

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity

... 4. The following and similar Pelagian errors are also condemned and rejected: nature, even since the fall, is said to be uncorrupt and that especially in spiritual things it is entirely good and pure. In its natural powers it is said to be perfect.

5. Original sin is only outward—a slight, insignificant spot sprinkled or a stain dashed on the nature of mankind. Or it is a corruption only in some outward things. Under and with original sin, human nature still possesses and retains its integrity and power even in spiritual things.

6. Original sin is not a spoiling or a lack, but only an outward difficulty for these spiritual good powers. It is like when a magnet is smeared with garlic juice. Its natural power is not removed by the juice, but only hindered. Nor can this stain of original sin be washed away easily, like a spot from the face, or paint from the wall.

7. Those who teach that human nature has been greatly weakened and corrupted through the fall, but that it still has not entirely lost all good in divine, spiritual things are also rebuked and rejected. They teach that what is sung in our churches, “Through Adam’s fall is all corrupt, Nature and essence human,” is not true, but from natural birth human nature still has something good in it, even though it is small, little, and slight. They suggest human nature has a capacity, skill, aptness, or ability to begin, to effect, or to help effect something in spiritual things. ...

The Apology (Article XVIII [70–73]) teaches this about free will:

We do not deny freedom to the human will. The human will has freedom in the choice of works and things that reason understands by itself... For without the Holy Spirit, human hearts lack the fear of God. Without trust toward God, they do not believe that they are heard, forgiven, helped, and preserved by God. Therefore, they are godless. For “a diseased tree [cannot] bear good fruit” [Matthew 7:18]. And “without faith it is impossible to please [God]” [Hebrews

In the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, which is appended to the Smalcald Articles and was also signed by the theologians present with their own hands, are these words:

Do not let them burden the Church with traditions. Do not let the authority of anyone prevail more than God’s Word. [Tr 11]

And shortly afterward:

This being the case, all Christians should beware of participating in the godless doctrine, blasphemies, and unjust cruelty of the pope. They should desert and condemn the pope with his followers as the kingdom of Antichrist, just as Christ has commanded, “Beware of false prophets” [Matthew 7:15]. Paul commands that godless teachers should be avoided and condemned as cursed [Galatians 1:8; Titus 3:10]. And he says, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.... What fellowship has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). [Tr 41]

To want to separate one’s self from so many lands and nations and to profess a separate doctrine is a serious matter. But here stands God’s command that everyone should beware and not agree with those who hold false doctrine or who think of supporting it through cruelty.

11:6]. Although we admit that free will has the freedom and power to perform the extreme works of the Law, nevertheless we do not assign spiritual matters to free will. [1531 German translation]

Here it is clearly seen that the Apology credits no ability to the human will, either for beginning good or for working by itself.

In the Smalcald Articles (Sin I; III I 5f) the following errors about the free will are also rejected, “A person has a free will to do good and not to do evil,” and so on. And shortly afterward [III I 10] it is also rejected as an error when people teach, “Scripture does not teach that the Holy Spirit with His grace is necessary for a good work.” ...

The Law indeed says it is God’s will and command that we should walk in a new life [Romans 6:4]. But it does not give the power and ability to begin and to do it. The Holy Spirit renews the heart. He is given and received, not through the Law, but through the preaching of the Gospel (Galatians 3:14). Thereafter, the Holy Spirit uses the Law in order to teach the regenerate from it and to point out and show them in the Ten Commandments what is the “will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2) in what “good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk” (Ephesians 2:10). He encourages them to this. When they are idle, negligent, and rebellious in this matter because of the flesh, He rebukes them through the Law. So the Spirit carries out both offices together: He slays and makes alive [Deuteronomy 32:39]. He leads into hell and brings up again. For His office is not only to comfort, but also to rebuke. For it is written, “when [the Holy Spirit] comes, He will convict the world [which includes also the old Adam] concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” [John 16:8]. Sin is everything that is contrary to God’s Law. St. Paul says, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof” [2 Timothy 3:16], and to rebuke is the Law’s special

office. Therefore, as often as believers stumble, they are rebuked by the Holy Spirit from the Law. By the same Spirit they are raised up and comforted again with the preaching of the Holy Gospel. ...

The Smalcald Articles (On the Church) speak about this as follows:

We do not agree with them [the papal bishops] that they are the Church. They are not the Church. Nor will we listen to those things that, under the name of Church, they command or forbid. Thank God, today a seven-year-old child knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd [John 10:11–16]. [SA III XII 1–2]

And shortly before this (“Ordination and the Call”):

If the bishops would be true bishops and would devote themselves to the Church and the Gospel, we might grant them to ordain and confirm us and our preachers. This would be for the sake of love and unity, but not because it was necessary. However, they would have to give up all comedies and spectacular display of unchristian parade and pomp. But they do not even want to be true bishops, but worldly lords and princes, who will neither preach, nor teach, nor baptize, nor administer the Lord’s Supper, nor perform any work or office of the Church. Furthermore, they persecute and condemn those who do discharge these functions, having been called to do so. So the Church should not be deprived of ministers because of the bishops. [SA III X 1–2]

In the article “The Papacy,” the Smalcald Articles say

Therefore, just as we cannot worship the devil himself as Lord and God, so we cannot endure his apostle — the pope or Antichrist — in his rule as head or lord. For what his papal government really consists of ... is to lie and kill and destroy body and soul eternally. [SA II IV 14]