

AUGSBURG CONFESSION, V. [THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY]

¹ To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. ² Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. ³ And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.

⁴ Condemned are **the Anabaptists** and others⁵ who teach that **the Holy Spirit comes to us through our own preparations, thoughts, and works without the external word of the Gospel.**

Apology XIII The Sacraments p. 212 - ¹³ It is good to extol the ministry of the Word with every possible kind of praise in opposition to **the fanatics** who dream that the Holy Spirit **does not come through the Word but because of their own preparations.** They sit in a dark corner doing and saying nothing, but only waiting for illumination, as the enthusiasts taught formerly and the Anabaptists teach now.

SA, III, VIII - ³ In these matters, which concern the external, spoken Word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that **God gives no one his Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word which comes before.** Thus we shall be protected from **the enthusiasts** — **that is, from the spiritualists who boast that they possess the Spirit without and before the Word** and who therefore judge, interpret, and twist the Scriptures or spoken Word according to their pleasure.

Apology IV Justification p. 109.17, 162 - ¹⁷ In order not to by-pass Christ altogether, **our opponents** require a knowledge of the history about Christ and claim that he merited for us a certain disposition or, as they call it, **“initial grace,”** which they understand as a disposition inclining us to love God more easily. It is clear, however, what they ascribe to this disposition, for they imagine that **the acts of the will before the disposition and those after it are of the same type.** They imagine that the will can love God, but that this disposition stimulates it to do so more freely. **They bid us merit this first disposition by our preceding merits. Then they bid us merit an increase of this disposition and eternal life by the works of the law.** ¹⁸ Thus they bury Christ; men should not use him as mediator and believe that for his sake they freely receive the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation, but should dream that they merit the forgiveness of sins and are accounted righteous by their own keeping of the law before God....

¹⁶² This is so because, first of all, **Christ does not stop being the mediator after our renewal. It is an error to suppose that he merely merited “initial grace” and that afterward we please God and merit eternal life by our keeping of the law.** ¹⁶³ **Christ remains the mediator.** We must always be sure that for his sake we have a gracious God in spite of our unworthiness. Paul clearly teaches this when he says (1 Cor. 4:4), “I am not aware of anything against me, but I am not thereby justified.” ...

FC Ep II, 11 *The following teaching is rejected and condemned...* ¹¹ **4.** Likewise the teaching that while before his conversion man is indeed too weak by his free will to make a beginning, convert himself to God, and whole-heartedly obey God’s law by his own powers, yet after the Holy Spirit has made the beginning through the preaching of the Word and in it has offered his grace, **man’s will is forthwith able by its own natural powers to add something (though it be**

little and feeble) to help, to cooperate, to prepare itself for grace, to dispose itself, to apprehend and accept it, and to believe the Gospel.

FC SD II, 3

³ The one party³ held and taught that, although by his own powers and without the gift of the Holy Spirit man is unable to fulfill the commandment of God, to trust God truly, to fear and to love him, man nevertheless still has so much of his natural powers prior to his conversion that he can to some extent **prepare himself for grace and give his assent to it, though weakly**, but that without the gift of the Holy Spirit he could accomplish nothing with these powers but would succumb in the conflict.

FC SD II, 77

⁷⁷ **4.** The teaching of **the synergists**,⁸ who maintain that in spiritual things man is not wholly dead toward that which is good, but only grievously wounded and half-dead. As a result, his free will is too weak to make a beginning and by its own powers to convert itself to God and to obey the law of God from the heart. **Nevertheless, after the Holy Spirit has made the beginning and has called us by the Gospel and offers his grace, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, then the free will by its own natural powers can meet God and to some degree — though only to a small extent and in a weak way — help and cooperate and prepare itself for the grace of God, embrace and accept it, believe the Gospel, and by its own powers cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the continuation and preservation of this work within us.** ⁷⁸ *But we have shown above that such a capacity naturally to prepare oneself for grace does not come from man's own natural powers but solely through the operation of the Holy Spirit...*

⁸² **8.** We also reject the following formulas if they are used without explanation: that man's will before, in, and after conversion resists the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit is given to those who resist him. ⁸³ From the foregoing exposition it is clear that when the Holy Spirit's activity produces no change at all for the good in the intellect, will, and heart, when man in no way believes the promise and is not prepared by God for grace, but wholly resists the Word, conversion does not and cannot take place. **For conversion is that kind of change through the Holy Spirit's activity in the intellect, will, and heart of man whereby man through such working of the Holy Spirit is able to accept the offered grace. All who stubbornly and perseveringly resist the Holy Spirit's activities and impulses, which take place through the Word, do not receive the Holy Spirit but grieve and lose him.**

⁸⁴ *Of course, there remains also in the regenerated a resistance*, of which the Scriptures say that the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and likewise that the passions of the flesh wage war against the soul, and the law in our members is at war with the law of our mind.⁴

⁸⁵ Hence **the unregenerated man resists God entirely** and is completely the servant of sin. *But the regenerated man delights in the law of God according to the inmost self, though he also sees in his members the law of sin at war with the law of his mind. For that reason with the law of his mind he serves the law of God, but with his flesh he serves the law of sin (Rom. 7:22, 23, 25).* In this way one can and should explain and teach the correct opinion in this matter thoroughly, clearly, and definitively....

⁸⁹ Again, when Luther says that man behaves in a purely passive way⁶ in his conversion (that is, that man does not do anything toward it and that man only suffers that which God works in him), **he did not mean that conversion takes place without the preaching and the hearing of the divine Word, nor did he mean that in conversion the Holy Spirit engenders no new**

impulses and begins no spiritual operations in us. On the contrary, it is his understanding that man of himself or by his natural powers is unable to do anything and cannot assist in any way toward his conversion, and that man's conversion is not only in part, but entirely, **the operation, gift, endowment, and work of the Holy Spirit alone, who accomplishes and performs it by his power and might through the Word in the intellect, will, and heart of man.** Man is, as it were, the subject which suffers. That is, man does or works nothing; he only suffers — though not as a stone does when a statue is carved out of it, or wax when a seal is impressed into it, for these do not know anything about what is going on or perceive or will anything in connection with it, but in the way and after the manner set forth and explained above.

⁹⁰ The young students at our universities have been greatly misled by the doctrine of the three efficient causes of unregenerated man's conversion to God, particularly as to the manner in which these three (the Word of God preached and heard, the Holy Spirit, and man's will) concur.⁷ From the previous explanation it is evident that conversion to God is solely of God the Holy Spirit, who is the true craftsman who alone works these things, for which he uses the preaching and the hearing of his holy Word as his ordinary means and instrument. The unconverted man's intellect and will are only that which is to be converted, since they are the intellect and will of a man who is spiritually dead, in whom the Holy Spirit works conversion and renewal. Toward this work the will of the person who is to be converted does nothing, but only lets God work in him, until he is converted. **Then he cooperates with the Holy Spirit in subsequent good works by doing that which is pleasing to God, in the manner and degree set forth in detail above.**

Large Catechism, Third Commandment

⁹¹ The Word of God is the true holy thing above all holy things. Indeed, it is the only one we Christians acknowledge and have. Though we had the bones of all the saints or all the holy and consecrated vestments gathered together in one heap, they could not help us in the slightest degree, for they are all dead things that can sanctify no one. **But God's Word is the treasure that sanctifies all things.** By it all the saints themselves have been sanctified.⁹² **At whatever time God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work are sanctified by it, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word which makes us all saints.** Accordingly, I constantly repeat that all our life and work must be guided by God's Word if they are to be God-pleasing or holy. Where that happens the commandment is in force and is fulfilled.

⁹³ Conversely, any conduct or work done apart from God's Word is unholy in the sight of God, no matter how splendid and brilliant it may appear, or even if it be altogether covered with holy relics, as are the so-called spiritual estates⁷ who do not know God's Word but seek holiness in their own works.

⁹⁴ Note, then, that the power and force of this commandment consist not of the resting but of the sanctifying, so that this day should have its own particular holy work. Other trades and occupations are not properly called holy work unless the doer himself is first holy. **But here a work must be performed by which the doer himself is made holy; this, as we have heard, takes place only through God's Word. Places, times, persons, and the entire outward order of worship are therefore instituted and appointed in order that God's Word may exert its power publicly.**

⁹⁵ Since so much depends on God's Word that no holy day is sanctified without it, we must realize that God insists upon a strict observance of this commandment and will punish all who despise his Word and refuse to hear and learn it, especially at the times appointed.

⁹⁶ Therefore this commandment is violated not only by those who grossly misuse and desecrate the holy day, like those who in their greed or frivolity neglect to hear God's Word or lie around in taverns dead drunk like swine, but also by that multitude of others who listen to God's Word as they would to any other entertainment, who only from force of habit go to hear preaching and depart again with as little knowledge of the Word at the end of the year as at the beginning. ⁹⁷ It used to be thought that Sunday had been properly hallowed if one heard a Mass or the reading of the Gospel; no one asked about God's Word, and no one taught it either. Now that we have God's Word, we still fail to remove the abuse of the holy day, for we permit ourselves to be preached to and admonished **but we listen without serious concern.**

⁹⁸ **Remember, then, that you must be concerned not only about hearing the Word but also about learning and retaining it.** Do not regard it as an optional or unimportant matter. It is the commandment of God, and he will require of you an accounting of how you have heard and learned and honored his Word.

...¹⁰¹ On the other hand, when we seriously ponder the Word, hear it, and put it to use, such is its power that it never departs without fruit. It always awakens new understanding, new pleasure, and a new spirit of devotion, and it constantly cleanses the heart and its meditations. For these words are not idle or dead, but effective and living....

Large Catechism, Lord's Prayer, 26

²⁶ But where there is true prayer there must be earnestness. We must feel our need, the distress that impels and drives us to cry out. Then prayer will come spontaneously, as it should, **and we shall not need to be taught how to prepare for it or how to generate devotion.** ²⁷ The need which ought to be the concern of both ourselves and others is quite amply indicated in the Lord's Prayer. Therefore it may serve to remind us and impress upon us not to become negligent about praying. We all have needs enough, but the trouble is that we do not feel or see them. God therefore wishes you to lament and express your needs and wants, **not because he is unaware of them,** but in order that you may kindle your heart to stronger and greater desires and spread your cloak wide to receive many things.

Small Catechism

⁹ Who, then, receives this sacrament worthily?

¹⁰ Answer: Fasting and bodily preparation are a good external discipline, but he is truly worthy and well prepared **who believes these words**: “for you” and “for the forgiveness of sins.” On the other hand, he who does not believe these words, or doubts them, is unworthy and unprepared, for the words “for you” require truly believing hearts.

Large Catechism V

³³ So far we have treated the sacrament from the standpoint both of its essence and of its effect and benefit. It remains for us to consider who it is that receives this power and benefit. Briefly, as we said above concerning Baptism and in many other places, the answer is: **It is he who believes what the words say and what they give**, for they are not spoken or preached to stone and wood but to those who hear them, those to whom Christ says, “Take and eat,” etc. ³⁴ And because he offers and promises forgiveness of sins, it cannot be received except by faith. This faith he himself demands in the Word when he says, “Given *for you*” and “poured out *for you*,” as if he said, “This is why I give it and bid you eat and drink, that you may take it as your own and enjoy it.” ³⁵ **Whoever lets these words be addressed to him and believes that they are true has what the words declare.** But he who does not believe has nothing, for he lets this gracious blessing be offered to him in vain and refuses to enjoy it. The treasure is opened and placed at everyone’s door, yes, upon everyone’s table, but it is also your responsibility to take it and confidently believe that it is just as the words tell you.

³⁶ **This, now, is the preparation required of a Christian** for receiving this sacrament worthily. Since this treasure is fully offered **in the words**, it can be grasped and appropriated only by the heart. Such a gift and eternal treasure cannot be seized with the hand. ³⁷ Fasting and prayer and the like may have their place as an external preparation and children’s exercise so that one’s body may behave properly and reverently toward the body and blood of Christ. But what is given in and with the sacrament cannot be grasped and appropriated by the body. **This is done by the faith of the heart which discerns and desires this treasure.**

FC SD VII 124 (*For Receiving Lord’s Supper*)

¹²⁴ **13.** We also reject the doctrine that worthiness does not consist in true faith alone **but also in man’s own preparation.**