

# **The Confutatio Pontificia**

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## Introduction

In Reference To The Matters Presented To His Imperial Majesty By The Elector Of Saxony And Some Princes And States Of The Holy Roman Empire, On The Subject And Concerning Causes Pertaining To The Christian Orthodox Faith, The Following Christian Reply Can Be Given.\_ August 3, 1530. Edited by J. M. Reu.

CONFUTATIO PONTIFICIA, AUGUST 3, 1530

As His Worshipful Imperial Majesty received several days since a Confession of Faith presented by the Elector the duke of Saxony and several princes and two cities, to which their names were affixed, with his characteristic zeal for the glory of God, the salvation of souls, Christian harmony and the public peace, he not only himself read the Confession, but also, in order that in a matter of such moment he might proceed the more thoroughly and seasonably, he referred the aforesaid Confession to several learned, mature, approved and honorable men of different nations for their inspection and examination, and earnestly directed and enjoined them to praise and approve what in the Confession was said aright and in accord with Catholic doctrine, but, on the other hand, to note that wherein it differed from the Catholic Church, and, together with their reply, to present and explain their judgment on each topic. This commission was executed aright and according to order. For those learned men with all care and diligence examined the aforesaid Confession, and committed to writing what they thought on each topic, and thus presented a reply to His Imperial Majesty. This reply His Worshipful Imperial Majesty, as becomes a Christian emperor, most accurately read and gave to the other electors, princes and estates of the Roman Empire for their perusal and examination, which they also approved as orthodox and in every respect harmonious with the Gospel and Holy Scripture. For this reason, after a conference with the electors, princes and states above named, in order that all dissension concerning this our orthodox holy faith and religion may be removed, His Imperial Majesty has directed that a declaration be made at present as follows:

In reference to the matters presented to His Imperial Majesty by the Elector of Saxony and some princes and states of the Holy Roman Empire, on the subject and concerning causes pertaining to the Christian orthodox faith, the following Christian reply can be given:

## Part I

To Article I.

Especially when in the first article they confess the unity of the divine essence in three persons according to the decree of the Council of Nice, their Confession must be accepted, since it agrees in all respects with the rule of faith and the Roman Church. For the Council of Nice, convened under the Emperor Constantine the Great, has always been regarded inviolable, whereat three hundred and eighteen bishops eminent and venerable for holiness of life, martyrdom and learning, after investigating and diligently examining the Holy Scriptures, set forth this article which they here confess concerning the unity of the essence and the trinity of persons. So too their condemnation of all heresies arising contrary to this article must be accepted - viz. the Manichaeans, Arians, Eunomians, Valentinians, Samosatanes, for the Holy Catholic Church has condemned these of old.

To Article II.

In the second article we approve their Confession, in common with the Catholic Church, that the fault of origin is truly sin, condemning and bringing eternal death upon those who are not born again by baptism and the Holy Ghost. For in this they properly condemn the Pelagians, both modern and ancient, who have been long since condemned by the Church. But the declaration of the article, that Original Sin is that men are born without the fear of God and without trust in God, is to be entirely rejected, since it is manifest to every Christian that to be without the fear of God and without trust in God is rather the actual guilt of an adult than the offence of a recently-born infant, which does not possess as yet the full use of reason, as the Lord says "Your children which had no knowledge between good and evil," Deut 1:39. Moreover, the declaration is also rejected whereby they call the fault of origin concupiscence, if they mean thereby that concupiscence is a sin that remains sin in a child even after baptism. For the Apostolic See has already condemned two articles of Martin Luther concerning sin remaining in a child after baptism, and concerning the fomes of sin hindering a soul from entering the kingdom of heaven. But if, according to the opinion of St Augustine, they call the vice of origin concupiscence, which in baptism ceases to be sin, this ought to be accepted, since indeed according to the declaration of St. Paul, we are all born children of wrath (Eph. 2:3), and in Adam we all have sinned (Rom.5:12).

To Article III.

In the third article there is nothing to offend, since the entire Confession agrees with the Apostles' Creed and the right rule of faith -viz. the Son of God became incarnate, assumed human nature into the unity of his person, was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered was crucified, died, descended to hell, rose again on the third day, ascended to heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Father.

To Article IV

In the fourth article the condemnation of the Pelagians, who thought that man can merit eternal life by his own powers without the grace of God, is accepted as Catholic and in accordance with the ancient councils, for the Holy Scriptures expressly testify to this. John the Baptist says: "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven," John 3:27 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights," James 1:17. Therefore "our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor 3:5. And Christ says: "No man can come to me, Except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him," John 6:44 And Paul: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" I Cor 4:7. For if any one should intend to disapprove of the merits that men acquire by the assistance of divine grace, he would agree with the Manichaeans rather than with the Catholic Church. For it is entirely contrary to holy Scripture to deny that our works are meritorious. For St. Paul says "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day," 2 Tim. 4:7 & 8. And to the Corinthians he wrote "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. 5:10. For where there are wages there is merit. The Lord said to Abraham: "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward," Gen 15:1. And Isaiah says: "Behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him," Isa. 40:10; and, chapter 58:7, 8: "Deal they bread to the hungry, and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall gather thee up." So too the Lord to Cain: "If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?" Gen. 4:7. So the parable in the Gospel declares that we have been hired for the Lord's vineyard, who agrees with us for a penny a day, and says: "Call the laborers and give them their hire," Matt 20:8. So Paul, knowing the mysteries of God, says: "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor," I Cor. 3:8. 6. Nevertheless, all Catholics confess that our works of themselves have no merit, but that God's grace makes them worthy of eternal life. Thus St. John says: "They shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy," Rev. 3:4. And St Paul says to the Colossians, 1:12: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

To Article V.

In the fifth article the statement that the Holy Ghost is given by the Word and sacraments, as by instruments, is approved. For thus it is written, Acts 10:44: "While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." And John 1:33: "The same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." The mention, however, that they here make of faith is approved so far as not Faith alone, which some incorrectly teach, but faith which worketh by love, is understood, as the apostle teaches aright in Gal 5:3. For in baptism there is an infusion, not of faith alone, but also, at the same time, of hope and love, as Pope Alexander declares in the canon *Majores* concerning baptism and its effect; which John the Baptist also taught long before, saying, Luke 3:16: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

To Article VI.

Their Confession in the sixth article that faith should bring forth good fruits is acceptable and valid since "faith without works is dead," James 2:17, and all Scripture invites us to works. For the wise man says: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Eccles. 9:10. "And the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering," Gen. 4:4. He saw that Abraham would "command his Children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment," Gen. 18:19. And: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing I will bless thee and multiply thy seed." Gen 22:16. Thus he regarded the fast of the Ninevites, Jonah 3, and the lamentations and tears of King Hezekiah, 4:2; 2 Kings 20. For this cause all the faithful should follow the advice of St. Paul: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," Gal. 6:10. For Christ says: The night cometh when no man can work" John 9:4.

But in the same article their ascription of justification to faith alone is diametrically opposite the truth of the Gospel by which works are not excluded; because glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good," Rom. 2:10. Why? ecause David, Ps. 62:12; Christ, Matt. 16:27; and Paul, Rom. 2:6 testify that God will render to every one according to his works. Besides Christ says: "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father," Matt. 7:21. 4. Hence however much one may believe, if he work not what is good, he is not a friend of God. "Ye are my friends," says Christ, "if ye do whatsoever I command you," John 15:14. On this account their frequent ascription of justification to faith is not admitted since it pertains to grace and love. For St. Paul says: "Though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing." 1 Cor. 13:2. Here St. Paul certifies to the princes and the entire Church that faith alone does not justify. Accordingly he teaches that love is the chief virtue, Col. 3:14: "Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." Neither are they supported by the word of Christ: "When ye shall have done all these things, say We are unprofitable servants," Luke 17:10. For if the doors ought to be called unprofitable, how much more fitting is it to say to those who only believe, When ye shall have believed all things say, We are unprofitable servants!

This word of Christ, therefore, does not extol faith without works, but teaches that our works bring no profit to God; that no one can be puffed up by our works; that, when contrasted with the divine reward, our works are of no account and nothing. Thus St. Paul says: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom. 8:18. For faith and good works are gifts of God, whereby, through God's mercy, eternal life is given. So, too, the citation at this point from Ambrose is in no way pertinent, since St. Ambrose is here expressly declaring his opinion concerning legal works. For he says: "Without the law," but, "Without the law of the Sabbath, and of circumcision, and of revenge." And this he declares the more clearly on Rom. 4, citing St. James concerning the justification of Abraham without legal works before circumcision. For how could Ambrose speak differently in his comments from St. Paul in the text when he says: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight?" Therefore, finally, he does not exclude faith absolutely, but says: "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

To Article VII.

The seventh article of the Confession, wherein it is affirmed that the Church is the congregation of saints, cannot be admitted without prejudice to faith if by this definition the wicked and sinners be separated from the Church. For in the Council of Constance this article was condemned among the articles of John Huss of cursed memory, and it plainly contradicts the Gospel. For there we read that John the Baptist compared the Church to a threshing-floor, which Christ will cleanse with his fan, and will gather the wheat into his garner, but will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire, Matt. 3:12. Wherefore this article of the Confession is in no way accepted. although we read in it their confession that the Church is perpetual, since here the promise of Christ has its place, who promises that the Spirit of truth will abide with it forever John 14:16. And Christ himself promises that he will be with the church always unto the end of the world. They are praised also, in that they do not regard variety of rites as separating unity of faith, if they speak of special rites. For to this effect Jerome says: "Every province abounds in its own sense" (of propriety). But if they extend this part of the Confession to universal Church rites, tis also must be utterly rejected, and we must say with St. Paul: "We have no such custom," 1 Cor. 11:16. "For by all believers universal rites must be observed," St. Augustine, whose testimony they also use, well taught of Januarius; for we must presume that such rites were transmitted from the apostles.

To Article VIII.

The eighth article of the Confession, concerning wicked ministers of the Church and hypocrites - viz. that their wickedness does not injure the sacraments and the Word - is accepted with the Holy Roman Church, and the princes commend it, condemning on this topic the Donatists and the ancient Origenists, who maintained that it was unlawful to use the ministry of the wicked in the Church - a heresy which the Waldenses and Poor of Lyons revived. Afterwards John Wicliff in England and John Huss in Bohemia adopted this.

To Article IX.

The ninth article, concerning Baptism - viz. that it is necessary to salvation, and that children ought to be baptized - is approved and accepted, and they are right in condemning the Anabaptists, a most seditious class of men that ought to be banished far from the boundaries of the Roman Empire in order that illustrious Germany may not suffer again such a destructive and sanguinary commotion as she experienced five tears ago in the slaughter of so many thousands.

To Article X.

The tenth article gives no offense in its words, because they confess that in the Eucharist, after the consecration lawfully made, the Body and Blood of Christ are substantially and

truly present, if only they believe that the entire Christ is present under each form, so that the Blood of Christ is no less present under the form of bread by concomitance than it is under the form of the wine, and the reverse. Otherwise, in the Eucharist the Body of Christ is dead and bloodless, contrary to St. Paul, because "Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more," Rom. 6:9. One matter is added as very necessary to the article of the Confession - viz. that they believe the Church, rather than some teaching otherwise and incorrectly, that by the almighty Word of God in the consecration of the Eucharist the substance of the bread is changed into the Body of Christ. For thus in a general council it has been determined, canon Firmiter, concerning the exalted Trinity, and the Catholic faith. They are praised therefor, for condemning the Capernaites, who deny the truth of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

To Article XI.

The eleventh article their acknowledgment that private absolution with confession should be retained in the Church is accepted as catholic and in harmony with our faith, because absolution is supported by the word of Christ. For Christ says to his apostles, John 20:23: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." Nevertheless, two things must here be required of them: one, that they compel an annual confession to be observed by their subjects, according to the constitution, canon Omnis Utriusque, concerning penance and remission and the custom of the Church universal. Another that through their preachers they cause their subjects to be faithfully admonished when they are about to confess that although they cannot state all their sins individually, nevertheless, a diligent examination of their conscience being made, they make an entire confession of their offences - viz. of all which occur to their memory in such investigation. But in regard to the rest that have been forgotten and have escaped our mind it is lawful to make a general confession, and to say with the Psalmist, Ps. 19:17: "Cleanse me, Lord, from secret faults."

To Article XII.

In the twelfth article their confession that such as have fallen may find remission of sins at the time when they are converted, and that the Church should give absolution unto such as return to repentance, is commended, since they most justly condemn the Novatians who deny that repentance can be repeated, in opposition both to the prophet who promises grace to the sinner at whatever hour he shall mourn, Ezek. 18:21, and the merciful declaration of Christ our Saviour, replying to St. Peter, that not until seven times, but until seventy times seven in one day, he should forgive his brother sinning against him, Matt. 18:22. But the second part of this article is utterly rejected. For when they ascribe only two parts to repentance, they antagonize the entire Church, which from the time of the apostles has held and believed that there are three parts of repentance - contrition, confession and satisfaction. Thus the ancient doctors, Origen, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Gregory, Augustine, taught in attestation of the Holy Scriptures, especially from 2 Kings 12, concerning David, 2 Chron 3:1, concerning Manasseh, Ps. 31, 37, 50, 101, etc.



Therefore Pope Leo X of happy memory justly condemned this article of Luther, who taught: "That there are three parts of repentance - viz. confession, contrition, and satisfaction -- has no foundation in Scripture or in Holy Christian doctors." This part of the article, therefore can in no way be admitted; so, too, neither can that which asserts that faith is the second part of repentance, since it is known to all that faith precedes repentance; for unless one believes he will not repent. Neither is that part admitted which makes light of pontifical satisfactions, for it is contrary to the Gospel, contrary to the apostles, contrary to the fathers, contrary to the councils, and contrary to the universal Catholic Church. John the Baptist cries: "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance," Matt. 3:8. St. Paul teaches: "As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness," Rom 6:19. He likewise preached to the Gentiles that they should repent and be Converted to God, bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, Acts 20:21.

So Christ himself also began to teach and preach repentance: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Matt. 4:17. Afterward he commanded the apostles to pursue this mode of preaching and teaching, Luke 24:47, and St. Peter faithfully obeyed him in his first sermon, Acts 2:38. So Augustine also exhorts that "every one exercise toward himself severity, so that, being judged of himself, he shall not be judged of the Lord," as St. Paul says. 1 Cor. 11:31. Pope Leo surnamed the Great, said "The Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, gave to those set over the churches the authority to assign to those who confess the doing of penance, and through the door of reconciliation to admit to the communion of the sacraments those who have been cleansed by a salutary satisfaction. brose says: "The amount of the penance must be adapted to the trouble of the conscience." Hence diverse penitential canons were appointed in the holy Synod of Nice, in accordance with The diversity of satisfactions, Jovinian the heretic, thought, however, that all sins are equal and accordingly did not admit a diversity of satisfactions. Moreover, satisfactions should not be abolished in the Church, contrary to the express Gospel and the decrees of councils and fathers, but those absolved by the priest ought to perform the penance enjoined, following the declaration of St. Paul: He "gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. 2:14. Christ thus made satisfaction for us, that we might be zealous of good works, fulfilling the satisfaction enjoined.

To Article XIII.

The thirteenth article gives no offence, but is accepted, while they say that the sacraments were instituted not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of God's will toward us; nevertheless, we must request them that what they here ascribe to the sacraments in general they confess also specifically concerning the seven sacraments of the Church and take measures for the observance of them by their subjects.

To Article XIV.

When, in the fourteenth article, they confess that no one ought to administer in the Church the Word of God and the sacraments unless he be rightly called, it ought to be understood that he is rightly called who is called in accordance with the form of law and the ecclesiastical ordinances and decrees hitherto observed everywhere in the Christian world, and not according to a Jeroboitic (cf. 1 Kings 12:20) call, or a tumult or any other irregular intrusion of the people. Aaron was not thus called. Therefore in this sense the Confession is received; nevertheless, they should be admonished to persevere therein, and to admit in their realms no one either as pastor or as preacher unless he be rightly called.

To Article XV.

In the fifteenth article their confession that such ecclesiastical rites are to be observed as may be observed without sin, and are profitable for tranquility and good order in the Church, is accepted, and they must be admonished that the princes and cities see to it that the ecclesiastical rites of the Church universal be observed in their dominions and districts, as well as those which have been kept devoutly and religiously in every province even to us, and if any of these have been intermitted that they restore them, and arrange, determine and effectually enjoin upon their subjects that all things be done in their churches according to the ancient form. Nevertheless, the appendix to this article must be entirely removed, since it is false that human ordinances instituted to propitiate God and make satisfactions for sins are opposed to the Gospel, as will be more amply declared hereafter concerning vows, the choice of food and the like.

To Article XVI.

The sixteenth article, concerning civil magistrates, is received with pleasure, as in harmony not only with civil law, but also with canonical law, the Gospel, the Holy Scriptures, and the universal norm of faith, since the apostle enjoins that "every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation," Rom. 13:1. And the princes are praised for condemning the Anabaptists, who overthrow all civil ordinances and prohibit Christians the use of the magistracy and other civil offices, without which no state is successfully administered.

To Article XVII.

The confession of the seventeenth article is received, since from the Apostles' Creed and the Holy Scripture the entire Catholic Church knows that Christ will come at the last day to judge the quick and the dead. Therefore they justly condemn here the Anabaptists, who think there will be an end of punishments to condemned men and devils, and imagine certain Jewish kingdoms of the godly, before the resurrection of the dead, in this present world, the wicked being everywhere suppressed.

To Article XVIII.

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