

II. OF FREE WILL.

STATUS CONTROVERSIAE.

The Principal Question in This Controversy.

1] Since the will of man is found in four unlike states, namely:

1. before the Fall; 2. since the Fall; 3. after regeneration; 4. after the resurrection of the body, the chief question is only concerning **the will and ability of man in the second state**, namely, **what powers in spiritual things he has of himself after the fall of our first parents and before regeneration**, and whether he is able by his own powers, prior to and before his regeneration by God's Spirit, to dispose and prepare himself for God's grace, and to accept [and apprehend], or not, the grace offered through the Holy Ghost in the Word and holy [divinely instituted] Sacraments.

AFFIRMATIVA.

The Pure Doctrine concerning This Article, according to God's Word.

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

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

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

NEGATIVA.
Contrary False Doctrine.

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

8] 1. The delirium [insane dogma] of philosophers who are called Stoics, as also of **the Manicheans**, who taught that **everything that happens must so happen, and cannot happen otherwise, and that everything that man does, even in outward things, he does by compulsion**, and that he is coerced to evil works and deeds, as in chastity, robbery, murder, theft, and the like.

9] 2. We reject also the error of **the gross Pelagians**, who taught that **man by his own powers, without the grace of the Holy Ghost, can turn himself to God, believe the Gospel, be obedient from the heart to God's Law, and thus merit the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.**

10] 3. We reject also the error of **the Semi-Pelagians**, who teach that **man by his own powers can make a beginning of his conversion**, but without the grace of the Holy Ghost cannot complete it.

11] 4. Also, when it is taught that, although **man by his free will before regeneration** is too weak to make a beginning, and by his own powers to turn himself to God, and from the heart to be obedient to God, yet, **if the Holy Ghost by the preaching of the Word has made a beginning, and therein offered His grace, then the will of man from its own natural powers can add something, though little and feebly, to this end, can help and cooperate, qualify and prepare itself for grace, and embrace and accept it, and believe the Gospel.**

12] 5. Also, that man, after he has been born again, can perfectly observe and completely fulfil God's Law, and that this fulfilling is our righteousness before God, by which we merit eternal life.

13] 6. Also, we reject and condemn the error of **the Enthusiasts**, who imagine that God **without means, without the hearing of God's Word**, also without the use of the holy Sacraments, draws men to Himself, and enlightens, justifies, and saves them. (Enthusiasts we call those who expect the heavenly illumination of the Spirit [celestial revelations] without the preaching of God's Word.)

14] 7. Also, that **in conversion and regeneration God entirely exterminates the substance and essence of the old Adam**, and especially the rational soul, and in conversion and regeneration creates a new essence of the soul out of nothing.

15] 8. Also, when the following expressions are employed without explanation, namely, **that the will of man before, in, and after conversion resists the Holy Ghost**,
and

that the Holy Ghost is given to those who resist Him intentionally and persistently; for, as Augustine says, in conversion *God makes willing persons out of the unwilling and dwells in the willing.*

16] As to the expressions of ancient and modern teachers of the Church, when it is said: *Deus trahit, sed volentem trahit, i. e., God draws, but He draws the willing*; likewise, *Hominis voluntas in conversione non est otiosa, sed agit aliquid, i. e., In conversion the will of man is not idle, but also effects something*, we maintain that, inasmuch as these expressions have been introduced for confirming [the false opinion concerning] the powers of the natural free will in

man's conversion, against the doctrine of God's grace, they do not conform to the form of sound doctrine, and therefore, when we speak of conversion to God, **justly ought to be avoided.**

17] But, on the other hand, it is correctly said that **in conversion God, through the drawing of the Holy Ghost, makes out of stubborn and unwilling men willing ones, and that after such conversion in the daily exercise of repentance the regenerate will of man is not idle,** but also cooperates in all the works of the Holy Ghost, which He performs through us.

18] 9. Also what Dr. Luther has written, namely, **that man's will in his conversion is *pure passive***, that is, that it does nothing whatever, is to be understood *respectu divinae gratiae in accendendis novis motibus*, that is, **when God's Spirit, through the Word heard or the use of the holy Sacraments, lays hold upon man's will, and works [in man] the new birth and conversion.** For when [after] the Holy Ghost has wrought and accomplished this, and man's will has been changed and renewed by His divine power and working alone, then the new will of man is an instrument and organ of God the Holy Ghost, so that he not only accepts grace, but also cooperates with the Holy Ghost in the works which follow.

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

131. Various Theological Controversies.

Following is a synopsis and summary of the main controversies within the Lutheran Church after the death of Luther, which were settled in the first eleven articles of the *Formula of Concord*. The sequence of these articles, however, is not strictly historical and chronological, but dogmatic. In the main, the arrangement of the Augsburg Confession is observed.

The first of these controversies was the so-called **Adiaphoristic Controversy, from 1548 to 1555, in which the Wittenberg and Leipzig theologians (Melancthon, Eber, Pfeffinger, etc.) defended the Leipzig Interim and the reintroduction of Romish ceremonies into the Lutheran Church.** They were opposed by the champions of a consistent and determined Lutheranism, led by Flacius, who declared: "*Nihil est adiaphoron in statu confessionis et scandalii*. Nothing is an adiaphoron in case of confession and offense." The controversy was decided by Article X.

The second is the **Majoristic Controversy, from 1551 to 1562, in which George Major and Justus Menius defended the phrase of Melancthon that good works are necessary to salvation.** They were opposed by the loyal Lutherans, of whom Amsdorf, however, lapsed into the opposite error: Good works are detrimental to salvation. This controversy was settled by Article IV.

The third is the **Synergistic Controversy, from 1555 to 1560**, in which Pfeffinger, Eber, Major, Crell, Pezel, Strigel, and Stoessel **held with Melancthon that man by his own natural powers cooperates in his conversion**. Their opponents (Amsdorf, Flacius, Hesshusius, Wigand, Gallus, Musaeus, and Judex) taught, as formulated by Flacius: “*Solus Deus convertit hominem ... Non excludit voluntatem, sed omnem efficaciam et operationem eius....* God alone converts man ... He does not exclude the will, but all efficaciousness and operation of the same.” This controversy was decided and settled by Article II.

The fourth is the **Flacian Controversy, from 1560 to 1575**, in which Flacius, supported by Cyriacus Spangenberg, Christian Irenaeus, Matthias Wolf, I. F. Coelestinus, Schneider, and others, **maintained that original sin is not an accident, but the very substance of fallen man**. The Lutherans, including the Philippists, were practically unanimous in opposing this error. It was decided by Article I.

The fifth was the **Osiandristic and the Stancarian Controversy, from 1549 to 1566**, in which **Andrew Osiander denied the forensic character of justification, and taught that Christ is our righteousness only according to His divine nature, while Stancarus contended that Christ is our righteousness according to His human nature only**. Both, Osiander as well as Stancarus, were opposed by Melancthon, Flacius, and practically all other Lutherans, the Philippists included. This controversy was settled by Article III.

The sixth was the **Antinomistic Controversy, from 1527 to 1556**, in which various false views concerning the Law and the Gospel were defended, especially by John Agricola who **maintained that repentance (contrition) is not wrought by the Law, but by the Gospel** (a view which, in a modified form was later on defended also by Wittenberg Philippists), and, **after Luther’s death, by Poach and Otto, who rejected the so-called Third Use of the Law**. The questions involved in these Antinomian controversies were decided by Articles V and VI.

The seventh was the **Crypto-Calvinistic Controversy, from 1560 to 1574**, in which the Philippists in Wittenberg, Leipzig, and Dresden (Peucer, Cracow, Stoessel, etc.) **endeavored gradually to supplant Luther’s doctrines concerning the Lord’s Supper and the majesty of the human nature of Christ by the Calvinistic teachings on these points**. These secret and dishonest enemies of Lutheranism were opposed by true Lutherans everywhere, notably by the theologians of Ducal Saxony. In 1574 they were publicly unmasked as deceivers and Calvinistic schemers. The controversy was settled by Articles VII and VIII.

The two last controversies were of a local nature. The first was chiefly confined to Hamburg, the second to Strassburg. In the former city **John Aepinus taught that Christ’s descent into hell was a part of His suffering and humiliation**. He was opposed by his colleagues in Hamburg. In Strassburg John Marbach publicly denounced **Zanchi, a Crypto-Calvinist, for teaching that faith, once engendered in a man, cannot be lost**. The questions involved in these two articles are dealt with in Articles IX and XI, respectively.