

[Formula of Concord]

Editors' Introduction to the Formula of Concord

Every movement has a period in which its adherents attempt to sort out and organize the fundamental principles on which the founder or founders of the movement had based its new paradigm and proposal for public life. This was true of the Lutheran Reformation. In the late 1520s one of Luther's early students, John Agricola, challenged first the conception of God's law expressed by Luther's close associate and colleague, Philip Melancthon, and, a decade later, Luther's own doctrine of the law. This began the disputes over the proper interpretation of Luther's doctrinal legacy. In the 1530s and 1540s Melancthon and a former Wittenberg colleague, Nicholas von Amsdorf, privately disagreed on the role of good works in salvation, the bondage or freedom of the human will in relationship to God's grace, the relationship of the Lutheran reform to the papacy, its relationship to government, and the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. The contention between the two foreshadowed a series of disputes that divided the followers of Luther and Melancthon in the period after Luther's death, in which political developments in the empire fashioned an arena for these disputes.

In the months after Luther's death on 18 February 1546, Emperor Charles V finally was able to marshal forces to attempt the imposition of his will on his defiant Lutheran subjects and to execute the Edict of Worms of 1521, which had outlawed Luther and his followers. Military success in the Smalcald War of 1545–47 enabled the emperor to issue a new religious policy for Protestant principalities and cities within the empire at the 1548 imperial diet meeting in Augsburg. The "Augsburg Interim," while suppressing distinctive Lutheran teaching, required Protestants to return to obedience to the Roman pontiff and to restore medieval doctrine and practice corresponding to Erasmian reform proposals of a moral and institutional sort. At the same time, the emperor had awarded the electorate of Saxony, the University of Wittenberg, and much of the territory of the Saxon elector John Frederick to the Lutheran duke of (eastern) Saxony, Moritz, because Moritz had sided with him in the war against Moritz's father-in-law, Philip of Hesse, and cousin, John Frederick. When Charles reneged on oral promises that Moritz would not have to abandon his Lutheran faith and insisted that Saxony also submit to the Augsburg Interim, Moritz commissioned his theologians from Wittenberg and Leipzig (in particular, Philip Melancthon) to assist his secular advisers in drafting a compromise plan that would preserve Luther's teaching while giving the appearance of compliance with imperial religious policy. This new plan for Saxon religious life was never officially adopted and only partially and selectively introduced. However, under the label "the Leipzig Interim," it aroused a storm of protest from many students of Luther and Melancthon who felt themselves and their faith betrayed by their teacher and his colleagues. Melancthon and his colleagues in Wittenberg had justified the compromises of the Leipzig Interim on the basis of the principle of *adiaphora*—

things neither commanded nor forbidden in scripture. Thus, this dispute over ecclesiastical submission to the power of the state, over the freedom of the church to regulate its own affairs, and over the necessity of confessing the faith boldly and clearly in a time when compromise and concession are being forced on the church received the name “adiaphoristic controversy.” It erupted shortly after the formulation of the Saxon policy in late 1548 and continued for more than a decade (treated in FC X).

In connection with the debate over the so-called Leipzig Interim, the first of a series of disagreements began over the definition of aspects of the doctrine of salvation in the Lutheran Reformation. The Wittenberg professor George Major defended the document’s proposition that “good works are necessary for salvation,” and thereby aroused a storm of criticism from opponents (later called “Gnesio-Lutherans” [genuine Lutherans] by scholars; Major and other Melancthon students who remained closer to their preceptor were dubbed “Philippists”). These opponents believed that this proposition returned to a medieval reliance on works for salvation (FC IV). Out of the debate over the role of works in salvation and the Christian life arose controversies between these two parties and even among the Gnesio-Lutherans over the uses of the law and the proper definition of the term “gospel” (FC V, VI). At the same time, in the early 1550s, both of these parties opposed the interpretation of Luther’s doctrine of justification advanced by Andrew Osiander, a longtime supporter of Luther in the city of Nuremberg, who had been forced to leave the city because of the Augsburg Interim and became professor at the University of Königsberg. Osiander, trained in the platonically influenced school of Old Testament interpretation according to Kabbala, believed that justification by grace through faith took place because the divine nature of Christ came to dwell in believers. All of Luther’s other followers held that God justified sinners through the word of forgiveness which conveys the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection to them and elicits trust in Christ (FC III).

A related controversy regarding human and divine relationships and interaction in regard to salvation—the synergistic controversy—focused on the role of the human will in conversion (FC II). Out of this dispute grew another controversy over the definition of original sin. Matthias Flacius Illyricus, a Gnesio-Lutheran leader, whose contributions in hermeneutics (*Key to the Sacred Scripture*) and church history (organization of the *Magdeburg Centuries*) shaped those disciplines for several generations, taught that original sin is the formal substance of the fallen human creature, whose lack of faith depicts the image of Satan, and no longer the image of God (FC I).

A second series of disputes in the 1550s and 1560s pitted Lutherans against John Calvin and his followers. Two schools of interpreters of Melancthon’s sacramental theology and Christology argued over the nature of the presence of Christ and his body and blood in the Lord’s Supper and related questions of the relationship between the two natures of Christ in his person (1564–74; FC VII, VIII).

Almost as soon as these controversies began in the early 1550s both theologians and governments in Lutheran lands sought to reconcile differences and reach theological agreement on the issues under dispute. In 1554 (in Naumburg) and again in 1558 (in the Frankfurt Recess

formulated largely by Melancthon) the Evangelical princes of the Holy Roman Empire sought to establish unity through simple doctrinal statements. Gnesio-Lutheran opposition frustrated these attempts at ending disputes through simplistic formulations; governments supporting Gnesio-Lutheran positions issued their own detailed confessions or confutations of errors instead.

The text of the Augsburg Confession itself became an issue dividing the followers of the Wittenberg theologians in Naumburg in 1561. At a diet of Evangelical governments the Lutheran princes were challenged by one of their number, Frederick III of the Palatinate, who was moving in the direction of Calvin's interpretation of the Lord's Supper, to permit a broader definition of subscription to the Augsburg Confession than was acceptable to the Gnesio-Lutherans. Attempts by theologians of this party to reconcile with Melancthon and his circle in 1557 failed as well. This effort was renewed in 1568 and 1569 when Philippist and Gnesio-Lutheran theologians met at Altenburg in colloquy to reconcile their differences; the colloquy ended with the two parties further alienated from each other.

Another campaign for concord began in 1569. Duke Christopher of Württemberg, who had supported such plans for establishing concord once again among the Lutherans, sent his chief theological adviser, Jakob Andreae, to assist Martin Chemnitz and Nicholas Selnecker (on loan from Philippist electoral Saxony) in the reformation of the lands of the duke's cousin, Duke Julius of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. Christopher commissioned Andreae to negotiate with Evangelical governments in north Germany during his sojourn at Julius's court to bring about concord among the theologians and administrations of the Lutheran cities and principalities. Andreae's attempt to do so through a brief and simple document, his "Five Articles," failed. However, during this effort he became alienated from the Philippist party and gravitated toward the Gnesio-Lutherans, in part under Chemnitz's theological influence. In 1573 he issued his *Six Sermons on the Disputes Dividing the Theologians of the Augsburg Confession* with a call that all Lutherans reconcile on the basis of his formulations in these sermons, which largely favored the Gnesio-Lutheran side. Chemnitz, David Chytraeus of Mecklenburg, and other theologians were asked for their reactions. They requested a more formal theological statement from the theological faculty of Tübingen, of which Andreae was a member. In response to this request Andreae himself wrote the "Swabian Concord" of 1574, casting his formula for concord into the form requested by the North German theologians. Chemnitz and Chytraeus revised his thoughts into the "Saxon-Swabian Concord" of 1575. At the same time the Württemberg government (now led by Christopher's son, Ludwig) and the governments of Baden and Henneberg established a theological commission that met at the abbey of Maulbronn in January 1576 and produced another formula for concord, the "Maulbronn Formula."

By this time Elector August of Saxony had discovered that the leading Philippist theologians in his lands—in spite of their efforts to keep the matter secret—had developed Melancthon's

Six Sermons Jakob Andreae. *Six Christian Sermons on the Divisions Which Have Continued to Surface among the Theologians of the Augsburg Confession from 1548 until This Year 1573*, in *Andreae and the Formula of Concord: Six Sermons on the Way to Lutheran Unity*, by Robert Kolb. St. Louis: Concordia, 1977. 58–134.

sacramental theology in a spiritualizing direction. The Formula of Concord itself uses the term “subtle sacramentarians” for this party. Traditionally they have been called “Crypto-Calvinists” according to the polemic of that day; in recent scholarship they are sometimes called “Crypto-Philippists” because they were trying to develop Melanchthon’s theology faithfully and at the same time held “secret” their spiritualizing interpretation of the Lord’s Supper. In 1574 these theologians and lay sympathizers were ousted from their leadership positions by August, and he invited Andreae to join the loyal Selnecker and others from his own ministerium in restoring a Lutheran doctrine of the Lord’s Supper to his lands. In this process he decided to join with Duke Julius and other Lutheran princes in sponsoring a drive for general concord among Lutheran ministeria and principalities.

A committee was formed with four theologians; Andreae, Chemnitz, Chytraeus, and Selnecker; and two representatives from electoral Brandenburg, Andrew Musculus and Christopher Körner. This committee, with the aid of members of the electoral Saxon ministerium, took the Swabian-Saxon Concord and the Maulbronn Formula and fashioned from them the “Torgau Book” of 1576. Circulated for critique among the Evangelical ministeria throughout Germany, this document was reworked by these theologians into the “Bergen Book” of 1577, which became the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord. Because its treatment of the disputes seemed too long to some of the princes, Andreae was commissioned to summarize it in what became the “Epitome” of the Formula of Concord. The Epitome and Solid Declaration were placed before the ministeria of the Evangelical lands of Germany. Andreae and others worked tirelessly in 1578 and 1579, conducting special colloquies with several ministeria, to win support from their churches, with some success. The Formula found approval by about two-thirds of the Evangelical churches of Germany and was then incorporated as the concluding document of the Book of Concord. The Book of Concord has served the churches that adopted it as a confessional standard for defining public teaching and ecclesiastical life, and its use has spread with the mission of those churches into lands in every inhabited continent.

This translation has preserved many of the Latin phrases that the German text employed. (Longer Latin citations are indicated in the footnotes.) At the time, technical theological vocabulary had not yet developed in German, and the authors of the Formula of Concord believed that points that hinged on such technical terms had to be made with the aid of the Latin. To provide readers with a better understanding of how the Solid Declaration developed, this translation also provides the textual analysis of the Solid Declaration based on George Fritschl’s reading of the source documents in *The Formula of Concord, Its Origin and Contents* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1916). The following designations at the beginning of the paragraphs of the Solid Declaration indicate these sources.

^a = “Swabian Concord” by Jakob Andreae, 1573

^b = David Chytraeus’s contributions to the “Saxon-Swabian Concord” of 1573

^c = Martin Chemnitz’s contributions to the “Saxon-Swabian Concord” of 1573

^d = “Maulbronn Formula”

^e = “Torgau Book,” 1576

^f = “Bergen Book,” 1577

^r = Revisions of the earlier text made at Torgau or Bergen

A THOROUGH, CLEAR, CORRECT,

*and Final Repetition and Explanation of Certain Articles of the
Augsburg Confession on Which Controversy Has Arisen for a Time
among Certain Theologians Adhering to This Confession,
Resolved and Settled according to the Direction of God’s Word
and the Summary Formulation of Our Christian Teaching*

[The Epitome]

A Summary Epitome of the Articles in Controversy among the Theologians of the Augsburg Confession, Explained and Reconciled in a Christian Manner under the Guidance of God’s Word in the Following Repetition

Concerning the Binding Summary, Rule, and Guiding Principle,

*according to which all teaching is to be judged and the errors which have arisen are to be explained and decided in Christian fashion.*¹

1. We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and guiding principle according to which all teachings and teachers are to be evaluated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments alone, as it is written, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119[:105*]), and Saint Paul: “If . . . an angel from heaven should proclaim to you something contrary, . . . let that one be accursed!” (Gal. 1[:8*]).

1 On the background of the concordists’ composition of a “binding summary, rule, and guiding principle,” see SD 526 n. 7 below.

*

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Other writings of ancient or contemporary teachers, whatever their names may be, shall not be regarded as equal to Holy Scripture, but all of them together shall be subjected to it, and not be accepted in any other way, or with any further authority, than as witnesses of how and where the teaching of the prophets and apostles was preserved after the time of the apostles.

2. Immediately after the time of the apostles—in fact, while they were still alive—false teachers and heretics invaded the church. Against them the early church prepared *symbola*, that is, short, explicit confessions, which were regarded as the unanimous, universal, Christian creed and confession of the orthodox and true church of Christ, namely, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. We pledge ourselves to these and thereby reject all heresies and teachings that have been introduced into the church of God contrary to them.

3. Concerning the division in matters of faith that has occurred in our times, we regard as the unanimous consensus and explanation of our Christian faith and confession, especially against the papacy and its false worship, idolatry, and superstition, and against other sects, as our symbol for this time, the first, unaltered Augsburg Confession, which was delivered to Emperor Charles V at Augsburg in 1530 during the great diet of the empire, along with the Apology of this Confession and the Articles that were presented at Smalcald in 1537 and were signed at that time by the foremost theologians.

And because these matters also concern the laity and the salvation of their souls, we pledge ourselves also to the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Luther, as both catechisms are found in Luther's printed works, as a Bible of the Laity, in which everything is summarized that is treated in detail in Holy Scripture and that is necessary for a Christian to know for salvation.

All teachings should conform to these directives, as outlined above. Whatever is contrary to them should be rejected and condemned as opposed to the unanimous explanation of our faith.

In this way the distinction between the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments and all other writings is preserved, and Holy Scripture alone remains the only judge, rule, and guiding principle, according to which, as the only touchstone, all teachings should and must be recognized and judged, whether they are good or evil, correct or incorrect.

The other symbols, however, and other writings listed above are not judges, as is Holy Scripture, but they are only witnesses and explanations of the faith, which show how Holy Scripture has at various times been understood and interpreted in the church of God by those

[Psalm 119:105 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed!

[Galatians 1:8 \(NRSV\)](#)

who lived at the time in regard to articles of faith under dispute and how teachings contrary to the Scripture were rejected and condemned.

I. Concerning Original Sin

*Status controversiae*²

The Chief Question in This Dispute³

Whether original sin is really, without any distinction, the corrupted nature, substance, and essence of the human creature, or indeed the most important and best part of its essence, as the rational soul itself at the height of its development and powers? Or whether, even after the fall, there is a distinction between the human substance, nature, essence, body and soul, and original sin, in such a way that human nature is one thing and original sin, which is imbedded in the corrupted nature and which corrupts this nature, is another?

Affirmative Theses

The Pure Teaching, Faith, and Confession on the Basis of the Guiding Principle and Summary Explanation Set Forth Above

1. We believe, teach, and confess that there is a difference between original sin and human nature—not only as God originally created it pure, holy, and without sin, but also as we have it now after the fall. Even after the fall this nature still is and remains a creature of God. This difference is as great as the difference between the work of God and the work of the devil.

2. We also believe, teach, and confess that we must preserve this difference very carefully because the teaching that there is supposedly no difference between our corrupted human nature and original sin is contrary to the chief articles of our Christian faith on creation, redemption, sanctification, and the resurrection of our flesh, and it cannot coexist with them.

For God created not only the body and soul of Adam and Eve before the fall but also our body and soul after the fall, even though they are corrupted. God also still recognizes them as his own work, as it is written, Job 10[:8*], “Your hands fashioned and made me, together all around.”⁴

2 The Latin for “state of the controversy.”

3 On the parties involved in this dispute, see SD I, 531–35 nn.21–22, below.

*

⁸ Your hands fashioned and made me; and now you turn and destroy me.

Furthermore, the Son of God assumed this human nature into the unity of his person—of course, without sin—and what he assumed was not another kind of flesh but our flesh. In this way he became our true brother. Hebrews 2[:14*], “Since the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things.” And [2:16*, 17*], “He did not [assume the nature of] the angels but of the descendants of Abraham; thus, he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect,” apart from sin.

Therefore, Christ also redeemed human nature as his creation, sanctifies it as his creation, awakens it from the dead, and adorns it in glorious fashion as his creation. But he did not create, assume, redeem, or sanctify original sin. He will also not bring it to life in his elect. He will neither adorn it with glory nor save it. Instead, it will be utterly destroyed in the resurrection.⁵

From all this, it is easy to distinguish between the corrupted nature and the corruption which is embedded in this nature—through which this nature is corrupted.

3. On the other hand, we believe, teach, and confess that original sin is not a slight corruption of human nature, but rather a corruption so deep that there is nothing sound or uncorrupted left in

[Job 10:8 \(NRSV\)](#)

4 The concordists followed the Hebrew text. Like the Luther Bible, the NRSV note translates, “did not come to help.” In the Luther Bible the passage is glossed, “Nothing is in me that you have not made or that is not yours.”

*

¹⁴ Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

[Hebrews 2:14 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁶ For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham.

[Hebrews 2:16 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁷ Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people.

[Hebrews 2:17 \(NRSV\)](#)

5 The arguments of par. 3–6 summarize one of the chief lines of argumentation used against the followers of Matthias Flacius.

the human body or soul, in its internal or external powers. Instead, as the church sings, “Through Adam’s fall human nature and our essence are completely corrupted.”⁶ The damage is so indescribable that it cannot be recognized by our reason but only from God’s Word. The damage is such that only God alone can separate human nature and the corruption of this nature from each other. This separation will take place completely through death, at the resurrection, when the nature which we now have will rise and live eternally, without original sin—separated and severed from it—as it is written in Job 19[:26*, 27*], “I will be covered in my own skin, and in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold.”⁷

Negative Theses

Rejection of the False Contrary Teaching

1. Therefore, we reject and condemn the teaching that original sin is only a *reatus*, that is, guilt, which results from someone else’s fault, without being any kind of corruption of our own nature.⁸

2. Likewise, that evil desires are not sin but are essential characteristics of our nature as it was created, as though the defect or damage discussed above were not truly sin for which the human creature apart from Christ is to be regarded as a child of wrath.

3. Likewise, we also reject the Pelagian error,⁹ which asserts that even after the fall human nature has remained uncorrupted and especially in spiritual matters remains completely good and pure in its *naturalia*, that is, in its natural powers.

6 A citation from the hymn of the Nuremberg city secretary, Lazarus Spengler (1523), *Lutheran Worship* 363, *The Lutheran Hymnal* 369.

*

²⁶ and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God,

[Job 19:26 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²⁷ whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!

[Job 19:27 \(NRSV\)](#)

7 According to the Luther Bible.

8 See SD I, nn. 31 and 32, on this and the following thesis.

4. Likewise, that original sin is only a slight, insignificant smudge that has been smeared on top of the human nature, a superficial stain, underneath which human nature retains its good powers, even in spiritual matters.

5. Likewise, that original sin is only an external obstacle for these good spiritual powers, and not a loss or lack of them, comparable to smearing a magnet with garlic juice.¹⁰ The juice does not take away the magnet's natural powers but merely interferes with them. Or, it is said that this spot can easily be washed away, like a smudge from the face or paint from the wall.

6. Likewise, that in the human being, human nature and its essence are not completely corrupted but that people still have something good about them, even in spiritual matters, such as the capability, aptitude, ability, or capacity to initiate or effect something in spiritual matters or to cooperate in such actions.

7. On the other hand, we also reject the false teaching of the Manichaeans,¹¹ when it is taught that original sin is something essential and autonomous that Satan infused into human nature and mixed together with it, as when poison and wine are mixed.

8. Likewise, that not the natural human being, but something extraneous and alien within the person commits sin, and thus not human nature but only original sin itself, which is in this nature, stands accused.

9. We¹² also reject and condemn as a Manichaean error when it is taught that original sin is really, without any distinction, the very substance, nature, and essence of the corrupted human being, and thus that there should be no suggestion of a difference between human nature after the fall in and of itself and original sin, nor should they be differentiated from each other in our thinking.

9 The British monk Pelagius, Augustine's opponent in the great controversy over grace and works of that time, lent his name to the view that salvation can be accomplished by human creatures apart from, or with the assistance of very little, divine grace.

10 Popular belief of the time.

11 The non-Christian thinker Mani lent his name to a radical dualism which posited more or less equally powerful divine forces or persons on the side of good and the side of evil. Opponents of Flacius and his followers used the term "Manichaean" to designate his view that original sin is the fallen human nature's essence in its "formal" dimension, that is, in relationship to God. The term "formal" was used in its Aristotelian sense of that which determines what a thing is as its design. The opponents' equation of his views with those of the ancient Manichaeans was based on their fear of where his views could lead, not on Flacius's actual teaching.

12 The following five paragraphs were considered a single unit and numbered one through five in the German original.

[10.] Luther calls this original sin ‘nature-sin’, ‘person-sin’, ‘essential sin’, but not in the sense that the nature, person, or essence of the human being in and of itself is original sin, without any distinction between the two. Rather with these expressions he made clear the difference between original sin, which is embedded in human nature, and other sins, which are called actual sins.

[11.] For original sin is not a sin that a person commits; rather it is embedded in the human being’s nature, substance, and essence. That means that even if no evil thought ever arose in the heart of the corrupted human being, no idle word were uttered, no evil deed done, nonetheless our nature is corrupted by original sin, which is implanted in us at birth in the sinful seed and which is a source of all other, actual sins, such as evil thoughts, words, and deeds, as it is written, “Out of the heart come evil intentions . . .” [Matt. 15:19*], and, “The inclination of the human heart is evil from youth” [Gen. 8:21*].

[12.] It is therefore good to note the different definitions of the word “nature,” through which the Manichaeans conceal their error and lead many simple people astray.¹³ For sometimes it means the essence of the human being, as when we say, “God created human nature.” Sometimes, however, it means the good or bad quality embedded in a thing’s nature or essence, as when it is said, “It is the nature of the snake to bite,” and, “It is the nature or quality of the human being to sin; thus human nature is sin.” Here the word “nature” does not mean the substance of the human being but rather something which is embedded in that nature or substance.

[13.] Concerning the Latin words *substantia* and *accidens*,¹⁴ since they are not biblical terms and are words unfamiliar to common people, they should not be used in sermons delivered to the common people, who do not understand them; the simple folk should be spared such words.

*

¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander.

[Matthew 15:19 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²¹ And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.

[Genesis 8:21 \(NRSV\)](#)

¹³ Here “Manichaeans” is used as a designation for the Flacian party.

¹⁴ On these terms, see SD I, 540 n. 45, below.

But in the schools and among the learned these terms are familiar and can be used without any misunderstanding to differentiate the essence of a thing from that which in an “accidental” way adheres to the thing. Therefore, these words are properly retained in scholarly discussion of original sin.

For the difference between God’s work and the devil’s work can be made most clear through these words because the devil cannot create a substance but can only corrupt the substance, which God has created, in an “accidental” way, with God’s permission.

II. Concerning the Free Will

Status controversiae

The Chief Question in This Dispute¹⁵

Because the human will is found in four dissimilar situations (1. before the fall; 2. after the fall; 3. after new birth; 4. after the resurrection of the flesh),¹⁶ the primary question concerns only the human will and capacity in the second situation: what kind of powers do human beings have after the fall of our first parents, before rebirth, on their own, in spiritual matters? Are they able, with their own powers, before they receive new birth through God’s Spirit, to dispose themselves favorably toward God’s grace and to prepare themselves to accept the grace offered by the Holy Spirit in the Word and the holy sacraments, or not?

Affirmative Theses

The Pure Teaching concerning This Article on the Basis of God’s Word

1. On this article it is our teaching, faith, and confession that human reason and understanding are blind in spiritual matters and understand nothing on the basis of their own powers, as it is written, “Those who are natural do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them and they are unable to understand them” [1 Cor. 2:14*] when they are asked about spiritual matters.

¹⁵ On the parties involved in this dispute, see SD II, 543–44 nn. 57–60, below.

¹⁶ On this distinction, which stems from Augustine, see SD II, 543 n. 55, below.

*

¹⁴ Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

2. Likewise, we believe, teach, and confess that the unregenerated human will is not only turned away from God but has also become God's enemy, that it has only the desire and will to do evil and whatever is opposed to God, as it is written, "The inclination of the human heart is evil from youth" [Gen. 8:21*]. Likewise, "The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed, it cannot" [Rom. 8:7*]. As little as a corpse can make itself alive for bodily, earthly life, so little can people who through sin are spiritually dead raise themselves up to a spiritual life, as it is written, "When we were dead through our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ" [Eph. 2:5*]. Therefore, we are not "competent of ourselves to claim anything [good] as coming from us; our competence is from God" (2 Cor. 3[:5*]).

3. However, God the Holy Spirit does not effect conversion without means, but he uses the preaching and the hearing of God's Word to accomplish it, as it is written (Rom. 1[:16*]), the

*

²¹ And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.

[Genesis 8:21 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁷ For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot,

[Romans 8:7 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—

[Ephesians 2:5 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁵ Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God,

[2 Corinthians 3:5 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

gospel is a “power of God” to save. Likewise, faith comes from hearing God’s Word (Rom. 10[:17*]).¹⁷ And it is God’s will that people hear his Word and not plug their ears. In this Word the Holy Spirit is present and opens hearts that they may, like Lydia in Acts 16[:14*], listen to it and thus be converted, solely through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, who alone accomplishes the conversion of the human being. For apart from his grace our “willing and exerting,” our planting, sowing, and watering, amount to nothing “if he does not give the growth” [Rom. 9:16*; 1 Cor. 3:7*]. As Christ says, “Apart from me, you can do nothing” [John

[Romans 1:16 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁷ So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

[Romans 10:17 \(NRSV\)](#)

17 Cited according to the Vulgate, not the Luther Bible or the NRSV.

*

¹⁴ A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul.

[Acts 16:14 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁶ So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy.

[Romans 9:16 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

[1 Corinthians 3:7 \(NRSV\)](#)

15:5*]. With these brief words he denies the free will its powers and ascribes everything to God's grace, so that no one has grounds for boasting before God (1 Cor. [9:16*]).

Negative Theses

Contrary False Teaching

Therefore, we reject and condemn all the following errors as contrary to the guiding principle of God's Word:

1. The mad invention of the philosophers who are called Stoics,¹⁸ as well as the Manichaeans, who taught that everything that happens has to happen just so and could not happen in any other way, and that people do everything that they do, even in external things, under coercion and that they are coerced to do evil works and deeds, such as fornication, robbery, murder, thievery, and the like.

2. We also reject the error of the crass Pelagians, who taught that human beings could convert themselves to God, believe the gospel, be obedient to God's law with their whole hearts, and thus merit forgiveness of sins and eternal life out of their own powers apart from the grace of the Holy Spirit.

3. We also reject the error of the Semi-Pelagians, who teach that human beings can initiate their conversion by means of their own powers, but cannot complete it without the grace of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹

*

⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

[John 15:5 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁶ If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!

[1 Corinthians 9:16 \(NRSV\)](#)

¹⁸ This ancient philosophical system was used by theologians, especially in Melancthon's circle, to designate all views of absolute necessity.

¹⁹ So the concordists understood most late-medieval theologians, such as Gabriel Biel, whose writings had had wide influence in early-sixteenth-century Germany, including on Luther.

4. Likewise, the teaching that, although human beings are too weak to initiate conversion with their free will before rebirth, and thus convert themselves to God on the basis of their own natural powers and be obedient to God's law with their whole hearts, nonetheless, once the Holy Spirit has made a beginning through the preaching of the Word and in it has offered his grace, the human will is able out of its own natural powers to a certain degree, even though small and feeble, to do something, to help and cooperate, to dispose and prepare itself for grace, to grasp this grace, to accept it, and to believe the gospel.²⁰

5. Likewise, that the human being, after rebirth, can keep God's law perfectly and fulfill it completely, and that this fulfilling of the law constitutes our righteousness before God, with which we merit eternal life.²¹

6. Likewise, we also reject and condemn the error of the Enthusiasts, who contrive the idea that God draws people to himself, enlightens them, makes them righteous, and saves them without means, without the hearing of God's Word, even without the use of the holy sacraments.²²

7. Likewise, that in conversion and new birth God completely destroys the substance and essence of the old creature, especially the rational soul, and creates a new essence of the soul out of nothing.

8. Likewise, when this wording is used without explanation: that the human will resists the Holy Spirit before, in, and after conversion, and that the Holy Spirit is given to those who intentionally and stubbornly resist him. For, as Augustine says, in conversion God makes willing people out of the unwilling and dwells in the willing.²³

Some ancient and modern teachers of the church have used expressions such as, "Deus trahit, sed volentem trahit," that is, "God draws, but he draws those who are willing"; and "Hominis voluntas in conversione non est otiosa, sed agit aliquid," that is, "The human will is not idle in conversion but also is doing something." Because such expressions have been introduced as confirmation of the natural free will in conversion contrary to the teaching of God's grace, we hold that these expressions do not correspond to the form of sound teaching, and therefore it is proper to avoid them when speaking of conversion to God.

20 A reference to Philippistic synergism, for instance, in the teaching of Johann Pfeffinger and Viktorin Strigel.

21 Against the perfectionism of certain Anabaptist groups and certain elements of Roman Catholic popular piety, particularly within monastic orders.

22 A marginal note designates this the view of "Enthusiasts [who] are those who await heavenly enlightenment of the Spirit without the preaching of God's Word." See also CA V.

23 Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* I, 19, 37 (MPL 44:568; NPNF, ser. 1, 5:389).

On the other hand, it is correct to say that in conversion God changes recalcitrant, unwilling people into willing people through the drawing power of the Holy Spirit, and that after this conversion the reborn human will is not idle in the daily exercise of repentance, but cooperates in all the works of the Holy Spirit which he performs through us.

9. Likewise, when Dr. Luther wrote that the human will conducts itself *pure passive* (that is, that it does absolutely nothing at all), that must be understood *respectu divinae gratiae in accendendis novis motibus*,²⁴ that is, insofar as God's Spirit takes hold of the human will through the Word that is heard or through the use of the holy sacraments and effects new birth and conversion. For when the Holy Spirit has effected and accomplished new birth and conversion and has altered and renewed the human will solely through his divine power and activity, then the new human will is an instrument and tool of God the Holy Spirit, in that the will not only accepts grace but also cooperates with the Holy Spirit in the works that proceed from it.

Therefore, before the conversion of the human being there are only two efficient causes, the Holy Spirit and God's Word as the instrument of the Holy Spirit, through which he effects conversion; the human creature must hear this Word, but cannot believe and accept it on the basis of its own powers but only through the grace and action of God the Holy Spirit.²⁵

III.

Concerning the Righteousness of Faith before God

Status controversiae

The Chief Question in This Dispute²⁶

Our churches unanimously confess on the basis of God's Word and in accord with the content of the Augsburg Confession that we poor sinners become righteous before God and are saved only through faith in Christ, and that therefore Christ alone is our righteousness. He is truly God and human because in him the divine and human natures are personally united with each other (Jer. 23[:6*]; 1 Cor. 1[:30*]; 2 Cor. 5[:21*]). Because of this confession, the question arose:

24 "Purely passively" and "in respect to divine grace in the creation of new movements."

25 A reference to Melancthon's *Loci communes* of 1535 and 1543, where he counted three Aristotelian factors (Latin: *causae*)—namely, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the will itself—in describing the Spirit's action of using the Word on the will to effect conversion and repentance.

26 On the parties involved in this dispute, see SD III, 562 nn. 101–103, below.

*

⁶ In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

Jeremiah 23:6 (NRSV)

According to which nature is Christ our righteousness? Thus, two mutually contradictory errors emerged in some churches.

The one party held that Christ is our righteousness only according to his divinity, when he dwells in us through faith. In comparison to this divinity which dwells in us through faith, the sins of all human creatures are to be regarded as a drop of water compared to a huge sea. On the other side, some have held that Christ is our righteousness before God only according to his human nature.

Affirmative Theses

The Pure Teaching of the Christian Church against Both These Errors

1. Against both of these errors we believe, teach, and confess unanimously that Christ is our righteousness neither according to his divine nature alone nor according to his human nature alone. On the contrary, the whole Christ, according to both natures, is our righteousness, solely in his obedience that he rendered his Father as both God and a human being, an obedience unto death. Through this obedience he earned the forgiveness of sins and eternal life for us, as it is written, “Just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5[:19*]).

2. Accordingly, we believe, teach, and confess that our righteousness before God consists in this, that God forgives us our sins by sheer grace, without any works, merit, or worthiness of our own, in the past, at present, or in the future, that he gives us and reckons to us the righteousness

*

³⁰ He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

[1 Corinthians 1:30 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[2 Corinthians 5:21 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁹ For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

[Romans 5:19 \(NRSV\)](#)

of Christ's obedience and that, because of this righteousness, we are accepted by God into grace and regarded as righteous.

3. We believe, teach, and confess that faith alone is the means and instrument through which we lay hold of Christ and, thus, in Christ lay hold of this "righteousness which avails before God."²⁷ Because of him "faith is reckoned to us as righteousness" (Rom. 4[:5*]).

4. We believe, teach, and confess that this faith is not a mere knowledge of the stories about Christ. It is instead a gift of God, through which in the Word of the gospel we recognize Christ truly as our redeemer and trust in him, so that solely because of his obedience, by grace, we have the forgiveness of sins, are regarded as godly and righteous by God the Father, and have eternal life.

5. We believe, teach, and confess that according to the usage of Holy Scripture the word "to justify" in this article means "to absolve," that is, "to pronounce free from sin": "One who justifies the wicked and one who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 17[:15*]); "Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies" (Rom. 8[:33*]). When in place of this the words *regeneratio* and *vivificatio*, that is "new birth" and "making alive," are used as synonyms of justification, as happens in the Apology, then they are to be understood in this same sense. Otherwise, they should be understood as the renewal of the human being and should be differentiated from "justification by faith."

6. We believe, teach, and confess that in spite of the fact that until death a great deal of weakness and frailty still cling to those who believe in Christ and are truly reborn, they should

27 Citing Romans 1:17* from the Luther Bible.

*

⁵ But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

[Romans 4:5 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁵ One who justifies the wicked and one who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord.

[Proverbs 17:15 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

[Romans 8:33 \(NRSV\)](#)

not doubt their righteousness, which is reckoned to them through faith, nor the salvation of their souls, but they should regard it as certain that they have a gracious God for Christ's sake, on the basis of the promise and the Word of the holy gospel.

7. We believe, teach, and confess that for the retention of pure teaching concerning the righteousness of faith before God, it is particularly important to hold steadfastly to the *particulae exclusivae*,²⁸ that is, the following expressions of the holy apostle Paul that completely separate the merit of Christ from our works and give honor to Christ alone. The holy apostle Paul writes, "by grace," "without merit," "apart from the law," "apart from works," "not through works," etc. These expressions all mean nothing other than that we become righteous and receive salvation "alone through faith" in Christ.

8. We believe, teach, and confess that although the contrition that precedes justification and the good works that follow it do not belong in the article on justification before God, nevertheless, a person should not concoct a kind of faith that can exist and remain with and alongside an evil intention to sin and to act against the conscience. Instead, after a person has been justified by faith, there then exists a true, living "faith working through love" (Gal. 5[:6*]). That means that good works always follow justifying faith and are certainly found with it, when it is a true and living faith. For faith is never alone but is always accompanied by love and hope.

Antithesis or Negative Theses

Rejection of Contrary Teaching

Therefore we reject and condemn all the following errors:

1. That Christ is our righteousness only according to the divine nature, etc.²⁹

2. That Christ is our righteousness only according to the human nature, etc.³⁰

3. That in texts from the prophets and apostles, when they speak of the righteousness of faith, the words "to justify" and "to be justified" are not supposed to mean "to pronounce free from sin" or "to be pronounced free from sin" and "to receive the forgiveness of sins." Instead they

²⁸ "exclusive terms."

*

⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love.

Galatians 5:6 (NRSV)

²⁹ The position of Andrew Osiander.

³⁰ The position of Francesco Stancaro.

mean to be made righteous before God in fact on account of the love and virtues which are infused by the Holy Spirit and through the works which result from this infusion.³¹

4. That faith should look not only to the obedience of Christ but also to his divine nature, as it dwells in us and produces results, and that through this indwelling our sins are covered.³²

5. That faith is the kind of trust in Christ's obedience that can exist and remain in a person who does not truly repent, demonstrates no love resulting from this faith, and perseveres in sin against the conscience.

6. That not God himself but only the gifts of God dwell in believers.

7. That faith saves because renewal, which consists in love toward God and the neighbor, has begun in us through this faith.

8. That faith has the primary role in justification, but at the same time renewal and love also constitute a part of our righteousness before God in this way, that although they are not the most important cause of our righteousness, nevertheless, our righteousness before God cannot be complete or perfect without such love and renewal.

9. That believers are both justified before God and receive salvation through the righteousness of Christ reckoned to them and through the new obedience which has begun in them, or partly through the reckoning of Christ's righteousness to them and partly through this new obedience which has begun in them.

10. That the promise of grace is made our own through faith in the heart and through the confession of the mouth and through other virtues.

11. That faith does not justify without good works, that is, that good works are necessarily required for righteousness, and without their presence a person cannot be justified.³³

IV. Concerning Good Works

Status controversiae

31 The concordists' summary of the teaching of the Roman Catholic party, for example, in the Augsburg Interim and at the Council of Trent. See SD III, 563, n. 107; 567–69, nn. 114–118; 570–71, nn. 122–128; 573, nn. 131–133.

32 The position of Andrew Osiander.

33 Points 7–11 represent views which Lutherans had criticized in Roman Catholic theological writings of the period.

The Chief Question in the Controversy over Good Works³⁴

Regarding the teaching on good works two controversies arose in some churches:

First some theologians split over the following expressions. The first party wrote: good works are necessary for salvation; it is impossible to be saved without good works; and no one has ever been saved without good works. Against this position the other party wrote: good works are harmful to salvation.

Later a split occurred among some theologians over the two words “necessary” and “free.” One party argued that the word “necessary” should not be used in regard to new obedience, which does not flow from necessity and compulsion but rather from a spontaneous spirit. The other party retained the word “necessary” because such obedience is not subject to our discretion, but rather reborn human beings are bound to render such obedience.

From this semantic argument a further controversy developed over the substance of the matter, when one party argued that the law should not be preached at all among Christians but people should be admonished to do good works only on the basis of the holy gospel. The other party contradicted this position.

Affirmative Theses

The Pure Teaching of the Christian Churches concerning This Controversy

As a thoroughgoing explanation and disposition of this dispute, it is our teaching, faith, and confession:

1. That good works follow from true faith (when it is not a dead faith but a living faith), as certainly and without doubt as fruit from a good tree.

2. We also believe, teach, and confess that at the same time, good works must be completely excluded from any questions of salvation as well as from the article on our justification before God, as the apostle testifies in clear terms, “So also David declares that salvation pertains to that person alone to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works, saying, ‘Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered’ ” (Rom. 4[:6–8*]),³⁵ and also, “For by

³⁴ On the parties involved in this dispute, see SD IV, 574–75, nn. 137–140, below.

*

⁶ So also David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works:

⁷ “Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;

⁸ blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon sin.”

grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2[:8–9*]).

3. We also believe, teach, and confess that all people, particularly those who have been reborn and renewed through the Holy Spirit, are obligated to do good works.

4. In this sense the words “necessary,” “should,” and “must” are used correctly, in Christian fashion, also in regard to the reborn; in no way is such use contrary to the pattern of sound words and speech.

5. Of course, the words *necessitas*, *necessarium* (“necessity” and “necessary”) are not to be understood as a compulsion when they are applied to the reborn, but only as the required obedience, which they perform out of a spontaneous spirit—not because of the compulsion or coercion of the law—because they are “no longer under the law, but under grace” [Rom. 6:14*].

6. Accordingly, we also believe, teach, and confess that when it is said that “the reborn do good works from a free spirit,” that is not to be understood as if it were up to the discretion of the reborn human beings to do good or not to do good as they wish, and that they would nevertheless retain their faith even as they deliberately persist in sin.

7. This is, of course, not to be understood in any other way than as the Lord Christ and his apostles themselves explain it, that is, regarding the liberated spirit, which acts not out of fear of punishment, like a slave, but out of the love of righteousness, as children (Rom. 8[:15*]).

[Romans 4:6–8 \(NRSV\)](#)

35 Cited according to the Luther Bible, with quotation from Psalm 32:1*.

*

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—

⁹ not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

[Ephesians 2:8–9 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

[Romans 6:14 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!”

8. However, in the elect children of God this spontaneity is not perfect but is encumbered with great weakness, as St. Paul complains about himself in Romans 7[:14–25*] and Galatians 5[:17*].

9. Of course, because of Christ, the Lord does not reckon this weakness against his elect, as it is written, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8[:1*]).

Romans 8:15 (NRSV)

*

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin.

¹⁵ I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good.

¹⁷ But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.

¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.

²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand.

²² For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self,

²³ but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

Romans 7:14–25 (NRSV)

*

¹⁷ For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.

Galatians 5:17 (NRSV)

10. We also believe, teach, and confess that not our works, but only God’s Spirit, working through faith, preserves faith and salvation in us. Good works are a testimony of his presence and indwelling.

Negative Theses

False and Contrary Teaching

1. Accordingly, we reject and condemn the following manner of speaking: when it is taught and written that good works are necessary for salvation; or that no one has ever been saved without good works; or that it is impossible to be saved without good works.³⁶

2. We also reject and condemn the bald expression that “good works are harmful to salvation” as offensive and harmful to Christian discipline.³⁷

For particularly in these last times it is no less necessary to admonish the people to Christian discipline and good works and to remind them how necessary it is that they practice good works as a demonstration of their faith and their gratitude to God than it is to admonish them that works not be mingled with the article on justification. For people can be damned by an Epicurean delusion about faith just as much as by the papistic, Pharisaic trust in their own works and merit.

3. We also reject and condemn the teaching that faith and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are not lost through intentional sin, but that the saints and elect retain the Holy Spirit even when they fall into adultery and other sins and persist in them.

V Concerning Law and Gospel

Status controversiae

The Chief Question in This Dispute³⁸

*

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[Romans 8:1 \(NRSV\)](#)

³⁶ The terminology advocated by George Major.

³⁷ Luther’s expression, which Nicholas von Amsdorf used in the Majoristic controversy.

³⁸ On the parties involved in this dispute, see SD V, 581–82 nn. 154–155, below.

Whether the preaching of the holy gospel is really not only a preaching of grace, which proclaims the forgiveness of sins, but also a preaching of repentance and rebuke, which condemns unbelief (something condemned not in the law but only by the gospel).

Affirmative Theses

The Pure Teaching of God's Word

1. We believe, teach, and confess that the distinction between law and gospel is to be preserved with great diligence in the church as an especially glorious light, through which the Word of God, in accord with Paul's admonition, is properly divided.³⁹

2. We believe, teach, and confess that the law is, strictly speaking, a divine teaching which gives instruction regarding what is right and God-pleasing and condemns everything that is sin and contrary to God's will.

3. Therefore, everything that condemns sin is and belongs to the proclamation of the law.

4. However, the gospel is, strictly speaking, the kind of teaching that reveals what the human being, who has not kept the law and has been condemned by it, should believe: that Christ has atoned and paid for all sins and apart from any human merit has obtained and won for people the forgiveness of sins, "the righteousness which avails before God,"⁴⁰ and eternal life.

5. However, because the word "gospel" is not used in just one sense in the Holy Scripture—the reason this dispute arose in the first place—we believe, teach, and confess that when the word "gospel" is used for the entire teaching of Christ, which he presented in his teaching ministry, as did his apostles in theirs (it is used in this sense in Mark 1[:15*], Acts 20[:24*]),

³⁹ See 2 Timothy 2:15*, where in the Luther Bible and its marginal notation "rightly explaining" is translated "rightly dividing" law and gospel.

⁴⁰ Romans 1:17* according to the Luther Bible.

*

¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

[Mark 1:15 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²⁴ But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace.

[Acts 20:24 \(NRSV\)](#)

then it is correct to say or to write that the gospel is a proclamation of both repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

6. When, however, law and gospel are placed in contrast to each other—as when Moses himself is spoken of as a teacher of the law and Christ as a preacher of the gospel—we believe, teach, and confess that the gospel is not a proclamation of repentance or retribution, but is, strictly speaking, nothing else than a proclamation of comfort and a joyous message which does not rebuke nor terrify but comforts consciences against the terror of the law, directs them solely to Christ’s merit, and lifts them up again through the delightful proclamation of the grace and favor of God, won through Christ’s merit.

7. In regard to the disclosure of sin: the veil of Moses [2 Cor. 3:13–16*] hangs in front of the eyes of all people as long as they only hear the preaching of the law and nothing of Christ, and thus they never learn to recognize the true nature of their sin from the law. Instead, they either become presumptuous hypocrites, like the Pharisees, or they despair, like Judas. Therefore Christ takes the law in his hands and interprets it spiritually (Matt. 5[:21–48*]; Rom. 7[:14*]). Thus,

*

¹³ not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside.

¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside.

¹⁵ Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds;

¹⁶ but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

[2 Corinthians 3:13–16 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’

²² But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire.

²³ So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you,

²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison.

²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹ “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’

³² But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³ “Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’

³⁴ But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,

³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

³⁷ Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’

³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also;

⁴⁰ and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well;

⁴¹ and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.

⁴² Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.

God's wrath, in all its enormity [Rom. 1:18*], is revealed from heaven upon all sinners; through this revelation they are directed to the law, and only then do they learn properly to recognize their sin through the law. Moses would never have been able to wring this acknowledgment out of them.

Therefore, it is true that the proclamation of the suffering and death of Christ, God's Son, is a sobering and terrifying proclamation and testimony of God's wrath. Through it people now are really led into the law, after the veil of Moses is taken away from them, so that they now really recognize what great things God demands from us in the law (none of which we can keep), and that we therefore should seek all our righteousness in Christ.

8. Nonetheless, as long as all of this (that is, Christ's suffering and death) proclaims God's wrath and terrifies people, it is still not, strictly speaking, the preaching of the gospel, but the preaching of Moses and the law and is thus an alien work of Christ, through which he comes to his proper function, which is the preaching of grace, comforting, and making alive. This, strictly speaking, is the preaching of the gospel.

Negative Thesis

Contrary Teaching, to Be Rejected

1. Accordingly, we reject and regard it as incorrect and harmful when it is taught that the gospel is, strictly speaking, a proclamation of repentance or retribution and not exclusively a

⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

[Matthew 5:21–48 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin.

[Romans 7:14 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth.

[Romans 1:18 \(NRSV\)](#)

proclamation of grace. For in this way the gospel is again made into a teaching of the law, the merit of Christ and the Holy Scriptures are obscured, Christians are robbed of true comfort, and the door is opened again to the papacy.⁴¹

VI. Concerning the Third Use of the Law

Status controversiae

The Chief Question concerning This Controversy⁴²

The law has been given to people for three reasons: first, that through it external discipline may be maintained against the unruly and the disobedient; second, that people may be led through it to a recognition of their sins; third, after they have been reborn—since nevertheless the flesh still clings to them—that precisely because of the flesh they may have a sure guide, according to which they can orient and conduct their entire life. In this connection a dispute occurred among a few theologians over the third use of the law.

It concerned whether the law is to be urged upon the reborn Christians or not. The one party said yes, the other no.

Affirmative Theses

The Correct Christian Teaching concerning This Controversy

1. We believe, teach, and confess that, although people who truly believe in Christ and are genuinely converted to God have been liberated and set free from the curse and compulsion of the law through Christ, they indeed are not for that reason without the law. Instead, they have been redeemed by the Son of God so that they may practice the law day and night (Ps. 119[:1*]). For our first parents did not live without the law even before the fall. This law of God was written into the heart, for they were created in the image of God.⁴³

⁴¹ See SD V, 586 below.

⁴² On the parties involved in this dispute, see SD VI, 587 nn. 165–166, below.

*

¹ Happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.

[Psalm 119:1 \(NRSV\)](#)

⁴³ Genesis 1:26*.

2. We believe, teach, and confess that the proclamation of the law is to be diligently impressed not only upon unbelievers and the unrepentant but also upon those who believe in Christ and are truly converted, reborn, and justified through faith.

3. For even if they are reborn and “renewed in the spirit of their minds” [Eph. 4:23*], this rebirth and renewal is not perfect in this world. Instead, it has only begun. Believers are engaged with the spirit of their minds in continual battle against the flesh, that is, against the perverted nature and character which clings to us until death and which because of the old creature is still lodged in the human understanding, will, and all human powers. In order that people do not resolve to perform service to God on the basis of their pious imagination in an arbitrary way of their own choosing, it is necessary for the law of God constantly to light their way. Likewise, it is necessary so that the old creature not act according to its own will but instead be compelled against its own will, not only through the admonition and threats of the law but also with punishments and plagues, to follow the Spirit and let itself be made captive (1 Cor. 9[:27*]; Rom. 6[:12*]; Gal. 6[:14*]; Ps. 119[:1*]; Heb. 13[:21*]).⁴⁴

*

²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,

[Ephesians 4:23 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²⁷ but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.

[1 Corinthians 9:27 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹² Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.

[Romans 6:12 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁴ May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

[Galatians 6:14 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹ Happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.

4. Concerning the difference between the works of the law and the fruits of the Spirit, we believe, teach, and confess that the works performed according to the law remain works of the law and should be so called, as long as they are coerced out of people only through the pressure of punishment and the threat of God's wrath.

5. The fruits of the Spirit, however, are the works that the Spirit of God, who dwells in believers, effects through the reborn; they are done by believers (insofar as they are reborn) as if they knew of no command, threat, or reward. In this manner the children of God live in the law and walk according to the law of God—what St. Paul in his epistles calls the law of Christ and the law of the mind. And yet they are “not under the law but under grace” (Rom. 7[:23*] and 8[:1*, 14*]).

6. Therefore, for both the repentant and unrepentant, for the reborn and those not reborn, the law is and remains one single law, the unchangeable will of God. In terms of obedience to it there is a difference only in that those people who are not yet reborn do what the law demands

[Psalm 119:1 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²¹ make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

[Hebrews 13:21 \(NRSV\)](#)

44 Here it is clear how intensively the concordists wrestled with the practical problems of the application of law and gospel at the parish level.

*

²³ but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

[Romans 7:23 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[Romans 8:1 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

[Romans 8:14 \(NRSV\)](#)

unwillingly, because they are coerced (as is also the case with the reborn with respect to the flesh). Believers, however, do without coercion, with a willing spirit, insofar as they are born anew, what no threat of the law could ever force from them.

Negative Theses

False and Contrary Teaching

1. Therefore, we reject as contrary teaching and error, which harm Christian discipline and true piety, the teaching that the law should be preached in the way and extent described above only among unbelievers, non-Christians, and the unrepentant, not among Christians and those who truly believe in Christ.

VII. Concerning the Holy Supper of Christ

Although those who teach Zwinglian doctrine are not to be counted among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession—since they separated themselves from this confession immediately, at the time it was presented—we, nonetheless, want to report on this controversy because they are insinuating themselves and spreading their error under the name of this Christian confession.⁴⁵

Status controversiae

The Chief Issue between Us and the Teaching of the Sacramentarians on This Article

In the Holy Supper are the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ truly and essentially present, distributed with the bread and wine, and received by mouth by all those who avail themselves of the sacrament—whether they are worthy or unworthy, godly or ungodly, believers or unbelievers—to bring believers comfort and life and to bring judgment upon unbelievers?

The sacramentarians say no; we say yes.

45 Although this article focuses chiefly on the “Crypto-Philippist” party within “Lutheran” ranks, above all in electoral Saxony, the concordists combine specific polemic directed against the Crypto-Philippists’ writings and positions with a repetition of the rejection of the teachings of Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger of Zurich, John Calvin and Theodore Beza of Geneva, the theologians at the court of Elector Frederick III of the Palatinate in Heidelberg, and other “Calvinist” or Reformed theologians. On the parties involved in this dispute, see SD VII, 592 n.172, below.

To explain this controversy, it must first of all be noted that there are two kinds of sacramentarians. There are the crude sacramentarians,⁴⁶ who state in plain language what they believe in their hearts: that in the Holy Supper there is nothing more than bread and wine present, nothing more distributed and received with the mouth. Then there are the cunning sacramentarians,⁴⁷ the most dangerous kind, who in part appear to use our language and who pretend that they also believe in a true presence of the true, essential, living body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper, but that this takes place spiritually, through faith. Yet, under the guise of such plausible words, they retain the former, crude opinion, that nothing more than bread and wine is present in the Holy Supper and received there by mouth.

For “spiritually” means to them nothing other than “the spirit of Christ” that is present, or “the power of the absent body of Christ and his merit.” The body of Christ, according to this opinion, is, however, in no way or form present, but it is only up there in the highest heaven; to this body we lift ourselves into heaven through the thoughts of our faith. There we should seek his body and blood, but never in the bread and wine of the Supper.

Affirmative Theses

The Confession of Pure Teaching concerning the Holy Supper, against the Sacramentarians⁴⁸

1. We believe, teach, and confess that in the Holy Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and essentially present, truly distributed and received with the bread and wine.

2. We believe, teach, and confess that the words of the testament of Christ are not to be understood in any other way than the way they literally sound, that is, not that the bread symbolizes the absent body and the wine the absent blood of Christ, but that they are truly the true body and blood of Christ because of the sacramental union.

3. Concerning the consecration, we believe, teach, and confess that neither human effort nor the recitation of the minister effect this presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper, but that it is to be attributed solely and alone to the almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

46 A reference to the theologians of Geneva, Zurich, Heidelberg, and other centers of Reformed teaching.

47 The “Crypto-Philippists.”

48 In these affirmative theses the concordists set forth their summary of Luther’s teaching concerning the Lord’s Supper. See SD VII, 598 nn. 191–193; 600, n. 197; 609–11, nn. 216–220. These theses emphasize the real sacramental presence of Christ’s body and blood with the elements of the sacrament, the oral reception (*manducatio oralis*), and the reception of Christ’s body and blood by unbelievers and believers alike (*manducatio impiorum* or *indignorum*); the last point rests on the Lutheran conviction that the words of consecration, by virtue of Christ’s command and promise, not the faith of the believer, render Christ’s body and blood present.

4. In addition, we believe, teach, and hold with one accord that in the use of the Holy Supper the words of Christ's institution may under no circumstances be omitted but must be spoken publicly, as it is written, "The cup of blessing that we bless . . ." (1 Cor. 11 [10:16*]). This blessing takes place through the pronouncement of the words of Christ.

5. The reasons for our position against the sacramentarians on this matter are those which Dr. Luther set forth in his *Great Confession*: "The first [reason for his position] is this article of our faith, that Jesus Christ is true, essential, natural, complete God and human being in one person, undivided and inseparable. The second, that the right hand of God is everywhere." Christ, really and truly placed at this right hand of God according to his human nature, rules presently and has in his hands and under his feet everything in heaven and on earth. No other human being, no angel, but only Mary's son, is so placed at the right hand of God, and on this basis he is able to do these things. "The third, that the Word of God is not false or deceitful. The fourth that God has and knows various ways to be present at a certain place, not only the single one . . . , which the philosophers call 'local' " or spatial."⁴⁹

6. We believe, teach, and confess that the body and blood of Christ are received not only spiritually through faith but also orally with the bread and wine, though not in Capernaite fashion but rather in a supernatural, heavenly way because of the sacramental union of the elements.⁵⁰ The words of Christ clearly demonstrate this, when Christ said, "take, eat, and drink," and the apostles did this. For it is written, "and they all drank from it" (Mark 14[:23*]). Likewise, Saint Paul says, "The bread, which we break, is a Communion with the body of

*

¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?

[1 Corinthians 10:16 \(NRSV\)](#)

49 *Confession concerning Christ's Supper* (1528) (WA 26:326, 29–327, 20; LW 37:214). Luther uses the Latin *locale* for any substance restricted to a fixed and definite space not shared with any other substance.

50 The sacramentarians charged that as the people in Capernaum interpreted Christ's words as referring to a physical eating (John 6:58*), so the Lutheran doctrine meant that communicants "tear the flesh of Christ with their teeth and digest it as other food." Some even condemned the Lutheran teaching as "cannibalistic."

*

²³ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it.

[Mark 14:23 \(NRSV\)](#)

Christ” [1 Cor. 10:16*], that is, who eats this bread eats the body of Christ. The leading teachers of the ancient church—Chrysostom, Cyprian, Leo I, Gregory, Ambrose, Augustine, and others—unanimously testify to this.⁵¹

7. We believe, teach, and confess that not only those who truly believe and are worthy, but also the unworthy and unbelievers receive the true body and blood of Christ, though they do not receive life and comfort, but rather judgment and damnation, if they do not turn and repent.

For though they reject Christ as a savior, they still must, against their will, accept him as a harsh judge, who is just as much present to exercise and visit judgment upon unrepentant guests as he is to bestow life and comfort upon the hearts of those who truly believe and are worthy guests.

8. We believe, teach, and confess that there is only one kind of unworthy guest, those who do not believe.⁵² Of them it is written, “Those who do not believe are condemned already” [John 3:18*]. The unworthy use of the holy sacrament increases, magnifies, and aggravates this condemnation (1 Cor. 11[:27*, 29*]).

*

¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?

[1 Corinthians 10:16 \(NRSV\)](#)

51 The references are listed below, SD VII, 603–4 n. 200 and 605 n. 203.

52 Martin Bucer had distinguished “unworthy” believers (*indigni*) from “ungodly” nonbelievers (*impij*). The concordists here reject that distinction.

*

¹⁸ Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

[John 3:18 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.

[1 Corinthians 11:27 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

9. We believe, teach, and confess that no genuine believers—no matter how weak—as long as they retain a living faith, receive the Holy Supper as condemnation. For Christ instituted this supper particularly for Christians who are weak in faith but repentant, to comfort them and to strengthen their weak faith.

10. We believe, teach, and confess that the entire worthiness of the guests at the table of his heavenly meal is and consists alone in the most holy obedience and perfect merit of Christ. We make his obedience and merit our own through true faith, concerning which we receive assurance through the sacrament. Worthiness consists in no way in our own virtues, or in internal or external preparations.

Negative Theses

The Contrary, Condemned Teaching of the Sacramentarians

On the other hand, we unanimously reject and condemn all the following erroneous articles, which oppose and are contrary to the teaching presented here, the simple belief and confession regarding the Supper of Christ:

1. The papal transubstantiation, when it is taught in the papacy that bread and wine in the Holy Supper lose their substance and natural essence and thus cease to exist, in such a way that the bread is transformed into the body of Christ and only its outward form remains.⁵³

2. The papal sacrifice of the Mass for the sins of the living and the dead.⁵⁴

3. That the laity are given only one of the sacramental elements and that against the clear words of the testament of Christ the chalice is kept from them and they are robbed of the blood of Christ.⁵⁵

4. When it is taught that the words of Christ's testament ought not to be understood or believed simply as they sound, but that they are an obscure expression, the meaning of which must be sought in other passages.⁵⁶

²⁹ For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves.

[1 Corinthians 11:29 \(NRSV\)](#)

⁵³ Council of Trent, Session 13, chaps. 4, 5, canons 2, 4, 6.

⁵⁴ Council of Trent, Session 22, chap. 2, canon 3.

⁵⁵ Council of Trent, Session 21, chap. 1, canons 1–3.

⁵⁶ Par. 25–37 represent views of either Zwinglian, Calvinist, or “Crypto-Philippist” theologians; see references in SD VII, 612–15 nn. 227–240, below.

5. That the body of Christ in the holy sacrament is not received orally with the bread, but only bread and wine are received by mouth; the body of Christ, however, is received only spiritually, through faith.

6. That the bread and wine in the Holy Supper are no more than distinguishing marks, through which Christians recognize each other.

7. That the bread and wine are only representations, similes, and symbols of the far-distant body and blood of Christ.

8. That the bread and wine are no more than a reminder, a seal, or a guarantee, through which we are assured that when faith soars into heaven, it will participate there in the body and blood of Christ as truly as we eat and drink bread and wine in the Supper.

9. That the assurance and confirmation of our faith in the Holy Supper take place only through the outward signs of bread and wine, and not through the true body and blood of Christ present there.

10. That in the Holy Supper only the power, effect, or merit of the absent body and blood of Christ are distributed.

11. That the body of Christ is enclosed in heaven, so that it can in no way be present at the same time in many or all places on earth where his Holy Supper is being conducted.

12. That Christ could not have promised the essential presence of his body and blood in the Holy Supper, nor could he make that possible, because the nature and characteristics of the assumed human nature would not permit or allow that.

13. That God, even on the basis of his total omnipotence (a dreadful statement!), cannot possibly make his body to be essentially present in more than one place at one particular time.

14. That not the almighty words of the testament of Christ, but rather faith, effects and creates the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper.

15. That believers should not look for the body of Christ in the bread and wine of the Holy Supper but should instead lift their eyes from the bread to heaven and look there for the body of Christ.

16. That unbelieving, unrepentant Christians do not receive the true body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper but only the bread and wine.

17. That the worthiness of the guests at this heavenly meal consists not only in true faith in Christ but indeed also in people's outward preparation.⁵⁷

57 Par. 38–40 return to criticize certain Roman Catholic practices.

18. That those who truly believe, who have and retain a true, living, pure faith in Christ, can receive this sacrament to their judgment, simply because they are still imperfect in their outward way of life.

19. That the outward, visible elements of bread and wine in the holy sacrament should be adored.

20. Likewise, we commend to the proper judgment of God all impudent, sarcastic, blasphemous questions and expressions, which we will not recite for the sake of propriety and which the sacramentarians utter in a crude, carnal, Capernaitic, and detestable manner, blasphemously, and with great offense concerning the supernatural, celestial mysteries of this sacrament.

21. We also hereby completely condemn the Capernaitic eating of the body of Christ. It suggests that his flesh is chewed up with the teeth and digested like other food. The sacramentarians maliciously attribute this view to us against the witness of their own conscience, despite our many protests. In this way they make our teaching detestable among their hearers. On the contrary, on the basis of the simple words of Christ's testament, we hold and teach the true, but supernatural, eating of the body of Christ and the drinking of his blood. Human reason and understanding cannot grasp this, but our understanding must be taken captive by obedience to Christ here as in all other articles of faith. Such a mystery cannot be grasped except by faith and is revealed alone in the Word.

VIII. Concerning the Person of Christ

Out of the controversy regarding the Holy Supper there arose a disagreement between the theologians of the Augsburg Confession who teach purely and the Calvinists (who also led some other theologians astray) over the person of Christ, the two natures in Christ, and their characteristics.

Status controversiae Chief Issues of Disagreement in This Dispute⁵⁸

The chief question was whether on the basis of the personal union the divine and human natures—and likewise the characteristics of each—are intimately linked with each other within the person of Christ, in reality (that is, in fact and in truth), and to what extent they are intimately linked?

⁵⁸ On the parties involved in this dispute, see SD VII, 592 n. 172, below. The controversies over the Lord's Supper and over Christology in the period after Luther's death are so intimately intertwined that they cannot be separated.

The sacramentarians contended that the divine and human natures are united in the one person in such a way that neither nature in reality (that is, in fact and in truth) shares with the other what is unique to that nature.⁵⁹ Instead, they have only the name in common. For they say that *unio* simply “causes the names to be held in common,” that is, the personal union results in nothing more than the sharing of their names. That is to say, God is called a human being and the human being God. In other words, they claim that God has nothing to do with humanity, and humanity has nothing to do with the divinity or with its majesty and characteristics in reality (that is, in fact and in truth). Dr. Luther and those who supported him defended the opposite position against the sacramentarians.

Affirmative Theses

The Pure Teaching of the Christian Church on the Person of Christ

To explain and settle this dispute according to the guidance of our Christian faith, we teach, believe, and confess the following:

1. That the divine and human natures in Christ are personally united, and therefore, that there are not two Christs (one the Son of God and the other the Son of Man), but one single Son of God and Son of Man (Luke 1[:31–35*]; Rom. 9[:5*]).

59 These views were represented in various forms in works published by electoral Saxon theologians in the early 1570s: the *Von der person und Menschwerdung unsers Herrn Jhesu Christi/Der waren christlichen Kirchen Grundfest* (On the person and the incarnation of Christ . . . a firm basis) (2d ed., 1571); the *Dresdener Abschied* (Dresden Recess) of 10 October 1571; and the *Exegesis perspicua & ferme integra controuersiae de sacra coena* of 1574. Although it was seldom directly cited, Martin Chemnitz’s *De duabus naturis in Christo* (On the two natures in Christ) (1570; 2d ed., 1578) had developed the ideas expressed in the position of the concordists. This position represents the concordists’ interpretation of Luther’s Christology; see SD VIII, 617–24 and nn. 250–278. The concordists laid out their defense of their christological teaching on the basis of patristic sources in the *Catalog of Testimonies*, which was published with some editions of the Book of Concord in 1580.

*

³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.

³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

³⁴ Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

2. We believe, teach, and confess that the divine and human natures are not blended together into one essence. Neither is one transformed into the other. Rather, each retains its own essential characteristics, which never become the characteristics of the other nature.

3. The characteristics of the divine nature are: that it is almighty, eternal, infinite, present everywhere (according to the characteristics of the nature and its natural essence, in and of itself), all-knowing, etc. These never become the characteristics of the human nature.

4. The characteristics of the human nature are: being a bodily creature, being flesh and blood, being finite and circumscribed, suffering, dying, ascending, descending, moving from one place to another, suffering from hunger, thirst, cold, heat, and the like. These never become characteristics of the divine nature.

5. Since both natures are personally united (that is, united in one person), we believe, teach, and confess that this union is not a connection or association of the sort that neither nature shares things with the other personally (that is, because of the personal union), as if two boards were glued together, with neither giving the other anything or receiving anything from the other. Instead, here is the most complete Communion, which God truly has with this human being; out of this personal union and out of the most complete and most indescribable communion that results from it flows everything human that can be ascribed to and believed about God and everything divine that can be ascribed to and believed about the human Christ. The ancient teachers of the church have explained this union and communion of the natures using similes of a glowing iron and of the union of body and soul in the human being.

6. Therefore, we believe, teach, and confess that God is a human being and a human being is God.⁶⁰ That could not be if the divine and human natures had absolutely no communion with each other in fact and in truth. For how could the human being, Mary's son, be called, or be, the Son of the most high God in truth if his humanity was not personally united with God's Son, in reality, that is in fact and in truth, but instead shared only the name "God" with him?

[Luke 1:31–35 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁵ to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

[Romans 9:5 \(NRSV\)](#)

60 Literally, "daß Gott Mensch und Mensch Gott sei," clearly reflecting the traditional Latin statement, "Deus sit homo, et homo sit Deus." This phrase is open to variation in translation. This interpretation takes into account the discussions and disagreements among Lutherans in the period leading up to the Formula. The circle around Martin Chemnitz insisted that abstractions in descriptions of the personal union be avoided, as the following passages make clear.

7. Therefore, we believe, teach, and confess that Mary did not conceive and give birth to a child who was merely, purely, simply human, but she gave birth to the true Son of God. Therefore, she is rightly called and truly is the Mother of God.

8. Therefore, we also believe, teach, and confess that no mere human being suffered, died, was buried, descended into hell, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and was exalted to the majesty and almighty power of God for us, but rather it was a human being whose human nature has such a profound, indescribable union and communion with the Son of God, that this human nature is one person with the Son of God.

9. Thus, the Son of God truly suffered for us—to be sure, according to the characteristics of the human nature, which he had assumed into the unity of his divine person and made his own, so that he could suffer and be our high priest for our reconciliation with God, as it is written, “They crucified the Lord of glory,” and, “With God’s blood⁶¹ we have been redeemed” (1 Cor. 2[:8*]; Acts 20[:28*]).

10. Therefore, we believe, teach, and confess that the Son of Man in reality, that is, in fact and in truth, was exalted to the right hand of the almighty majesty and power of God according to his human nature, because he was assumed into God, when he was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of his mother and was personally united with the Son of the Almighty.

11. According to the personal union he always possessed this majesty, and yet dispensed with it in the state of his humiliation. For this reason he grew in stature, wisdom, and grace before God and other people [Luke 2:52*]. Therefore, he did not reveal his majesty at all times but only

61 The translation of the Luther Bible, based on a substantial manuscript tradition, considered the more difficult reading as the original.

*

⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

[1 Corinthians 2:8 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.

[Acts 20:28 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

[Luke 2:52 \(NRSV\)](#)

when it pleased him, until he completely laid aside the form of a servant [Phil. 2:7*] (but not his human nature) after his resurrection. Then he was again invested with the full use, revelation, and demonstration of his divine majesty and entered into his glory, in such a way that he knows everything, is able to do everything, is present for all his creatures, and has under his feet and in his hands all that is in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, not only as God but also as human creature, as he himself testifies, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” [Matt. 28:18*], and St. Paul writes: He ascended “above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things” [Eph. 4:10*]. As present everywhere he can exercise this power of his, he can do everything, and he knows all things.

12. Therefore, he is able—it is very easy for him—to share his true body and blood, present in the Holy Supper, not according to the manner or characteristic of the human nature, but according to the manner and characteristic of God’s right hand, as Dr. Luther says in [his explanation of] our Christian creed. This presence is not an earthly nor a Capernaite presence, but at the same time it is a true and essential presence, as the words of his testament say, “This is, is, my body,” etc.⁶²

Through this our teaching, faith, and confession the person of Christ is not divided, as Nestorius did. (He denied the *communicatio idiomatum*,⁶³ that is, the true communion of the characteristics of the two natures in Christ, and thus divided his person, as Luther explains in his

*

⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form,

[Philippians 2:7 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[Matthew 28:18 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁰ He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.)

[Ephesians 4:10 \(NRSV\)](#)

62 For example, in Luther’s *That These Words of Christ, “This Is My Body,” Etc., Still Stand Firm* (1527) (WA 23:131–37; LW 37:55–59); *Confession concerning Christ’s Supper* (1528) (WA 26:326–30; LW 37:214–16).

63 Communication of attributes or characteristics.

book *On the Councils and the Church*.)⁶⁴ Nor are the natures with their characteristics mixed together with each other into one essence, as Eutyches falsely taught. Nor is the human nature denied or destroyed in the person of Christ, and neither nature is transformed into the other. Rather, Christ is and remains for all eternity God and human being in one inseparable person, which is the highest mystery after the mystery of the Holy Trinity, as the Apostle testifies [1 Tim. 3:16*]. In this mystery lie our only comfort, life, and salvation.

Negative Theses

Contrary False Teaching concerning the Person of Christ

Accordingly, we reject and condemn the following erroneous articles as contrary to God's Word and our simple Christian creed,⁶⁵ when it is taught:⁶⁶

1. That God and the human being in Christ are not one person, but there is one person, the Son of God, and another person, the Son of Man, as Nestorius foolishly asserted.
2. That the divine and human natures are mixed together with each other into one essence and that the human nature is transformed into divinity, as Eutyches fantasized.
3. That Christ is not true, natural, and eternal God, as Arius held.
4. That Christ did not have a true human nature, with body and soul, as Marcion contrived.
5. That the personal union creates only common titles or names.⁶⁷
6. That it is only an expression or *modus loquendi*, that is, only a matter of words or a way of speaking, when it is said: God is a human being, a human being is God; for the deity has nothing in common with the humanity, and the humanity nothing with the deity in reality, that is, in fact.

64 *On the Councils and the Churches* (1539) (WA 50:584–95; LW 41:95–106).

*

¹⁶ Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.

1 Timothy 3:16 (NRSV)

65 Andreae had argued in his earliest approach to concord on the basis of the Apostles' Creed as well as Scripture; cf. his *Six Christian Sermons*.

66 For specific references to Calvinist and "Crypto-Philippist" works in which these positions may be found, see SD VIII, 628–29, nn. 288–291; 633–35, nn. 301–304.

67 Cited first in Latin, then translated.

7. That it is merely a *communicatio verbalis*, that is, nothing more than a figure of speech, when it is said that the Son of God died for the sins of the world or that the Son of Man has become almighty.

8. That the human nature in Christ became an infinite essence in a manner like that of the deity and is present everywhere in the same way the divine nature is present, on the basis of some sort of essential, shared power and characteristic, which has been separated from God and poured out into the human nature.⁶⁸

9. That the human nature has been made the same as the divine nature in its substance and essence or in its essential attributes and has become equal with it.

10. That the human nature of Christ is spatially extended into all parts of heaven and earth (an idea that should not be applied to the divine nature either).

11. That it is impossible for Christ, because of the characteristics of the human nature, to be in more than one place at the same time—much less to be bodily present in all places.

12. That only the mere humanity suffered for us and redeemed us, and that the Son of God in fact had no communion with the humanity in the suffering, as if it had not affected him at all.

13. That Christ is present with us on earth in Word, in the sacraments, and in all times of need only according to his deity, and that such presence has absolutely nothing to do with his human nature; and that after he redeemed us through his suffering and death, he has nothing more to do with us on earth according to the human nature.

14. That the Son of God, who assumed the human nature, after he laid aside the form of a servant does not perform all the works of his omnipotence in, through, and with his human nature, but only a few and exclusively in the place in which his human nature is spatially present.

15. That he is not at all capable of exercising his omnipotence and other characteristics of his divine nature according to his human nature, contrary to the express words of Christ, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” [Matt. 28:18*], and St. Paul: “In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2[:9*]).

68 Par. 27–29 try to answer objections of Lutheran theologians such as Tilemann Hesshus.

*

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[Matthew 28:18 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

16. That to him [Christ] has indeed been given greater power in heaven and on earth, that is, greater and more than all angels and other creatures, but he does not share in the omnipotence of God; moreover, such divine power has not been given to him. In this way they invent a *media potentia*, that is, a kind of power between God's almighty power and the power of other creatures, which is given to Christ according to his humanity through the exaltation, and which is less than God's almighty power and greater than the power of other creatures.

17. That according to his human spirit Christ has a fixed limit on how much he can know, and that he cannot know more than is appropriate and necessary for him to know in the exercise of his office as judge.

18. That Christ does not yet have perfect knowledge of God and all his works, although it is, of course, written, that in him "are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge" [Col. 2:3*].

19. That it is impossible for Christ, according to his human spirit, to know what has existed from eternity, what is happening at the present time everywhere in the world, and what will be in the future in eternity.

20. When anyone teaches and so interprets and blasphemously perverts the passage in Matthew 28[:18*] ("All authority . . . has been given to me") that in the resurrection and his ascension all power in heaven and on earth was restored or again returned to Christ according to the divine nature—as though in the state of humiliation he had laid it aside and forsaken it even according to his deity.

Such teaching not only perverts the word of Christ's testament but prepares the way for the return of the accursed Arian heresy, that finally denies the eternal divinity of Christ. In this way Christ is completely lost, along with our salvation, if such false teaching is not contradicted on the basis of the firm foundation of God's Word and our simple Christian creed.

⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,

[Colossians 2:9 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[Colossians 2:3 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[Matthew 28:18 \(NRSV\)](#)

IX.
Concerning Christ's Descent into Hell

Status controversiae

The Chief Issue regarding This Article⁶⁹

Among some theologians committed to the Augsburg Confession there has been some dispute regarding this article: when and in what manner the Lord Christ descended into hell, according to our simple Christian creed, and whether it took place before or after his death. Also, whether he descended only in his soul, or only in his deity, or with body and soul, bodily and spiritually. Also, whether this article of faith belongs to the suffering of Christ or to his glorious victory and triumph.

Since this article, as is true of the previous article, cannot be comprehended by reason or understanding, but must be grasped alone by faith:

It is our unanimous counsel that there should be no dispute over this issue but it should be believed and taught on the simplest level as Dr. Luther of blessed memory explained this article in a most Christian manner in his sermon at Torgau in 1533.⁷⁰ There he cut off all unprofitable, unnecessary questions and admonished all godly Christians to a simple Christian faith.

For it is enough that we know that Christ descended into hell and destroyed hell for all believers and that he redeemed them from the power of death, the devil, and the eternal damnation of hellish retribution. How that happened we should save for the next world, where not only this matter but many others, which here we have simply believed and cannot comprehend with our blind reason, will be revealed.

X.
Concerning Ecclesiastical Practices

Which Are Called Adiaphora or Indifferent Matters⁷¹

A dispute also occurred among theologians of the Augsburg Confession over ceremonies or ecclesiastical practices that are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word but that were introduced in the churches for the sake of good order and decorum.

Status controversiae
On the Chief Controversy regarding This Article

69 On the background of this article, see SD IX, 634–35 n. 305, below.

70 WA 37:62–67.

71 On the parties involved in this dispute, see SD X, 635–36 nn. 308–309, below.

The chief question concerned a situation of persecution, in a case in which confession is necessary, when the enemies of the gospel refuse to come to terms with us: the question was whether, in that situation, in good conscience, certain ceremonies that had been abolished (as in themselves indifferent matters neither commanded nor forbidden by God) could be revived under the pressure and demand of the opponents, and whether compromise with them in such ceremonies and indifferent matters would be proper? The one party said yes, the other said no to this question.

Affirmative Theses

The Proper, True Teaching and Confession concerning This Article

1. To settle this dispute, we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that ceremonies or ecclesiastical practices that are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word, but have been established only for good order and decorum, are in and of themselves neither worship ordained by God nor a part of such worship. "In vain do they worship me" with human precepts (Matt. 15[:9*]).

2. We believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the authority to alter such ceremonies according to its own situation, as may be most useful and edifying for the community of God.

3. Of course, all frivolity and offense must be avoided, and special consideration must be given particularly to those who are weak in faith.

4. We believe, teach, and confess that in a time of persecution, when an unequivocal confession of the faith is demanded of us, we dare not yield to the opponents in such indifferent matters. As the Apostle wrote, "Stand firm in the freedom for which Christ has set us free, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" [Gal. 5:1*]. And: "Do not put on the yoke of the others; what partnership is there between light and darkness?" [2 Cor. 6:14*]. "So that the truth

*

⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.' "

[Matthew 15:9 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹ For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

[Galatians 5:1 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

of the gospel might always remain with you, we did not submit to them even for a moment” [Gal. 2:5*]. For in such a situation it is no longer indifferent matters that are at stake. The truth of the gospel and Christian freedom are at stake. The confirmation of open idolatry, as well as the protection of the weak in faith from offense, is at stake. In such matters we can make no concessions but must offer an unequivocal confession and suffer whatever God sends and permits the enemies of his Word to inflict on us.

5. We also believe, teach, and confess that no church should condemn another because the one has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God than the other has, when otherwise there is unity with the other in teaching and all the articles of faith and in the proper use of the holy sacraments, according to the well-known saying, “Dissonantia ieiunii non dissolvit consonantiam fidei,” “Dissimilarity in fasting is not to disrupt unity in faith.”⁷²

Negative Theses

False Teaching concerning This Article

Therefore, we reject and condemn as incorrect and contrary to God’s Word:⁷³

1. When anyone teaches that human commands and prescriptions in the church are to be regarded in and of themselves as worship ordained by God or a part of it.

2. When anyone imposes such ceremonies, commands, and prescriptions upon the community of God with coercive force as if they were necessary, against its Christian freedom, which it has in external matters.

¹⁴ Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness?

2 Corinthians 6:14 (NRSV)

*

⁵ we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you.

Galatians 2:5 (NRSV)

⁷² Irenaeus, cited in Eusebius, *Church History* V, 24, 13 (MPG 20:506; NPNF, ser. 2, 1:243).

⁷³ These positions summarize the Gnesio-Lutheran understanding of what Melanchthon and other electoral Saxon theologians were attempting in the so-called Leipzig Interim.

3. Likewise, when anyone teaches that in a situation of persecution, when public confession is necessary, one may comply or come to terms with the enemies of the holy gospel in these indifferent matters and ceremonies. (Such actions serve to damage God's truth.)

4. Likewise, when such external ceremonies and indifferent matters are abolished in a way that suggests that the community of God is not free at all times, according to its specific situation, to use one or more of these ceremonies in Christian freedom, as is most beneficial to the church.

XI.

Concerning the Eternal Predestination and Election of God

On this article there has been no public conflict among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession.⁷⁴ However, because it is an article of comfort when properly treated, it is also explained in this document so that no offensive dispute may arise in the future.

Affirmative Theses

The Pure, True Teaching concerning This Article

1. First of all, the difference between *praescientia* and *praedestinatio*, that is, between God's foreknowledge and his eternal election, must be carefully noted.

2. God's foreknowledge is nothing else than that God knows all things before they happen, as it is written, "God in heaven reveals mysteries. He has disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in future times" (Dan. 2[:28*]).

3. This foreknowledge extends equally over godly people and evil people, but it is not a cause of evil. It is not the cause of sins, when people act wrongly (sin proceeds originally from the devil and the wicked, perverted human will), nor of human corruption, for which people are responsible themselves. Instead, God's foreknowledge provides order in the midst of evil and sets limits to it. It determines how long evil can continue and determines also that everything, even if it is evil in itself, serves the welfare of God's elect.

4. *Praedestinatio*, however, or God's eternal election, extends only to the righteous, God-pleasing children of God. It is a cause of their salvation, which God brings about. He has

74 On the background of this article, see SD XI, 641, n. 318, below.

*

²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at the end of days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed were these:

arranged everything that belongs to it. Our salvation is so firmly grounded on it [cf. John 10:26–29*] that “the gates of hell will not prevail against it” [Matt. 16:18*].

5. This election is not to be probed in the secret counsel of God but rather is to be sought in the Word, where it has also been revealed.

6. However, the Word of God leads us to Christ, who is the “Book of Life” [Phil. 4:3*; Rev. 3:5*], in whom are inscribed and chosen all who shall be eternally saved, as it is written, “He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world” [Eph. 1:4*].

*

²⁶ but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep.

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.

²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

²⁹ What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father’s hand.

[John 10:26–29 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

[Matthew 16:18 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

³ Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

[Philippians 4:3 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁵ If you conquer, you will be clothed like them in white robes, and I will not blot your name out of the book of life; I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels.

[Revelation 3:5 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

7. This Christ calls all sinners to himself and promises them refreshment. He is utterly serious in his desire that all people should come to him and seek help for themselves [cf. Matt. 11:28*]. He offers himself to them in the Word. He desires them to hear the Word and not to plug their ears or despise his Word. To this end he promises the power and activity of the Holy Spirit, divine assistance in remaining faithful and attaining eternal salvation.

8. Therefore we are to make judgments regarding our election to eternal life neither on the basis of reason nor on the basis of God's law. Such a course of action would lead us either into a wild, irresponsible, Epicurean life, or into despair—and would awaken harmful thoughts in human hearts. Whenever people follow their reason, they can hardly escape such reflections as these: "As long as God has chosen me for salvation, I cannot be condemned no matter what I do!" or, "I have not been chosen for eternal life, so it does not help when I do good; everything is really in vain."

9. Instead, the true meaning of election must be learned from the holy gospel of Christ. It clearly states, "God imprisoned all in unbelief that he may be merciful to all," and that he wants no one to be lost but rather that everyone repent and believe on the Lord Christ [Rom. 11:32*; 1 Tim. 2:4*; cf. Ezek. 33:11*; 18:23*].

⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.

[Ephesians 1:4 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²⁸ "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

[Matthew 11:28 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

³² For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

[Romans 11:32 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁴ who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

[1 Timothy 2:4 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

10. This teaching is useful and comforting for all those who are concerned about the revealed will of God and follow the order which St. Paul observed in the Epistle to the Romans. There he first of all points people to repentance, acknowledgment of their sins, and then to faith in Christ and obedience to God before he speaks of the mystery of God's eternal election.

11. That "many are called and few are chosen" [Matt. 20:16*] does not mean that God does not want to save everyone. Instead, the reason for condemnation lies in their not hearing God's Word at all or arrogantly despising it, plugging their ears and their hearts, and thus blocking the Holy Spirit's ordinary path, so that he cannot carry out his work in them; or if they have given it a hearing, they cast it to the wind and pay no attention to it. Then the fault lies not with God and his election but with their own wickedness [cf. 2 Peter 2:9–15*; Luke 11:47–52*; Heb. 12:15–17*, 25*].

¹¹ Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

[Ezekiel 33:11 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²³ Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that they should turn from their ways and live?

[Ezekiel 18:23 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

[Matthew 20:16 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment

¹⁰ — especially those who indulge their flesh in depraved lust, and who despise authority. Bold and willful, they are not afraid to slander the glorious ones,

¹¹ whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not bring against them a slanderous judgment from the Lord.

¹² These people, however, are like irrational animals, mere creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed. They slander what they do not understand, and when those creatures are destroyed, they also will be destroyed,

¹³ suffering the penalty for doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their dissipation while they feast with you.

¹⁴ They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!

¹⁵ They have left the straight road and have gone astray, following the road of Balaam son of Bosor, who loved the wages of doing wrong,

[2 Peter 2:9–15 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁴⁷ Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your ancestors killed.

⁴⁸ So you are witnesses and approve of the deeds of your ancestors; for they killed them, and you build their tombs.

⁴⁹ Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’

⁵⁰ so that this generation may be charged with the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world,

⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be charged against this generation.

⁵² Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.”

[Luke 11:47–52 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled.

¹⁶ See to it that no one becomes like Esau, an immoral and godless person, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

¹⁷ You know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, even though he sought the blessing with tears.

[Hebrews 12:15–17 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

12. A Christian should only think about the article of God's eternal election to the extent that it is revealed in God's Word. The Word holds Christ before our eyes as the "Book of Life," which he opens and reveals for us through the preaching of the holy gospel, as it is written, "Those whom he has chosen, he also called" [Rom. 8:30*]. In Christ we are to seek the Father's eternal election. He has decreed in his eternal, divine counsel that he will save no one apart from those who acknowledge his Son Christ and truly believe in him. We should set aside other thoughts, for they do not come from God but rather from the imagination of the evil foe. Through such thoughts he approaches us to weaken this glorious comfort for us or to take it away completely. We have a glorious comfort in this salutary teaching, that we know how we have been chosen for eternal life in Christ out of sheer grace, without any merit of our own, and that no one can tear us out of his hand [John 10:28–29*]. For he has assured us that he has graciously chosen us not only with mere words. He has corroborated this with an oath and sealed it with the holy sacraments. In the midst of our greatest trials we can remind ourselves of them, comfort ourselves with them, and thereby quench the fiery darts of the devil.

13. Along with this we should strive as diligently as possible to live according to God's will and to "confirm our calling," as Saint Peter admonishes [2 Peter 1:10*]. We should especially abide by the revealed Word that cannot and will not fail us.

²⁵ See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven!

[Hebrews 12:25 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

[Romans 8:30 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

²⁹ What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.

[John 10:28–29 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁰ Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble.

[2 Peter 1:10 \(NRSV\)](#)

14. This short explanation of God’s eternal election gives God his honor fully and completely. On the basis of his pure mercy alone, without any merit of ours at all, he saves us “according to the purpose of his will” [Eph. 1:11*]. In addition, no one is given reason either for faintheartedness or for a reckless, wild life.

Antitheses or Negative Theses

False Teaching regarding This Article

Accordingly, we believe and maintain that those who present the teaching of God’s gracious election to eternal life either in such a way that troubled Christians cannot find comfort in it but are driven to faintheartedness or despair, or in such a way that the impenitent are strengthened in their arrogance, are not preaching this teaching according to the Word and will of God but rather according to their own reason and at the instigation of the accursed devil, because (as the Apostle testifies) “whatever was written was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope” [Rom. 15:4*]. Therefore, we reject the following errors:

1. When it is taught that God does not want all people to repent and believe the gospel.
2. Likewise, that when God calls us to himself, he does not seriously intend that all people should come to him.
3. Likewise, that God does not desire that everyone should be saved, but rather that without regard to their sins—only because of God’s naked decision, intention, and will—some are designated for damnation, so that there is no way that they could be saved.
4. Likewise, that the cause of God’s election does not lie exclusively in God’s mercy and the most holy merit of Christ but that there is also a cause in us, because of which God has chosen us for eternal life.

*

¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will,

[Ephesians 1:11 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

[Romans 15:4 \(NRSV\)](#)

These are blasphemous, horrible, and erroneous teachings, which take away from Christians all the comfort that they have in the holy gospel and in the use of the holy sacraments. Therefore, these errors dare not be tolerated in the church of God.

This is the brief and simple explanation of the contested articles which for a time theologians of the Augsburg Confession taught and discussed in ways that contradicted each other. From this every simple Christian can recognize, according to the direction of God's Word and the simple catechism, what is correct and incorrect. For here we have set forth not only the pure teaching but have also exposed and rejected contrary, erroneous teaching. In this way the offensive divisions that had arisen are completely resolved. May the almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus grant the grace of his Holy Spirit, that we may all be one in him [John 17:20–21*] and steadfastly remain in this Christian and God-pleasing unity.

XII. Concerning Other Factions and Sects That Never Subscribed to the Augsburg Confession

So that such heretical groups and sects may not tacitly be associated with us because we have not taken notice of them in the previous explanation of our teaching,⁷⁵ we wish here at the end to list only the simple statements of doctrine in which they err and teach contrary to our Christian faith and confession, as we have presented it in detail.

The Erring Articles of the Anabaptists

The Anabaptists are divided among themselves into many different factions, and some advocate many errors, others few. In general, however, they proclaim the kind of teaching that cannot be tolerated or permitted either in the church, in public affairs and temporal government, or in domestic life.

Intolerable Teachings in the Church

*

²⁰ “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word,

²¹ that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

[John 17:20–21 \(NRSV\)](#)

75 On the background of the composition of this article and the positions represented by these “factions and sects,” see SD XII, 656–59 nn. 330–333, below.

1. That Christ did not receive his body and blood from the Virgin Mary but brought them with him from heaven.

2. That Christ is not true God but merely has more gifts of the Holy Spirit than any other holy person.

3. That our righteousness before God rests not only upon the merit of Christ but also in our renewal and thus in the godliness of our own way of life. This rests for the most part upon our own special, self-selected spirituality [Col. 2:23*] and is fundamentally nothing else than a new monasticism.

4. That children who are not baptized are not sinners in God's sight but instead are righteous and innocent. In their innocence, because they have not yet come into full exercise of their reason, they are saved without baptism (which in their opinion children do not need). They reject therefore the entire teaching of original sin and everything connected with it.

5. That children should not be baptized until they attain the use of reason and can confess their faith themselves.

6. That the children of Christians, because they are born to Christian and believing parents, are holy without and before baptism and are God's children. This is also the reason why the Anabaptists do not regard infant baptism as important, nor do they encourage it, against the express words of God's promise, which only extends to those who keep his covenant and do not despise it (Gen. 17[:4–8*, 19–21*]).

*

²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-imposed piety, humility, and severe treatment of the body, but they are of no value in checking self-indulgence.

[Colossians 2:23 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁴ “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations.

⁵ No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations.

⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

⁷ I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

⁸ And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.”

7. That a congregation in which sinners are still found is not a true Christian congregation.

8. That no one should attend worship or hear a sermon in the houses of worship in which papal Masses were previously held and recited.

9. That no one should have anything to do with the ministers of the church who preach the gospel according to the Augsburg Confession and condemn the preaching and errors of the Anabaptists; that no one should serve these ministers or do any work for them, but should flee and avoid them as perverters of God's Word.

Intolerable Articles in Public Affairs

1. That service in government is not a God-pleasing walk of life in the New Testament.

2. That a Christian cannot fill or carry out functions in the government with a good, clear conscience.

3. That a Christian may not make use of the functions of government against the wicked in appropriate situations, nor may the subjects of the government call upon it to use the power it possesses and has been given by God for protection and defense.

4. That Christians may neither swear an oath with good conscience nor pay homage with an oath to their prince or lord.

5. That in the period of the New Testament, governmental authority may not execute criminals without harming its conscience.

Intolerable Articles in Domestic Life

1. That a Christian may not own or possess private property with a good conscience, but rather is bound to surrender all to the community.

Genesis 17:4–8 (NRSV)

*

¹⁹ God said, “No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.

²⁰ As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.

²¹ But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year.”

Genesis 17:19–21 (NRSV)

2. That a Christian may not be an innkeeper, merchant, or arms-maker with good conscience.

3. That married people may divorce for the sake of faith and abandon the other marriage partner, and then marry another who shares the same faith.

*Erroneous Articles of the Schwenckfelders*⁷⁶

1. That all those who hold that Christ is a creature according to the flesh have no correct knowledge of the reigning king of heaven, Christ.

2. That the flesh of Christ assumed all divine attributes through the exaltation in such a way that in status and essential dignity he, Christ, as a human being, is equal to the Father and the Word in all respects: in power, might, majesty, and glory, that from now on the two natures in Christ share one essence, one set of characteristics, one will, and the same glory, and that the flesh of Christ is a part of the essence of the Holy Trinity.

3. That the church's ministry, the Word as it is proclaimed and heard, is not a means through which God the Holy Spirit teaches human beings the saving knowledge of Christ and effects conversion, repentance, faith, and new obedience in them.

4. That the water of baptism is not a means through which God the Lord seals our adoption as children and effects new birth.

5. That bread and wine in the Holy Supper are not means through which and with which Christ distributes his body and blood.

6. That a Christian, who is truly reborn through the Holy Spirit, can keep and fulfill the law of God perfectly in this life.

7. That a congregation which does not practice public exclusion [of sinners] or has no regular process for excommunication is not a true Christian congregation.

8. That a minister of the church who is not personally and truly renewed, reborn, righteous, and godly may not effectively teach other people or distribute a proper, true sacrament to them.

Errors of the New Arians

That Christ is not true, essential God by nature, of one eternal divine essence with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, but that he is merely adorned with divine majesty under and alongside God the Father.

Errors of the Antitrinitarians

76 Followers of Caspar Schwenckfeld.

This is a completely new sect, never before heard of in Christendom. It believes, teaches, and confesses that there is not a single, eternal, divine essence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but as God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three different persons, so each individual person also has its own distinct essence, separated from the other persons of the Godhead. Either all three—like three different human beings who in all other ways are completely separate from each other in their essences—would have equal power, wisdom, majesty, and glory; or, they are in essence and characteristics not equal, so that only the Father is the real, true God.

These and articles like them and whatever other further errors are attached to these and follow from them, we reject and condemn as incorrect, false, heretical, and opposed to the Word of God, the three creeds, the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and the Catechisms of Luther. All godly Christians, of higher or lower social station, should avoid them if they hold the welfare of their souls and their salvation dear.

To demonstrate that this is our teaching, faith, and confession, as we want to account for it on the Last Day before the just Judge, our Lord Jesus Christ, and as we want to say or write nothing contrary, either in secret or publicly, but intend to remain in this teaching by the grace of God, we have upon careful consideration, in true fear of God and invoking him, subscribed with our own hands, done at Bergen, 29 May 1577.

DR. JAKOB ANDREAE subscribed

DR. NICHOLAS SELNECKER subscribed

DR. ANDREW MUSCULUS subscribed

DR. CHRISTOPHER KÖRNER subscribed

DAVID CHYTRAEUS

DR. MARTIN CHEMNITZ

[The Solid Declaration]

A GENERAL, CLEAR, CORRECT,

*and Definitive Repetition and Explanation of Certain Articles
of the Augsburg Confession, Concerning which Controversy
Has Arisen for a Time among Certain Theologians, Here Resolved
and Settled according to the Direction of God's Word
and the Summary Formulation of our Christian Teaching.*

By the Almighty's special grace and mercy the teaching of the chief articles of our Christian religion (which had been hideously obscured by human teaching and regulations under the papacy) was purified and elucidated anew on the basis of God's Word by Dr. Luther, of blessed and holy memory.¹ He condemned the errors, abuses, and idolatry of the papacy. However, the opposition regarded this genuine Reformation as a new teaching, as if it were totally contrary to God's Word and established Christian practices. They attacked this Reformation vigorously but without foundation and brought charges against it filled with the wildest lies and accusations. This caused the Christian electors, princes, and estates,² who had at that time accepted the pure teaching of the holy gospel and had reformed their churches in Christian fashion according to the Word of God, to arrange for the presentation of a Christian confession composed on the basis of God's Word at the great imperial assembly in Augsburg in 1530.³ They submitted it to Emperor Charles V as their clear and unequivocal Christian confession of what is held and taught in the Christian, Evangelical churches, regarding the most important articles of the faith—particularly regarding those that had become matters of controversy between them and the pope's adherents. This elicited a churlish reaction from their opponents, but, praise God, this confession has endured to this day, without being refuted or overturned.

Once again we wholeheartedly confess our adherence to this same Christian Augsburg Confession, solidly based as it is in God's Word, and we remain faithful to its simple, clear, unequivocal meaning, which its words intend.⁴ We regard this confession as a pure, Christian creed, which (after the Word of God) should guide true Christians in this time, just as in earlier times Christian creeds and confessions were formulated in God's church when major controversies broke out. To these documents the faithful teachers and their hearers confessed their adherence at those times with heart and mouth. By the grace of the Almighty we, too, are resolved to abide faithfully until our end in this oft-cited Christian confession, as it was delivered to Emperor Charles in 1530. We do not intend to deviate in the least from this Confession either in this document or in any other, nor do we intend to submit any other, new confession.

Although the Christian teaching in this Confession has remained practically unchallenged (apart from the charges of the papists), at the same time it cannot be denied that certain

1 The authors of the Formula of Concord reflected the widespread belief among Lutherans of their day that Luther had been a special instrument in God's hands for the restoration of the gospel in the church. They replaced his authority as a chief interpreter of the Bible with their own collection of documents, but their high regard for his insight, wisdom, and historical role reveals itself often in the Formula.

2 The political authorities in the territories of the Reformation within the Holy Roman Empire.

3 For the authors of the Formula of Concord the Augsburg Confession was the fundamental expression of the proper interpretation of scripture.

4 The authors of the Formula here issued a decision in the controversy over the proper, authoritative text of the Augsburg Confession, deciding for the original version, as printed in 1531, the *invariata* (unrevised) against the *variata* (revised), which contained revisions composed by Philip Melancthon during the decade following that original publication.

theologians have deviated from certain highly significant and vital articles of faith.⁵ They either never had been or indeed did not remain faithful to a correct understanding of these articles of faith. Instead, they even dared to import an alien interpretation into this teaching while wanting to appear as adherents of the Augsburg Confession and to appeal to it and praise it. Because of this, onerous and harmful divisions arose within the pure⁶ Evangelical churches just as even at the time of the holy apostles horrible errors arose in the same way among those who wanted to be called Christians and boasted of their adherence to the teaching of Christ. Thus, some wanted to become righteous and be saved through the works of the law (Acts 15[:1–29*]); some denied

5 It became necessary to compose a “formula of concord” because of the internal controversies among the followers of Luther and Melanchthon in the 1550s through the 1570s, as described in the introduction.

6 “Pure” in reference to the teaching of the church conveys the sense of “unadulterated” and “effective,” as the word is applied to food and medicine in modern English.

*

¹ Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders.

³ So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers.

⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

⁵ But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, “It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.”

⁶ The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter.

⁷ After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers.

⁸ And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us;

⁹ and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us.

¹⁰ Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear?

¹¹ On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

¹² The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles.

¹³ After they finished speaking, James replied, “My brothers, listen to me.

¹⁴ Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name.

¹⁵ This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written,

¹⁶ ‘After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up,

¹⁷ so that all other peoples may seek the Lord— even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things

¹⁸ known from long ago.’

¹⁹ Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God,

²⁰ but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood.

²¹ For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues.”

²² Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers,

²³ with the following letter: “The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.

²⁴ Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds,

²⁵ we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

²⁶ who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁷ We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth.

the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15[:12*]); some did not believe that Christ was the true, eternal God [1 John 2:22–23*]. The holy apostles had to confront such teachers sharply in their sermons and writings, although at that time, such highly significant errors and serious controversy would involve a great deal of offense, both to unbelievers and to those weak in the faith. Similarly, in our day our opponents, the papists, gloat over the divisions that have arisen among us, in the unchristian and futile hope that this disunity would lead to the final downfall of the pure teaching. Those who are weak in the faith do take offense because of these controversies: some doubt whether the pure teaching exists among us in view of these divisions, and some do not know which group among us they should support regarding the articles of faith under dispute. For these controversies are not merely misunderstandings or semantic arguments, where someone might think that one group had not sufficiently grasped what the other group was trying to say or that the tensions were based upon only a few specific words of relatively little consequence. Rather, these controversies deal with important and significant matters, and they are of such a nature that the positions of the erring party neither could nor should be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused or defended.

Therefore, necessity demands explanation of these disputed articles on the basis of God's Word and reliable writings, so that those with a proper Christian understanding could recognize which position regarding the points under dispute is in accord with God's Word and the Christian Augsburg Confession and which is not, and so that Christians of good will, who are concerned about the truth, might protect and guard themselves from the errors and corruptions that have appeared among us.

²⁸ For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials:

²⁹ that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

[Acts 15:1–29 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?

[1 Corinthians 15:12 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

²² Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also.

[1 John 2:22–23 \(NRSV\)](#)

Concerning the Binding Summary,⁷ Basis, Rule, and Guiding Principle,

How All Teaching Is to Be Judged in Accord with God's Word and How the Errors That Have Arisen Are to Be Explained and Decided in Christian Fashion.

Fundamental, enduring unity in the church requires above all else a clear and binding summary and form in which a general summary of teaching is drawn together from God's Word, to which the churches that hold the true Christian religion confess their adherence. For this same purpose the ancient church always had its reliable creeds, which were not based upon private writings but on such books as were set forth, approved, and accepted in the name of the churches that confessed their adherence to a single teaching and religion. For this reason we have made this mutual declaration with hearts and mouths that we intend to create or accept no special or new confession of our faith. Rather, we confess our adherence to the publicly recognized writings that have been regarded and used as creeds or common confessions in all the churches of the Augsburg Confession at all times: before the disputes arose among those who had confessed their adherence to the Augsburg Confession and during the time when, everywhere and in all articles of faith, they had remained in agreement with the pure teaching of the divine Word as Dr. Luther of blessed memory had explained it.

1. First, we confess our adherence to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments, as to the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which alone is the one true guiding principle, according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and evaluated.

2. Since in ancient times the true Christian teaching as it was correctly and soundly understood was summarized on the basis of God's Word in short articles or chief parts against the adulterations of heretics, we confess our adherence, secondly, to the three ecumenical creeds, the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian, as the glorious confessions of the faith—succinct, Christian, based upon God's Word, in which all the heresies that had at that time arisen within the Christian churches were clearly and thoroughly refuted.

⁷ In 1561, in his manuscript summary of the controversies that beset the German Evangelical churches at the time (published in 1594 by Chemnitz's successor in Braunschweig, Polycarp Leyser, under the title, *De controversiis quibusdam, quae superiori tempore, circa quosdam Augustanae Confessionis Articulos, motae & agitatae sunt; Iudicium*), Martin Chemnitz had insisted that the churches needed a guiding set of hermeneutical principles—a "correct form and organized summary"—for the adjudication of disputes over the proper interpretation of scripture and that such principles should be given legal force within churches through the adoption of documents collected in a *corpus doctrinae* (literally, body of doctrine). Some churches had already begun this practice; for example, the Gnesio-Lutherans of ducal Saxony had adopted a *Book of Confutation* in 1559, and Philippists had brought together a collection of documents by Melancthon in the *Corpus doctrinae Misnicum* or *Philippicum*, published in 1560. To avoid the impression that the Formula of Concord was being written in opposition to the Melancthonian collection, the concordists decided at Torgau to avoid the term *corpus doctrinae*. The entire Formula of Concord, however, may be seen as the binding summary, basis, rule, and guiding principle according to which, like a *corpus doctrinae*, the public teaching of churches was to be set.

3. Third, in these last times our merciful God, by his special grace, has through the faithful ministry of that most outstanding man of God, Dr. Luther, once again brought to light out of the horrible darkness of the papacy the truth of his Word. This teaching, drawn from and in accord with the Word of God, is summarized in the articles and chief parts of the Augsburg Confession in opposition to the adulterations of the papacy and other sects. For these reasons, we confess our adherence to the first, unaltered edition of the Augsburg Confession. We do so not because it was produced by our theologians but because it is taken from God's Word and is firmly and solidly grounded in it. We confess our adherence to it—precisely as it was set forth in written form in 1530 and presented to Emperor Charles V in Augsburg by some Christian electors, princes, and estates of the Roman Empire as a general confession of the reformed⁸ churches—as our creed for this age. This symbol distinguishes our reformed churches from the papists and other condemned sects and heresies. We appeal to it just as it was custom and tradition in the ancient church for later synods, Christian bishops, and teachers to appeal to the Nicene Creed and confess adherence to it.

4. Fourth, as far as the genuine and true meaning of the Augsburg Confession is concerned, a detailed Apology was prepared after the presentation of the Confession [to the emperor] and was published in 1531. This was done so that we might give a more complete explanation and defense against the papists and so that we might forestall the possibility that under the name of the Augsburg Confession someone might surreptitiously undertake to insinuate into the church errors already rejected by the Confession itself. We therefore unanimously confess our adherence to this Apology because in it the Augsburg Confession is not only expounded and defended but also supported with clear, irrefutable testimonies from Holy Scripture.

5. Fifth, we confess our adherence also to the articles that were presented at Smalcald in the great assembly of theologians in 1537,⁹ and were approved and accepted there, as they were first composed and printed. They were intended to be delivered at the Council in Mantua, or wherever it would be held, as an explanation of the Augsburg Confession, in the name of the most illustrious and illustrious electors, princes, and estates, who resolved to abide by them through God's grace. In these articles this teaching of the Augsburg Confession was repeated and certain articles of God's Word are more extensively explained. In addition, we had to set forth the basis and reason why we departed from the papist errors and idolatry and why we should have no fellowship with them—and also why we could reach no compromise with the papacy and did not intend to do so.

6. Sixth, since these highly significant matters also concern the common people, the laity (who, for the sake of their salvation, must distinguish between pure and false teaching), we also pledge ourselves unanimously to the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Luther, as they were

8 For the authors of the Formula of Concord, "reformed" designated those churches which had introduced reforms for which Luther had called.

9 By 1577 German Evangelical theologians included automatically Melancthon's Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope with Luther's Smalcald Articles as one document.

written by him and incorporated into his collected works,¹⁰ because they have been unanimously approved and accepted by all the churches of the Augsburg Confession and are officially used in the churches, schools, and homes, and because these Catechisms summarize Christian teaching from God's Word for the simple laity in the most correct and simple, yet sufficiently explicit fashion.

These writings, accepted officially and universally among us, have always been regarded in churches and schools that teach purely as the summary and model of the teaching that Dr. Luther of blessed memory had thoroughly set forth in his writings, on the basis of God's Word, against the papacy and other sects. We likewise intend to appeal to and rely on the detailed expositions of his teaching in his doctrinal and polemical writings, but in the manner and fashion in which he himself did in the Latin preface of his collected works¹¹ with a necessary and Christian admonition. There he expressly made the distinction that God's Word alone ought to be and remain the only guiding principle and rule of all teaching and that no person's writing can be put on a par with it, but that everything must be totally subject to God's Word.

This does not mean that other good, useful, pure books that interpret Holy Scripture, refute errors, and explain the articles of faith are to be rejected. Insofar as they are in accord with this model for teaching, they should be regarded and used as helpful interpretations and explanations. Speaking of this summary of our Christian teaching in this way only indicates that there is a unanimously and commonly held, reliable form for teaching to which all our churches commonly pledge themselves. The extent to which all other writings are to be approved and accepted shall be judged and evaluated on the basis of and according to this form, for it is taken from God's Word.

For we assembled the writings mentioned above (the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and Luther's Large and Small Catechisms) as a carefully considered summary of our Christian teaching because these writings have always been regarded as the common and universally accepted position of our churches, as subscribed by the leading learned theologians of that time and received by all Evangelical churches and schools. We have also included them because, as was stated above, they were all written and issued before the disputes arose among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession. For this reason they were regarded as being impartial, and no party involved in controversy could or should reject them. No one who adheres

10 This comment rejects revisions of Luther's catechism by the electoral Saxon "Crypto-Philippist" party. Such revisions furthered its spiritualizing view of the Lord's Supper. The appeal to Luther's "collected works" probably refers specifically to the Jena edition. The first collection of "Luther's Works" appeared in 1520. From 1539 scholars in Wittenberg worked on a massive edition of Luther's published writings, which appeared in seven Latin (1545–61) and twelve German (1539–61) volumes. After the Smalcald War, Gnesio-Lutheran reservations about elements of this Wittenberg edition gave rise to a second "complete edition," the Jena edition, in four Latin (1556–58) and eight German (1555–59) volumes. This became the more widely used edition in the sixteenth century and is the edition that the Formula itself cites.

11 The reference is to the edition of 1545 (WA 54:179–87; LW 34:327–38).

to the Augsburg Confession sincerely can object to these writings but will gladly accept and support them as witnesses.¹² So no one can blame us for using these writings to explain and reach decisions concerning the disputed articles of faith. Just as we base our teaching on God's Word as the eternal truth, we present and cite these writings as testimonies of the truth and as the unanimous, correct understanding of our predecessors who steadfastly held to the pure teaching.¹³

*Antitheses or False Teaching in the Disputed Articles*¹⁴

In order to preserve pure teaching and fundamental, lasting, God-pleasing unity in the church, it is necessary not only to present the pure, beneficial teaching correctly, but also to censure those who contradict it and teach other doctrines (1 Tim. 3[:9*]; Titus 1[:9*]). For, as Luther states, true shepherds are to do both: pasture or feed the sheep and ward off the wolves, so that they may flee from other voices (John 10[:4b–5*, 16b*]) and “separate the precious from the vile” (Jer. 15[:19*, Vulgate]).

12 Since 1555 the acceptance of the Augsburg Confession guaranteed an inferior but legal status within the Holy Roman Empire; those who did not adhere to the Augsburg Confession, or to the papacy, were outside the law. Therefore, accepting the Augsburg Confession was critical.

13 The concordists here define the purpose of their collection of confessional documents: to define the content of the belief of the churches of the Augsburg Confession. They are doing so through a new *corpus doctrinae*, although they explicitly rejected that term at Torgau in order to avoid a sense of competition with the *Corpus doctrinae Philippicum*.

14 The sixteenth-century practice of condemning false teaching in confession of the faith rests on models in the ancient church.

*

⁹ they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

1 Timothy 3:9 (NRSV)

*

⁹ He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

Titus 1:9 (NRSV)

*

⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

Thus, we have come to fundamental, clear agreement that we must steadfastly maintain the distinction between unnecessary, useless quarrels and disputes that are necessary. The former should not be permitted to confuse the church since they tear down rather than edify. The latter, when they occur, concern the articles of faith or the chief parts of Christian teaching; to preserve the truth, false teaching, which is contrary to these articles, must be repudiated.

To be sure, the writings we have mentioned provide clear and correct instruction on each and every article of our Christian religion under dispute for Christian readers, who yearn for and love divine truth. These writings make clear what they should accept and hold as correct and true on the basis of God's Word (the prophetic and apostolic writings) and what they should reject, flee, and avoid as false and untrue. Nevertheless, in order to hold on to the truth in an even clearer and more understandable form and to distinguish it from all errors—and so that nothing remain hidden or concealed under commonly used words—we have clearly and expressly reached mutual agreement on an explanation of the most important articles that have come into controversy at this time, and we have clearly explained each individually. In this way there may be a reliable public witness, not only for our contemporaries but also for following generations, regarding what our churches unanimously hold fast and have decided concerning these controverted articles, namely:

1. First, that we reject and condemn all heresy and error that was rejected and condemned in the first, ancient, orthodox church on the true and firm foundation of holy, divine Scripture.¹⁵

⁵ They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

[John 10:4–5 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁶ I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

[John 10:16 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord: If you turn back, I will take you back, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall serve as my mouth. It is they who will turn to you, not you who will turn to them.

[Jeremiah 15:19 \(NRSV\)](#)

15 This same concern, that “Lutherans” represent the catholic and orthodox consensus of Christian teaching, is also evident in the Augsburg Confession.

2. Second, that we reject and condemn all sects and heresies that are rejected in the writings mentioned above.

3. Third, because of the divisions that have arisen in the past twenty-five years¹⁶ as a result of the Interim and for other reasons among some theologians of the Augsburg Confession, it was our desire to set forth and explain our faith and confession in regard to each specific controversy clearly, straightforwardly, and unequivocally, in theses and antitheses (that is, as correct teaching and its opposite), so that the foundation of the divine truth in all these articles may be made obvious—to the exclusion of all incorrect, dubious, suspicious, and condemned teachings, no matter where or in what books they may be found, or who may have written or wanted to accept them.¹⁷ We have done this in order to give everyone a reliable warning against the errors that are disseminated from time to time in certain theologians' writings, so that no one may be seduced by the reputation of any individual. The Christian readers will want to examine and compare this explanation (as far as is necessary) with the writings enumerated above. From such a comparison they will actually find that what was confessed at the beginning, explained later at various times, and repeated by us in this document regarding each article in the general summary of our religion and faith contains no contradictions. Instead, it presents the simple, unchangeable, reliable truth. Moreover, they will find that we do not lurch from one teaching to another, as our opponents falsely allege, but that we earnestly desire to be found faithful to the Augsburg Confession (as it was originally presented) and to its straightforward and intended Christian meaning. By God's grace we shall persist steadfastly and firmly in this confession against all adulterations of the truth that have arisen.

I. Concerning Original Sin

^aFirst,¹⁸ a dispute took place among some theologians of the Augsburg Confession regarding original sin¹⁹ and its true meaning. One party contended that because “through Adam's fall the

16 An approximate number, indicating the quarter-century that began with the Smalcald War (1546–47) and the Augsburg and so-called Leipzig Interims (1548).

17 Controversy had also divided Lutherans regarding the citation of Melancthon's works and the use of his name and authority. Some Gnesio-Lutherans favored explicit warning against elements of his later theology. Some Philippists found it intolerable not to accord him equal status with Luther. The concordists here warn readers to judge all books by their content, not by their author.

18 The ordering of the Formula's articles referred to with this “first” is thematic, not chronological. The Formula roughly follows the outline of the Augsburg Confession: Articles I and II parallel CA II; Articles III–VI parallel CA IV–VI; Article VII parallels CA X (with FC VIII and IX following from FC VII); Article X parallels CA XV; and Article XI parallels CA XVIII. The earliest form of Article I is found in Jakob Andreae's *Six Christian Sermons* 81–84.

19 The German term for the Latin *peccatum originale*, original sin, is “inherited sin.” Luther and his students also employed the term “root sin” for original sin.

whole human nature and essence is corrupted,”²⁰ after the fall the corrupted creature’s nature, substance, essence, even the noblest, most important part of its essence—the rational soul at its highest level and with its most foremost powers—is original sin itself, and has been called nature-sin or person-sin, because it is not a thought, word, or deed but the nature itself, out of which, as the root, all other sins arise. Moreover, there is therefore after the fall, because nature has been corrupted by sin, absolutely no difference at all between human nature or the human essence and original sin.²¹

^aOn the contrary, the other party taught that original sin is not actually the nature, substance, or essence of the human being, that is of the human body or soul, which even now, after the fall, are and remain God’s creation and creature in us. Rather, they taught that original sin is something situated in the nature, body, soul, and all the powers of the human being, namely, a horrible, deep-seated, indescribable corruption of this nature. They acknowledged, therefore, that human beings lack the righteousness with which they were originally created, that in spiritual matters they have died to the good, and that they have perversely turned toward all evil. They taught that on account of this corruption and inborn sin, which is embedded in human nature, all actual sins flow from the heart. Thus, they insisted on preserving the distinction between the corrupted human nature and its essence—or between the body and soul (which are still God’s work and creation in us even after the fall) on the one hand, and, on the other, original sin (which is an activity of the devil, through which human nature has been corrupted).²²

20 A citation from the hymn of the Nuremberg city secretary, Lazarus Spengler (1523), *Lutheran Worship* 363.

21 The leader of this party was the Croatian-Italian student of Luther and Melancthon, Matthias Flacius (Illyricus). In a debate over the freedom of the will with his colleague at the University of Jena, Viktorin Strigel, in the presence of Duke John Frederick the Middler of Saxony at Weimar in 1560, Flacius, against his own better judgment, employed the Aristotelian terminology of Strigel to describe original sin. Strigel insisted that original sin be described as an Aristotelian “accident,” that is, a characteristic which does not belong to the defining “essence” of a thing. Using terminology from the system of logic and rhetoric which Melancthon developed out of Aristotelian sources, Flacius distinguished between a “formal essence” and a “material essence.” In order to emphasize the seriousness of original sin, he taught that it has become the “formal” or forming essence or substance of the fallen human being; in the material essence, the sinner retains human characteristics of rationality and will, but the formal substance of the fallen human is original sin. In this connection he taught that the sinner is “in the image of Satan.” After his death in 1575 his position continued to be defended by Cyriacus Spangenberg, Christopher Irenaeus, Joachim Magdeburg, and others.

22 Not only the Philippist party but also many of Flacius’s friends among the Gnesio-Lutherans (including Simon Musaeus, Tilemann Hesshus, Johannes Wigand, Joachim Mörlin, and his associate Martin Chemnitz) were alienated from him by his position on original sin, because they feared it deprived the fallen human being of humanity itself. The implications they saw in Flacius’s falsely labeled “Manichaeism” position are presented clearly in FC I. Much of this article reproduces a memorandum

^aThis controversy regarding original sin is not an idle quarrel. On the contrary, if this teaching is correctly drawn from God’s Word and distinguished from all Pelagian²³ and Manichaeian²⁴ errors, then (as the Apology says [II, 33; IV, 45–46, 156–58]) people will better recognize and praise all the more the benefits of the Lord Christ and his precious merit, as well as the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. God will also be honored when his work and creation are correctly distinguished from the devil’s work, through which human nature has been corrupted. ^aTherefore, in order both to explain this dispute in a Christian way, according to God’s Word, and to maintain correct, pure teaching on original sin, we want to set forth theses and antitheses (that is, proper teaching and its contrary) in short statements from the writings mentioned above.

^{cf}First of all, it is true that not only should Christians regard and recognize as sin the actual violation of God’s commandments in their deeds, but they should also perceive and recognize that the horrible, dreadful, inherited disease corrupting their entire nature is above all actual sin and indeed is the “chief sin.” It is the root and fountainhead of all actual sins. ^cLuther calls this a “nature-sin” or “person-sin,”²⁵ in order to indicate that even if a human being thinks, says, or does nothing evil (which is, of course, after the fall of our first parents, impossible for human nature in this life), nevertheless, our entire nature and person is sinful, that is, totally and thoroughly corrupted in God’s sight and contaminated by original sin as with a spiritual leprosy. Because of this corruption and on account of the fall of the first human beings, God’s law accuses and condemns human nature and the human person. Therefore, Luther concludes, we are “by nature children of wrath” [Eph. 2:3*], of death, and of damnation, if we are not redeemed from them through Christ’s merit.

^cSecond, it is also clear and true, as the nineteenth article of the Augsburg Confession teaches, that God is not a creator, author, or cause of sin. Instead, by the instigation of the devil, “through one human being, sin” (which is a work of the devil) “came into the world” (Rom.

Chemnitz had written in 1571 for the city of Regensburg, where the ministerium was sharply divided by this issue.

23 The British monk Pelagius, Augustine’s opponent in the great controversy over grace and works of that time, lent his name to the view that salvation can be accomplished by human beings apart from, or with the assistance of very little, divine grace.

24 The non-Christian thinker Mani lent his name to a radical dualism that posited more or less equally powerful divine forces or persons on both the side of good and the side of evil.

25 For example, in his sermon on the Gospel lesson for the Festival of the Circumcision of Jesus (WA 51:354; cf. 46:39, 40).

*

³ All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.

[Ephesians 2:3 \(NRSV\)](#)

5[:12*]; 1 John 3[:8*]). To this day and in this state of corruption, God does not create and make sin in us, but along with human nature, which God still in this day and age creates in human beings, original sin is transmitted through carnal conception and birth from father and mother through the sinful seed.

^cThird, as the Smalcald Articles say [III, 1], “reason does not recognize” and knows nothing about the nature of this inherited defect. Instead, it must be learned and “believed on the basis of the revelation of the Scripture.” This is summarized in the Apology [II, 2–50] under these headings:

^f1. That this inherited defect is guilt, which causes us all to stand in God’s disfavor and to be “children of wrath by nature” because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, as the Apostle testifies in Romans 5[:12*].

^{cf}2. Second, that original sin is a complete absence or “lack of the original righteousness acquired in Paradise” [Ap II, 15] or of the image of God, according to which the human being was originally created in truth, holiness, and righteousness. At the same time it is the absence of any ability or competence in anything that relates to God or, as the Latin text says, “The

*

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—

[Romans 5:12 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

⁸ Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

[1 John 3:8 \(NRSV\)](#)

*

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—

[Romans 5:12 \(NRSV\)](#)

description of original sin deprives the unrenewed human nature of the gifts, powers, and all capacity to initiate and effect anything in spiritual matters.”²⁶

°3. That not only is original sin (in human nature) such a complete lack of all good in spiritual, divine matters, but also that at the same time it replaces the lost image of God in the human being with a deep-seated, evil, horrible, bottomless, unfathomable, and indescribable corruption of the entire human nature and of all its powers, particularly of the highest, most important powers of the soul, in mind, heart, and will. Ever since the fall, the human being inherits an inborn evil way of doing things, an internal impurity of the heart, and an evil desire and inclination, so that we all by nature inherit such a heart, mind, and way of thinking from Adam. Following its highest powers and in light of reason, this fallen heart is by nature diametrically opposed to God and his highest commandments. Indeed, it is hostile to God, particularly in regard to divine, spiritual matters. °True, in other—natural, external—matters, which are subject to reason, the human being retains to a certain extent its understanding, powers, and ability—even though so greatly weakened, so poisoned and adulterated through the inherited defect, that it is worth nothing in God’s sight.

cf4. The punishment and penalty for original sin, which God laid upon Adam’s children and upon original sin, is death, eternal damnation,²⁷ and also “other corporal” and spiritual, temporal, and eternal miseries, “the tyranny and domination of the devil.” “Human nature” is subject to the rule of the devil and “is abandoned to the devil’s power and imprisoned under his rule, which intoxicates and seduces many important and wise people in the world with horrible errors, heresies, and other blindness and drags people into all kinds of vice.”²⁸

°5. Fifth, this inherited defect is so huge and abominable that it can be covered and forgiven in God’s sight in those who are baptized and believe only for the sake of the Lord Christ. Only the new birth and renewal of the Holy Spirit can and must heal this deranged, corrupted human nature. This renewal only begins in this life; it is finally completed in the life to come.

°These points, cited here in summary fashion, are explained in more detail in the above-mentioned writings of the common confession of our Christian teaching.

26 This sentence was written first in Latin and then translated into German in the text of the Formula. It reproduces a paraphrase of Ap II, 2–3, from the *Corpus doctrinae Julium*, which Chemnitz had prepared for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel in 1576.

27 The Prussian critique of the Torgau Book urged inclusion of “eternal damnation” to impress upon readers the seriousness of human sinfulness.

28 This paragraph attempts to meet the concern that Flacius expressed with the term “image of Satan,” without actually adopting that terminology. With that term Flacius intended to make clear that fallen sinners have turned their faith from God to a false god. Because he believed that faith reflects the image of one’s god, those who trust in something other than the true God are believing the devil’s lie and are thus in his image.

°Such teaching must be preserved and guarded, so that it does not swerve either to the Pelagian side or to the Manichaeian side. Therefore, we must briefly show which teachings contrary to this article of faith are excluded and rejected in our churches.

°1. First, against old and new Pelagians, we reject and condemn the following false opinions and teachings: that original sin is merely a *reatus* (obligation resulting from a debt incurred by someone else) without any corruption of our nature.²⁹

°2. Likewise, that sinful, evil desires are not sin but *conditiones* (or created, essential characteristics) of our nature.³⁰

°3. Or that this lack and defect which we have mentioned are not really and truly sin in God's sight, because of which the human being apart from Christ must be a child of wrath and condemnation and under the rule and the power of Satan.

°4. These and similar Pelagian errors are also excluded and rejected: that human nature even after the fall is uncorrupted and, particularly in spiritual matters, completely good and pure, and, in its *naturalia* (that is, in its natural powers), perfect.³¹

°5. Or that original sin is only external, a simple, insignificant spot splashed on us, or a stain spilled on us, or a *corruptio tantum accidentium aut qualitatum* (that is, a corruption of something incidental to human nature), in spite of which and beneath which human nature still has and retains its goodness and power even in spiritual matters.³²

°6. Or that original sin is not a deprivation or lack of spiritual powers but only an external obstacle for such good, spiritual powers, just as coating a magnet with garlic juice does not take away its natural powers but only impedes them

1

29 Peter Lombard, *Sentences* II, d. 30, c. 6; cf. Chemnitz's critique, *Examination of the Council of Trent* 1:311–74.

30 Council of Trent, Session V, "Decree on Original Sin," chap. 5. Zwingli had expressed a similar position in *An Account of the Faith (Fidei ratio)* of 1530 (article IV, *BSRK*, 82–83; *Essays*, 40–42).

31 Council of Trent, Session V, "Decree on Original Sin," chap. 5.

32 So Flacius understood the position of Strigel, in his *Key to the Sacred Scriptures (Clavis scripturae sacrae, 1567)*, II. The literal translation of the Latin is "a corruption only of accidents and qualities."

¹Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. 2000. *The Book of Concord : The confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* . Fortress Press: Minneapolis