which cannot be observed without sin. But now they do this thing, they forbid the administration of the holy sacrament in both elements: again, they forbid marriage unto the priests, and receive no one, unless he has first taken an oath, that he will not preach this doctrine, which without doubt is commensurate with the holy Gospel.

Our churches do not request the bishops to make peace and union, at the expense of their honour and dignity, (though this would be fit for the bishops to do in a case of necessity,) but they entreat only, that the bishops discontinue certain unjust burdens, which did not exist in the church formerly, and which are received contrary to the custom of the universal Christian church. There might, perhaps, have been some reasons for these when they were first established, but they are not suitable for our times. It is likewise undeniable, that some ordinances were received through ignorance. Wherefore the bishops ought to have the kindness to mitigate these ordinances, since such change would not be injurious to the preservation of the unity of the Christian church; for many ordinances instituted by men, have ceased of themselves in the course of time, and were unnecessary to be observed, as the papal laws themselves testify. But if it cannot be granted, or obtained from them, that these human ordinances may be moderated and abolished, which cannot be observed without sin, we must follow the rule of the Apostles, which commands, that "*We must obey God rather than men.*" as found in Acts 5:29.

St. Peter, in 1 Peter 5:3, forbids the bishops to dominate, as if they had power to force the churches in whatever measure they please. Now, it is not our design to deprive the bishops of their power, but we desire and entreat, that they would not force the consciences of men

to sin. But if they will not desist but contemn this entreaty, they may consider that they shall, therefore, be under obligation to render an account unto God, since by this obstinacy of theirs, they give occasion for disunion and schisms, which they ought justly to help to prevent.

CONCLUSION

These are the principal articles, which are regarded as controverted. It were easy indeed to enumerate many more abuses and errors, but in order to be brief, and to prevent prolixity, we have mentioned only the principal ones, by which the others will be easy to judge of. For in former times much complaint existed concerning indulgences, pilgrimages, and the abuse of excommunications. The clergy have also had endless disputes with the monks about hearing confessions, about burials, funeral sermons, and numberless other subjects. All such we have thought proper to pass over in mildness, so that the more important subjects in this matter, might be the better perceived. Nor should it be considered, that anything has been said or intimated here against anyone out of hatred or disrespect; but we have related these subjects only, which we have considered as necessary to cite and announce, in order that it might be the more clearly perceived, that by us nothing is received either in doctrine or ceremonies, which might be contrary to the Holy Scripture, or opposed to the universal Christian church. For it is clear, indeed, and evident, that with the greatest sedulity by the help of God (without boasting) we have been cautious that no new and ungodly doctrine insinuate itself, spread, and prevail in our churches.

The foregoing articles we have, in conformity with the edict, desired to submit, as an indication of our Confession, and of our doctrine. And if anyone should be found who has an objection to them, we are ready to give him further information with reasons from Holy Writ.

Your Imperial Majesty's most humble subjects.

JOHN, Elector of Saxony.

GEORGE, Margrave of Brandenburg.

ERNEST, Duke of Luneburg.

PHILIP, Landgrave of Hesse.

WOLFGANG, Prince of Anhalt.

The Imperial city of Nuremburg.

The Imperial city of Reutlingen.