

Apology of the Augsburg Confession II. Original Sin

² ... for it{AC II} says: “It is also taught that since the fall of Adam all men who are born according to the course of nature **are conceived and born in sin**. That is, all men are

--full of evil lusts and inclinations from their mothers’ wombs

--and are unable by nature to have true fear of God or true faith in God.”³

³ This passage testifies that in those who are born according to the flesh we deny the existence not only of actual fear and trust in God but also of the possibility and gift to produce it. We say that anyone born in this way has **concupiscence** and **cannot produce true fear and trust in God**. ... When we use the term “concupiscence,” we do not mean only its acts or fruits, but **the continual inclination of nature...**

⁹ To be able to love God above all things by one’s own power and to obey his commandments, what else is this but to have **original righteousness**? ¹⁰ If human nature has such powers that by itself it can love God above all things, as the scholastics confidently assert, then what can original sin be? What need is there for the grace of Christ if we can become righteous by our own righteousness? What need is there for the Holy Spirit if human powers by themselves can love God above all things and obey his commandments? ...

¹⁴ This was why in our definition of original sin we also mentioned concupiscence and denied to man’s natural powers the fear and trust of God. We wanted to show that original sin also involves such faults as ignorance of God, contempt of God, lack of the fear of God and of trust in him, inability to love him. These are the chief flaws in human nature, transgressing as they do **the first table of the Decalogue**.

¹⁵ We have said nothing new. Properly understood, the old definition says exactly the same thing, “**Original sin is the lack of original righteousness.**”⁸ But what is righteousness? Here the scholastics quibble about philosophical questions and do not explain what original righteousness is. ¹⁶ In the Scriptures righteousness contains not merely **the second table of the Decalogue, but also the first**, commanding fear of God, faith and love toward him. ¹⁷ So original righteousness was intended to involve not only a balanced physical constitution, but these gifts as well: a surer knowledge of God, fear of God, trust in God, or at least the inclination and power to do these things. ¹⁸ This the Scripture shows when it says that man was created in **the image of God and after his likeness** (Gen. 1:27). What else is this than that a wisdom and righteousness was implanted in man that would grasp God and reflect him, that is, that man received gifts like the knowledge of God, fear of God, and trust in God?

Apology of the Augsburg Confession IV. Justification

¹ In the fourth, fifth, and sixth articles, and later in the twentieth, they condemn us for teaching that **men do not receive the forgiveness of sins because of their own merits, but freely for Christ’s sake, by faith in him**. They condemn us both for denying that men receive the forgiveness of sins because of their merits, and for affirming that men receive the forgiveness of sins by faith and by faith in Christ are justified.⁸

² In this controversy **the main doctrine of Christianity** is involved; when it is properly understood, it illumines and magnifies the honor of Christ and brings to pious consciences the abundant consolation that they need. We therefore ask His Imperial Majesty kindly to hear us out on this important issue. ³ For since they understand neither the forgiveness of sins nor faith nor grace nor righteousness, **our opponents confuse this doctrine miserably, they obscure the glory and the blessings of Christ, and they rob pious consciences of the consolation offered them in Christ.** ⁴ To substantiate our Confession and to refute the objections of our opponents,

we shall have to say a few things by way of preface so that the sources of both kinds of doctrine, the opponents' and our own, might be recognized.

⁵ All Scripture should be divided into these **two chief doctrines, the law and the promises**. In some places it presents the law. In others it presents the promise of Christ; this it does either when it promises that the Messiah will come and promises forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life for his sake, or when, in the New Testament, the Christ who came promises forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life. ⁶ **By "law" in this discussion we mean the commandments of the Decalogue, wherever they appear in the Scriptures. For the present we are saying nothing about the ceremonial and civil laws of Moses.**

⁷ Of these two doctrines our opponents select the law and by it they seek forgiveness of sins and justification. **For to some extent human reason naturally understands the law** since it has the same judgment naturally written in the mind. ⁸ But the Decalogue does not only require external works that reason can somehow perform. It also requires **other works far beyond the reach of reason**, like true fear of God, true love of God, true prayer to God, true conviction that God hears prayer, and the expectation of God's help in death and all afflictions. Finally, it requires obedience to God in death and all afflictions, lest we try to flee these things or turn away when God imposes them.

⁹ Here the scholastics have followed the philosophers. Thus they teach only **the righteousness of reason — that is, civil works** — and maintain that without the Holy Spirit reason can love God above all things. As long as a man's mind is at rest and he does not feel God's wrath or judgment, he can imagine that he wants to love God and that he wants to do good for God's sake. In this way the scholastics teach men to merit the forgiveness of sins by doing what is within them, that is, if reason in its sorrow over sin elicits an act of love to God or does good for God's sake.⁹ ¹⁰ Because **this view naturally flatters men, it has produced and increased many types of worship in the church**, like monastic vows and the abuses of the Mass; someone has always been making up this or that form of worship or devotion with this view in mind. ¹¹ To support and increase trust in such works, the scholastics have declared that by necessity — the necessity of unchanging order, not of compulsion — God grants grace to those who do this.¹

¹² In this point of view there are many vicious errors that would take a long time to enumerate. But let the intelligent reader just consider this. **If this is Christian righteousness, what difference is there between philosophy and the teaching of Christ? If we merit the forgiveness of sins by these elicited acts of ours, of what use is Christ? If we can be justified by reason and its works, what need is there of Christ or of regeneration?** ¹³ On the basis of these opinions, things have come to such a pass that many people ridicule us for teaching that men ought to seek **some righteousness beyond the philosophical**. ¹⁴ We have heard of some who, in their sermons, laid aside the Gospel and expounded the ethics of Aristotle. If the opponents' ideas are correct, this was perfectly proper, for Aristotle wrote so well on natural ethics that nothing further needs to be added. ¹⁵ We see that there are books in existence which compare certain teachings of Christ with the teachings of Socrates, Zeno, and others, as though Christ had come to give some sort of laws by which we could merit the forgiveness of sins rather than receiving it freely for his merits. ¹⁶ So if we accept this teaching of the opponents that we merit forgiveness of sins and justification by the works of reason, there will be no difference between philosophical or Pharisaic righteousness and Christian righteousness....

²¹ Thus our opponents teach nothing but **the righteousness of reason or of law**, at which they look as the Jews did at the veiled face of Moses.³ In smug hypocrites, who think that they

are keeping the law, they arouse presumption, a vain trust in works and a contempt for the grace of Christ. Timid consciences, on the other hand, they drive to despair because in their doubt they can never experience what faith is and how effective it is. And at last they despair utterly.

²² **We for our part maintain that God requires the righteousness of reason.** Because of God's command, honorable works commanded in the Decalogue should be performed, according to Gal. 3:24, "The law is a custodian," and 1 Tim. 1:9, "The law is laid down for the lawless." For God wants this civil discipline to restrain the unspiritual, and to preserve it he has given laws, learning, teaching, governments, and penalties. ²³ To some extent, reason can produce this righteousness by its own strength, though it is often overwhelmed by its natural weakness and by the devil, who drives it to open crimes. ²⁴ We freely give this righteousness of reason its due credit; for our corrupt nature has no greater good than this, as Aristotle correctly says, "Neither the evening star nor the morning star is more beautiful than righteousness."²⁴ God even honors it with material rewards. **Nevertheless, it ought not be praised at the expense of Christ....**

³¹ John 8:36 says, "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." Therefore reason cannot free us from our sins or merit for us the forgiveness of sins. And in John 3:5 it is written, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God." But if we must be born again through the Holy Spirit, then the righteousness of reason does not justify us before God, it does not keep the law. ³² And Rom. 3:23 says, "All fall short of the glory of God," that is, they lack the wisdom and righteousness of God which acknowledge and glorify him. And Rom. 8:7, 8, "The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."³³ These words are so clear that they do not need an acute understanding but only attentive listening — to use the words that Augustine uses in discussing this matter.⁶

If the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, then the flesh sins even when it performs **outward civil works**. If it cannot submit to God's law, it is certainly sinning even when it produces deeds that are excellent and praiseworthy in human eyes. ³⁴ Our opponents concentrate on **the commandments of the second table**, which contain the civil righteousness that reason understands. Content with this, they think they satisfy the law of God. Meanwhile they do not see **the first table, which commands us to love God, to be sure that God is wrathful at our sin, to fear him truly, and to be sure that he hears us**. But without the Holy Spirit, the human heart either despises the judgment of God in its smugness, or in the midst of punishment it flees and hates his judgment. ³⁵ **So it does not obey the first table.** It is inherent in man to despise God and to doubt his Word with its threats and promises. Therefore men really sin even when they do virtuous things without the Holy Spirit; for they do them with a wicked heart, and (Rom. 14:23) "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." Such people despise God when they do these things, as Epicurus did not believe that God cared for him or regarded or heard him.⁷ This contempt for God corrupts works that seem virtuous, for God judges the heart....

⁴⁰ Therefore men cannot keep the law by their own strength, and they are all under sin and subject to eternal wrath and death. On this account **the law cannot free us from sin or justify us, but the promise of the forgiveness of sins and justification was given because of Christ. He was given for us to make satisfaction for the sins of the world and has been appointed as the mediator and the propitiator.** ⁴¹ **This promise is not conditional** upon our merits but offers the forgiveness of sins and justification freely. As Paul says (Rom. 11:6), "If it is by works, it is no longer on the basis of grace." Elsewhere he says, "Now, the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law" (Rom. 3:21), that is, the forgiveness of sins is offered freely. Reconciliation does not depend upon our merits. ⁴² If the forgiveness of sins depended upon our

merits and if reconciliation were by the law, it would be useless. For since we do not keep the law, it would follow that we would never obtain the promise of reconciliation. So Paul reasons in Rom. 4:14, “If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.” For if the promise were conditional upon our merits and the law, which we never keep, it would follow that the promise is useless.

AP. IV, PART 4: LOVE AND THE KEEPING OF THE LAW

¹²² Here our opponents urge against us the texts, “If you would enter life, keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:17), “The doers of the law will be justified” (Rom. 2:13), and many similar passages regarding the law and works. Before answering these, we must say what we believe about love and the keeping of the law.

¹²³ It is written in the prophet (Jer. 31:33), “I will put my law upon their hearts.” In Rom. 3:31 Paul says that faith does not overthrow but upholds the law. Christ says (Matt. 19:17), “If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” And again, “If I have not love, I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13:2). ¹²⁴ These and similar passages assert that we should begin to keep the law ever more and more. **We are not speaking of ceremonies, but of Decalogue, the law that deals with the thoughts of the heart.** ¹²⁵ Since faith brings the Holy Spirit and produces a new life in our hearts, it must also produce spiritual impulses in our hearts. What these impulses are, the prophet shows when he says (Jer. 31:33), “I will put my law upon their hearts.” **After we have been justified and regenerated by faith, therefore, we begin to fear and love God, to pray and expect help from him, to thank and praise him, and to submit to him in our afflictions. Then we also begin to love our neighbor because our hearts have spiritual and holy impulses.**

¹²⁶ This cannot happen until, being justified and regenerated, we receive the Holy Spirit. First, it is impossible to keep the law without Christ; it is impossible to keep the law without the Holy Spirit. ¹²⁷ But the Spirit is received by faith, according to Paul’s word (Gal. 3:14), “That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” ¹²⁸ Then, too, how can the human heart love God while it knows that in his terrible wrath he is overwhelming us with temporal and eternal calamities? The law always accuses us, it always shows that God is wrathful. ¹²⁹ We cannot love God until we have grasped his mercy by faith. Only then does he become an object that can be loved.

¹³⁰ Although it is somewhat possible to do **civil works, that is, the outward works of the law**, without Christ and the Holy Spirit, **still the impulses of the heart toward God, belonging to the essence of the divine law, are impossible without the Holy Spirit**; this is evident from what we have already said. ¹³¹ But our opponents are fine theologians! They look at **the second table and political works**; about **the first table** they care nothing, as though it were irrelevant, or at best they require **only outward acts of worship**. They utterly overlook that eternal law, far beyond the senses and understanding of all creatures: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Deut. 6:5).

¹³² But Christ was given so that for his sake we might receive the gift of the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit, to bring forth in us eternal righteousness and a new and eternal life. Therefore we cannot correctly keep the law unless by faith we have received the Holy Spirit. Paul says that faith does not overthrow but upholds the law (Rom. 3:31) because the law can be kept only when the Holy Spirit is given. ¹³³ In 2 Cor. 3:15-17 he states that **the veil that covered the face of Moses cannot be removed except by faith**, which receives the Holy Spirit. For this is what he says: “Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a

man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Now, the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”¹³⁴ By the “veil” Paul means human opinion about the entire law, both the moral and the ceremonial; that is, hypocrites think that outward and civil works satisfy the law of God and that sacrifice and ritual justify before God *ex opere operato*.¹³⁵ But this veil is removed from us, and this error taken away, when God shows us our uncleanness and the greatness of our sin. Only then do we see how far we are from keeping the law. Then we recognize how our flesh in its smugness and indifference does not fear God or truly believe in his providential care, but supposes that men are born and die by chance. Then we experience our failure to believe that God forgives and hears us. But when we are consoled by faith through hearing the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins, we receive the Holy Spirit, so that we can think rightly about God, fear him, and believe in him. **From this it is clear that without Christ and without the Holy Spirit we cannot keep the law.**

¹³⁶ **Therefore we also hold that the keeping of the law should begin in us and increase more and more.** But we mean to include both elements, namely, the inward spiritual impulses and the outward good works. Our opponents slanderously claim that we do not require good works, whereas we not only require them but show how they can be done.¹³⁷ The results show that hypocrites who try to keep the law by their own strength cannot achieve what they set out to do.¹³⁸ For human nature is far too weak to be able by its own strength to resist the devil, who holds enthralled all who have not been freed by faith.¹³⁹ Nothing less than Christ’s power is needed for our conflict with the devil. We know that for Christ’s sake we have a gracious God and his promise. And therefore we pray that the Holy Spirit may govern and defend us, so that we may not be deceived and err, nor be driven to do anything against God’s will. So the Psalm teaches (Ps. 68:18), “He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.” For Christ conquered the devil and gave us his promise and the Holy Spirit, so that with the help of God we, too, might conquer. And 1 John 3:8 says, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”

¹⁴⁰ We teach, furthermore, not only how the law can be kept, but also that God is pleased when we keep it — not because we live up to it but because we are in Christ, as we shall show a little later. **So it is clear that we require good works.**¹⁴¹ **In fact, we add that it is impossible to separate faith from love for God, be it ever so small.** For through Christ we come to the Father; and having received the forgiveness of sins, we become sure that we have a gracious God who cares about us, we call upon him, give thanks to him, fear and love him. So John teaches in his first epistle (4:19); “We love,” he says, “because he first loved us,” that is, because he gave his Son for us and forgave us our sins. So he indicates that faith precedes while love follows.¹⁴² **The faith of which we are speaking, moreover, has its existence in penitence;** that is, it is conceived in the terrors of a conscience that feels God’s wrath against our sins and looks for forgiveness of sins and deliverance from sin. This faith ought to grow and be strengthened in these terrors and in other afflictions.¹⁴³ **And so it cannot exist in those who live according to the flesh, who take pleasure in their lusts and obey them.** Therefore Paul says (Rom. 8:1), “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” And in Rom. 8:12, 13 he says, “We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”¹⁴⁴ Receiving the forgiveness of sins for a heart terrified and fleeing from sin, therefore, such a faith does not remain in those who obey their lusts, nor does it exist together with mortal sin....

¹⁵⁶ We are debating about an important issue, **the honor of Christ and the source of sure and firm consolation for pious minds — whether we should put our trust in Christ or in our own works.** ¹⁵⁷ If we put it in our works, we rob Christ of his honor as mediator and propitiator. And in the judgment of God we shall learn that this trust was vain and our consciences will then plunge into despair. For if the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation do not come freely for Christ's sake, but for the sake of our love, nobody will have the forgiveness of sins unless he keeps the whole law, because the law does not justify so long as it can accuse us. ¹⁵⁸ Justification is reconciliation for Christ's sake. Therefore it is clear that we are justified by faith, for it is sure that we receive the forgiveness of sins by faith alone.

¹⁵⁹ Now let us reply to the objection of the opponents referred to above. They are right when they say that **love is the keeping of the law**, and obedience to the law certainly is righteousness. But they are mistaken when they think that we are justified by the law. **We are not justified by the law; but we receive the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation by faith for Christ's sake, not for the sake of love or the keeping of the law.** From this it necessarily follows that we are justified by faith in Christ.

¹⁶⁰ When this keeping of the law and obedience to the law is perfect, it is indeed righteousness; but in us it is weak and impure. Therefore it does not please God for its own sake, and it is not acceptable for its own sake. ¹⁶¹ From what we have said it is clear that justification does not mean merely the beginning of our renewal, but the reconciliation by which we are later accepted. Nevertheless, it is more clearly evident now that this incipient keeping of the law does not justify, because it is accepted only on account of faith. We must not trust that we are accounted righteous before God by our own perfection and keeping of the law, but only because of Christ.

¹⁷⁷ **We must conclude**, therefore, that being reconciled by faith we are accounted righteous because of Christ, not because of the law or our works. The incipient keeping of the law pleases God because of faith; because of faith our failure to keep it is not imputed to us, although the sight of our impurity thoroughly frightens us. ¹⁷⁸ If, then, we must seek justification elsewhere, our love and works do not justify. Far above our purity — yes, far above the law itself — should be placed the death and satisfaction of Christ, bestowed upon us to assure us that because of this satisfaction and not because of our keeping of the law we have a gracious God....

¹⁸⁹ **Good works should be done** because **God has commanded them and in order to exercise our faith, to give testimony, and to render thanks. For these reasons good works must necessarily be done.** They take place in a flesh that is partly unregenerate and hinders what the Holy Spirit motivates, fouling it with its impurity. Because of faith they are nevertheless holy and divine works, sacrifices, and the reign of Christ, whereby he shows his rule before the world. For in these works he sanctifies hearts and suppresses the devil. And in order to keep the Gospel among men, he visibly pits the witness of the saints against the rule of the devil; in our weakness he displays his strength. ¹⁹⁰ The dangers, labors, and sermons of the apostle Paul, Athanasius, Augustine, and other teachers of the church are holy works, true sacrifices acceptable to God, battles by which Christ restrained the devil and drove him away from the believers. ¹⁹¹ David's labors in waging war and in governing the state are holy works, true sacrifices, battles of God to defend the people who had God's Word against the devil, that the knowledge of God might not perish utterly from the earth....

²⁰³ **Good works ought to follow faith in this way. But they are put to a different use by anyone who cannot believe and be sure in his heart that for Christ's sake he is freely forgiven and freely has a gracious God.** When such a person sees the works of the saints, he supposes, in human fashion, that through these works the saints merited grace and the forgiveness of sins. Then he imitates them in the delusion that by similar works he will merit grace and forgiveness of sins, appease the wrath of God, and achieve justification because of these works. ²⁰⁴ We condemn this wicked idea about works. First, **it obscures the glory of Christ** when men offer these works to God as a price and propitiation, thus giving our works an honor that belongs only to Christ. Secondly, **they still do not find peace of conscience in these works**, but in real terror they pile up works and ultimately despair because they cannot find works pure enough. The law always accuses them and brings forth wrath. Thirdly, such people never attain the knowledge of God, for in their anger they flee his judgment and never believe that he hears them. ²⁰⁵ But faith gives assurance of God's presence when it is sure that he freely forgives and hears us....

³¹⁰ **Thus the service and worship of the Gospel is to receive good things from God, while the worship of the law is to offer and present our goods to God.** We cannot offer anything to God unless we have first been reconciled and reborn. The greatest possible comfort comes from this doctrine that the highest worship in the Gospel is the desire to receive forgiveness of sins, grace, and righteousness. About this worship Christ speaks in John 6:40, "This is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life." And the Father says (Matt. 17:5), "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."...

³⁴⁴ Let us therefore hold to the church's confession that we are saved through mercy. At this point someone may say, "Hope will be uncertain if we are saved through mercy and if, prior to salvation, there is nothing to distinguish those who are saved from those who are not." To this we must give a satisfactory answer. It seems that for some such reason the scholastics invented the term "merit of condignity." ³⁴⁵ This can be a great problem to the human mind. We shall therefore reply briefly. Precisely in order to make hope sure and to distinguish between those who are saved and those who are not, we must hold that we are saved through mercy. Unless it is qualified, this statement seems absurd. In courts of human judgment a right or debt is certain, while mercy is uncertain. The judgment of God is another thing altogether. Here mercy has God's clear and certain promise and his command. **Properly speaking, the Gospel is the command to believe that we have a gracious God because of Christ. "God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned," etc. (John 3:17, 18).** ³⁴⁶ **So whenever mercy is spoken of, faith in the promise must be added. This faith produces a sure hope, for it rests on the Word and commandment of God.** If our hope were to rest on works, then it would really be unsure since works cannot still the conscience, as we have often said above. ³⁴⁷ This faith makes the difference between those who are saved and those who are not. Faith makes the difference between the worthy and the unworthy because eternal life is promised to the justified and it is faith that justifies.