

On The Councils and the Churches

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I have often joined in the laughter when some one offered the dogs a bit of bread on the point of a knife and when they snapped at it, rapped them on the muzzle with the handle, so that the poor dogs not only lost the bread, but had the pain beside. It was a good joke, but I never thought, at that time, that the devil would have that kind of a joke on us men and take us for such poor dogs, until I found out how the most holy father, the pope, plays this same kind of a dog's joke on Christendom in his bulls and books and daily practices; but, Lord God, with what loss to men's souls and what mockery of the divine Majesty! That is what he is doing now with the council. The whole world has cried for and waited for it; the good emperor and the whole empire have been working for it for about twenty years; and the pope has always held out false hopes, and held off, and constantly offered it to the emperor, like a bit of bread to a dog, until he saw his time; then he raps him on the muzzle, and mocks him, as though the emperor were his fool and jumping-jack. For he now issues the third call for the council but before doing it, he sends his apostles into all lands and swears kings and princes to hold fast the pope's doctrine. The bishops and their clergy are in agreement with this; they will yield nothing at all and will allow nothing to be reformed. Thus the council is closed before it begins; we are to have no reforms, but everything is to keep on as it has been up to this time. Is not that a splendid council? It has not yet met, but it has already done what it was to do, if it were to begin. That is rapping the emperor on the muzzle; nay, it is overtaking the Holy Ghost and far outstripping Him. I have feared, however, — and have often written it and said it, — that they would not and could not hold a council unless they first captured the emperor, the kings, and the princes, and had them in their own hands, so that they might be altogether free to make what decrees they please, in order to strengthen their tyranny and oppress Christendom with far heavier burdens than it has ever had to bear before.

In God's name, if you lords, — emperor, kings, princes, — are so fond of having such worthless, damnable people trample on your faces and rap you on the muzzle, then we have to let it be done, and remember that they used to do still worse things, when they deposed kings and emperors, cursed them, drove them out, betrayed and slew them, and played the devil's will with them. History shows this; and they think to do the same thing still. Nevertheless, Christ will know how to find His Christendom and maintain it even against the gates of hell, though emperor and kings neither can nor will do anything toward it. He can spare their help more easily than they can spare His help. What did He have to do before emperors and kings were born? And what would He have to do now, if there were no emperors and kings, even though a world full of devils raged against Him? He is not unused to sour food, and He can cook food that is sourer still; woe to them that must eat it!

But we poor, weak Christians, whom these saints call heretics, ought to be glad and happy. We ought joyfully to praise and thank God, the Father of all mercy, that He takes our part so heartily, and smites our murderers and blood-dogs with such Egyptian blindness and Jewish craziness that they propose to yield on no point, however small, and prefer to let Christendom be destroyed rather than allow the smallest of the idolatries (of which they are full) to be reformed. This is their boast; and they fulfill it, too. I say, we should be glad; for this way they make our case better than we had ever asked, and their own case worse than they now think. They know and confess that, on many points, they are wrong, and have the Scriptures and God against them besides; and yet they would force

their way through against God, and knowingly defend wrong as right. In this confidence, a poor Christian ought to go to the Sacrament, even without confession, and risk a hundred necks, if he had them, when he sees so plainly that God reigns on our side, and the devil on theirs. We have now seen the final conclusion of the future Council at Vicenza and the strict verdict of the last council, (or that which must be regarded as such). It is to the effect that all the world must despair of a reformation of the Church. The matter cannot be given a hearing, but they would rather (as they boast) allow Christendom to be destroyed; in other words, they would rather have the devil himself as god and lord, than have Christ and lay aside even a little of their idolatry. Not satisfied with that, they would compel us poor Christians, with the sword, to join knowingly in their worship of the devil and blasphemy of Christ. Such a defiance no history records and no age has known. Other tyrants have the poor honor of crucifying the Lord of Majesty unknowingly, as do the Turks, heathen, and Jews; but here are men who under Christ's name, and as Christians, nay, as the highest of Christians, puff themselves up and arm themselves against Christ, and say, — "We know that Christ's words and deeds are against us; nevertheless, we will not endure His Word or yield to it, but He must yield to us and endure our idolatry; and yet we will be Christians, and be known as such."

Thus the pope, with his followers, refuses to hold a council and will neither reform the Church nor contribute advice or assistance to a reformation, but would defend his tyranny by force, and let the Church be destroyed. Therefore we, whom the pope has so sadly deserted, can do nothing else than go elsewhere for advice and help, and begin by seeking and praying a reformation from our Lord Christ. For because of these abandoned tyrants, who compel us to despair of a council and a reformation, we must not despair of Christ, or leave the Church without advice or help; but we must do what we can, and let them go to the devil, as they desire.

By this they loudly testify against themselves that they are true antichrists and autocatacrites who condemn themselves and obstinately desire to be condemned. Thus they exclude themselves from the Church, and openly proclaim that they are, and will continue to be, the Church's worst enemies. For he who says that he would rather that the Church should be destroyed than that he should let himself be improved, or should yield on any point, confesses thereby that he is not only no Christian and does not want to be in the Church (which he would allow to be destroyed, in order that he might remain, and not be destroyed with the Church), but also that he will do what he can for the destruction of the Church. They offer terrible proof of this, not only in such words as these, but also in their deeds, letting so many hundred parishes go to wrack, and churches go to ruin, without shepherds, sermons, and sacraments.

In ancient days the bishops and, indeed, any Christian (as today), let themselves be tortured, and went to death with thankfulness and joy for their dear Church, and Christ went to death for His Church, in order that it might continue and be preserved. But the pope and his followers now declare that the Church must go to death for them, so that they may continue in their tyranny, idolatry, knavery, and all rascality. What think you of these fellows? They would remain; the Church shall be destroyed. What are we going to do about it? But if the Church is to be destroyed, then Christ must first be destroyed; for it is built on Him, as on a rock, against the gates of hell. And if Christ is to be destroyed, God Himself must first be destroyed; for it is He who laid this rock and foundation. Now who could guess that these lords had such great power that the Church and Christ and God Himself must so easily go down before their threats? They must be far, far mightier than the gates of hell and all the devils, for the Church has remained, and must remain, in spite of them.

They cry out, I say, that they will not be the Church, or in the Church, but will be the Church's worst enemies and help destroy it. Nevertheless they have plagued us and nagged us with the word, "Church, Church." They have shouted and spit it out, without measure and without end, that they are to be considered the Church, and they have made us out heretics and cursed us and slain us, because we would not listen to them as though they were the Church. Now, I verily think, we are honorably and mightily absolved, and that they will not and cannot call us heretics anymore, since they do not want to be lauded as the Church, but, as enemies of the Church, want it to go to destruction, and even to help suppress it. For to be the Church and, at the same time, to let the Church be destroyed rather than be destroyed themselves, or have a hair's-breadth of themselves destroyed, — those two things do not fit. That settles it — *Ex ore tuo te judico, serve nequam.* f160

If the Last Day were not close at hand it would be small wonder if heaven and earth were to fall at such blasphemy. The fact that God can tolerate such things as this is a sign that the Day is not far off. And yet they laugh at that, unmindful that they have made God out to be blind, crazy, mad, and foolish, and they think that their doings are wise and manly. I, too, would be as care-free as they are, if I regarded only their raging; but the wrath of God, which is shown upon them, terrifies me sorely, and it is high time that we all wept and prayed earnestly, as Christ did over Jerusalem, when He bade the women weep not for Him, but for themselves and their children. For they do not believe that the time of their visitation is near, and they will not believe it, even though they see it, hear it, smell it, taste it, touch it, and feel it.

Now how are we to attack this thing? The pope will neither give us a true council nor permit a reformation, but he and his will let the Church be destroyed. Thus he has turned himself out of the Church so that he may remain, and not be destroyed in the Church or with it. He is out; he has bidden the Church good-bye. How, I say, are we to attack this thing? How are we to proceed, since we must do it without the pope? For we are the Church, or in the Church, which the papists would let go to destruction in order that they may remain. But we, too, would like to remain and do not intend to go down so miserably, with our Lord Christ and His Father, the God of us all, before the defiance of the papists. Yet we feel that there is need for a council or reformation in the Church, because we see such gross abuses that, even if we were oxen and asses, and not men or Christians, and could not observe these things with eyes or ears, we must, nevertheless, feel them with paws and claws, and trip over them. Suppose that we, the transitory Church, were ourselves to hold a council against the abiding lords, without the pope and without their consent, and to undertake a reformation which the abiding junkers would consider very transitory, but which they would have to put up with!

But we shall now get down to the matter, since we have lost our most holy head, the pope, and will have to take such counsel with ourselves as our Lord may grant us.

PART 1: THE CHURCH CANNOT BE REFORMED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FATHERS AND THE COUNCILS.

Some years ago many of the papists occupied themselves with the councils and the fathers and at last brought all the councils together in one book. This work gave me no small pleasure, because I had not previously seen the councils side by side. And there are now among them, I believe, some good, pious people who would like to see the Church reformed according to the standard of these councils and fathers. They are moved to this by the fact that the present state of the Church, under the papacy, disagrees shamefully with the ways of the councils and fathers. In this case, however,

their good intentions are quite in vain; for, beyond doubt, it is their idea that the pope and his people would, or would have to, include themselves in such a reformation. But that is a vain idea, for there stands the pope, with his abiding lords, and defies them, as he defies us, saying that they would rather let the Church perish than yield a single point; i.e., they would rather let councils and fathers perish than yield to them in anything. For if the councils and fathers were to be followed, God help us! what would become of the pope and the present bishops? In truth, they would have to become the perishable Church, instead of being abiding lords.

I will say nothing about the ancient days, which we may call the thousand or fourteen hundred years after the birth of Christ. It is not more than a hundred years since the pope began the holy practice of giving one priest two livings, such as canonries or parishes. The theologians at Paris and their comrades wrote many terrible things about this and complained of it. I am not yet sixty years old, and yet I know that within my memory the custom has grown up that a bishop should have more than one endowment. Meanwhile, however, the pope has devoured everything, made a robbery of the annates and everything else, and portions out the bishoprics by threes, the abbeys and endowed positions by tens. How can he spew all this up again and let his chancelry be torn apart, for the sake of the fathers and councils? Yes, you say, this is an abuse; well, then, take your ancient councils and fathers and reform it all, for things were not like this a hundred years ago or sixty years ago, before you were born.

Now of what use is your reformation according to the fathers and councils? You hear that the pope and the bishops will not endure it; and if they could not endure the condition of the Church fifty years ago, when you and I were children, how would they or could they endure it, if we wanted to reform it by restoring the condition of the Church of six hundred, or a thousand, or fourteen hundred years ago. This proposal is simply impossible, because the pope is in possession, and wants to be unreformed. Therefore we must let both councils and fathers and everything that we can say or think, be useless in these matters; for the pope is above councils, above fathers, above kings, above God, above angels. Let us see you bring him down and make the fathers and councils his masters! If you do that, I will agree with you and stand by you; but so long as it does not happen, what is the use of talking or writing so much about councils or fathers? There is no one who takes the matter up. If the pope, with his imperishable lords, cardinals and bishops, is unwilling to go along into the reformation and be put, with us, under the councils and fathers, then a council is of no use and then no reformation is to be hoped from him; for he dashes it all to the ground and tells us to shut up.

But suppose they ask that we allow ourselves to be reformed, with them, according to the councils and fathers, and so help the Church, even though the pope and his people would neither do it nor suffer it! What then? To this I give a double answer. Either they are bitter, malicious, and bad, and do not mean it well; or else they are good-hearted and mean it well, so far as in them lies.

To the former it should be said that they ought first to take themselves by the nose and pull the beam out of their own eye. Let them, with the pope and cardinals or without the pope and cardinals, grow fond of the councils and fathers and hold to them. When that happens, then we, following their holy example, will straightway be there, and will become better than they are themselves. For, God be praised and thanked! we are not such abandoned people that we would let the Church perish rather than yield, even in great matters, so long as they are not against God. On the contrary, so far as our knowledge and ability go, we are ready to perish utterly, rather than that misfortune or injury should befall the Church.

But if they themselves pay no heed to the fathers and councils, and yet would force us under them, that is too raw; and we must say, *Medice cura te ipsum*, and, with Christ, "They lay on people's necks intolerable burdens, which they themselves will not touch with one finger." That does no good, and we have no small reason for refusal, especially since they ascribe such great sanctity to the fathers and the councils. We do not keep them; and neither do they, except in words and on paper, when they show it to us; for we confess, and must confess, that we are right poor, weak Christians, and that in many things.

For one thing, we have so much to do, day and night, with reading, thinking, writing, teaching, exhorting, encouraging both ourselves and others, that, indeed, no time is left us even to think whether there ever were councils or fathers, to say nothing of concerning ourselves with such high matters as tonsures, chasubles, long robes, etc., and their high sanctity. If they have risen so high and become so altogether angelic and so rich in faith, that the devil has to let them alone, and can start no errors among them and terrify no weak consciences; we weak Christians have not attained to that state, and we fear that we never shall attain to it on earth. Therefore they really ought to be gracious and merciful, and not condemn us because we cannot yet equal them in holiness. For if we were to leave the work that we have in matters of faith and, weak as we are, to emulate their strong holiness in dress and foods, we might give up our weak holiness and not attain their high, strong holiness, and so sit down between two chairs.

But if they will not be gracious and merciful to us, we must let them be angels and dance in Paradise among the flowers, as men who have long since abolished faith and, in their heavenly holiness, have no temptation from devil, flesh, or world. But we must toil and sweat in slime and mud; poor fribelists and beginners in faith that we are, we cannot be such high doctors and magisters in faith. If we had as much faith as they think that they have, we could bear tonsures, chasubles, councils and fathers more easily than they do; but since they do not bear them at all, they bear them easily (for to bear nothing is to have no heavy burden), and boast, the while, that we are not willing to bear them.

Likewise we poor Christians have enough to do to keep God's commandments, so much, indeed, that we cannot give attention to the other high works, which they boast of as spiritual, conciliar, and patristic. For we drive and practice both ourselves and our followers, with the greatest diligence, to love God above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves, to be humble and patient, merciful and gentle, chaste and sober, not covetous or envious, and to keep the rest of God's commandments. We should be glad if there were among our people no pride, avarice, usury, envy, over-drinking, over-eating, adultery, or wantonness; but we succeed so poorly and miserably that we can bring only a few of them to these good works; the great mass remains what it is and grows worse everyday. Now figure it out yourself, when we are so weak in the doing of these necessary works, commanded by God, how can we leave them and give ourselves to the high, strong, unnecessary works of which they tell us? If we had performed the divine, little, despicable, or as they contemptuously call them, "civil" works, then, God willing! we would begin to do their spiritual, churchly works about meat-eating, dress, holy days, etc. But they have an easy task, because they fulfill all God's commandments, love God above all things and have no covetousness or usury, no adulterers or fornicators, no drinkers or drunkards among them, but they do all these little, good, divine works so easily that time actually hangs heavy on their hands. Therefore it is only right that, over and above these "civil" works of ours, they should undertake to do stronger or higher works, in obedience to the Church or the fathers, since they are far too strong to practice these little good works with us; they have taken a long leap beyond them and have got far ahead of us. Nevertheless, in their high and strong mercy, and

according to the doctrine of St. Paul, they ought to have sympathy with us weak, poor Christians, and not condemn us or make fun of us because we are learning so childishly to toddle along the benches, nay, to creep in the mire, and cannot skip and dance, on such light feet and legs, over and outside of God's commandments, as they do, the strong heroes and giants, who can attack the works that are higher and greater than loving God above all things and one's neighbor as oneself; though St. Paul calls this "the fulfilling of the law" in Romans 13:10, and so does Christ, in Matthew 5:19.

If they will not have sympathy with us, however, we ask at least a little time until we have completed God's commandments and the little children's works; then we will gladly fall to upon their high, spiritual, knightly, manly works. For what is the use of trying to compel a child to run and work like a strong man? Nothing will come of it; the child cannot. So we poor, weak Christians, who, in God's commandments and His little good works, toddle along the benches and sometimes scarcely creep on all fours, nay, even pull ourselves along on the ground, so that Christ must dandle us, as a mother or a maid dandles a child, — we simply cannot keep pace with their strong, manly running and doing; and God forbid that we should! Therefore we shall keep the "churchly and conciliar holiness" (as they call it) until we have nothing more to do in God's commandments and good works, and not permit this reformation which we cannot accomplish. Let that be sufficient answer to the first kind of people, those who demand this reformation of us with evil intent.

The second kind are those who hope, though vainly, that such a fine reformation as they imagine might still be accomplished by means of the fathers and councils, even though the pope were unwilling or wanted to hinder it. These I answer kindly that I regard it an impossible undertaking and do not know at all how it can be attacked. For I, too, have read the fathers, even before I set myself so stiffly against the pope; and I read them more diligently than they who now quote them so defiantly and proudly against me; for I know that none of them has attempted, as I have, to lecture in the schools upon a book of Holy Scripture and use the writings of the fathers in doing so. Let them take up one book of Holy Scripture and seek their glosses in the fathers, and they will have the same experience that I had, when I took up Hebrews with St. Chrysostom's glosses, Titus and Galatians with the help of St. Jerome's, Genesis with the help of St. Ambrose's and Augustine's, the Psalter with all the writers that were to be had, and so on. I have read more than they think and driven through all the books, and they are too presumptuous when they imagine that I have not read the fathers, and would hold up to me as something precious the very thing that, twenty years ago, I had to think lightly of so that I might read the Scriptures.

St. Bernard claims that he learned his wisdom from the trees, the oaks and pines, which were his doctores, i.e., he got his ideas under the trees, out of the Scriptures. He says, too, that he regards the holy fathers highly, but does not heed everything that they have spoken. He states his reason in this parable, — he would rather drink from the spring than from the rill. So all men who can drink out of the spring forget the rill, except as they use the rill to bring them to the spring; thus the Scriptures must remain master and judge. Or, if we follow the rills too much, they lead us too far from the spring, and lose both taste and virtue, until at last they flow into the salt sea, and are lost. That is what has happened under the papacy.

Enough of that! We would show cause why this undertaking is impossible. In the first place, it is plain that the councils are not only unequal, but even contradictory, and the same is true of the fathers. If we were to try to harmonize them, there would be greater disagreement and disputing than there now is, and we should never get out of it anymore. For since they are unlike and often contradictory,

our first undertaking would be to see how we could cull out the best and let the rest go. Then the trouble would start! One would say, "If we are going to keep them, we must keep all or nothing." Another would say, "You are culling out what you like, and leaving what you do not like." Who will be the umpire? Look at the *Decretum*, in which Gratian had this very purpose, so that the book was even called *Concordantia discordantium*: i.e., he wanted to compare the unlike utterances of the fathers and councils, harmonize the contradictory ones and cull out the best. He succeeded like a crab walks; often let the best go and kept the worst, and neither compared nor harmonized them. The jurists themselves say it stinks of ambition and avarice, and a canonist is nothing but a jackass. How much more would that be the case with us if we actually got to the point of trying to make the utterances and opinions of all the fathers and councils agree together! It would be pains and labor lost and bad would be made worse, and I shall not involve myself in such a dispute; for I know that there would be no end to it and we would have, at last, only an uncertain case, at the cost of vain and lost labor and time. They are too green, the young paper-smearers, and far too inexperienced. They think that what they read and imagine must be so and all the world must worship it, though they cannot say the A B C of Scripture and are inexpert even in the fathers and councils. They shout and sputter, and do not know what they are saying and writing.

I shall say no more of Gratian. St. Augustine writes to Januarius and complains that even in his time, that is, three hundred years after Christ (for in this year 1539 he has been dead for eleven hundred and two years), the Church was already greatly burdened with statements of bishops, on one side and another, so that the condition of the Jews was more tolerable and endurable; and he sets down these clear, plain words, *Innumerabilibus servilibus oneribus premunt ecclesiam*, "They oppress the Church with innumerable burdens," while the Jews are burdened only by God, not by men. He also says, in the same place, that it was Christ's will to impose upon the Church only a few, easy ceremonies, viz., baptism and the sacrament of the altar, and speaks of no more than these two, as everyone can read. The books are to be had and no one can accuse me of inventing this.

But he makes a mighty rent in this, and says, in the same place, *Hoc genus habet liberas observationes*, i.e., "No one is bound to keep all of these, but may omit them without sin." If St. Augustine is not here a heretic, then I shall never become a heretic. He throws the opinions of so many bishops and so many churches all on a heap in the fire and recommends only baptism and the Sacrament, believing that Christ did not will to impose any further burden on the Church, if, indeed, that can be called a burden which is all comfort and grace; as He says, "My burden is light and my load is pleasant," i.e., "My burden is peace and my load is pleasure."

Nevertheless, the fine, wise man does this honor to the great, so-called universal, or chief, councils. He makes a distinction between them and the others, and the statements of the bishops, and says that they are to be highly thought of, saying, in the same place, that the ordinances of these great chief councils ought rightly be kept, and that much depends on them and that they have, to use his own words, *saluberrimam auctoritatem*, i.e., it is highly profitable to have respect for them. But he never saw one of these great councils, nor was he ever in one of them, otherwise he would, perhaps, have written differently, or more, about them. For in all the books there are not more than four of these chief councils that are famous or well-known, and so the Roman bishops compare them to the four Gospels, as they cry in their decretals.

The first was the Nicene Council, held at Nicaea, in Asia, in the fifteenth year of Constantine the Great, almost thirty-five years before Augustine's birth. The second was at Constantinople in the

third year of the Emperors Gratian and Theodosius the Great, who ruled jointly. At that time Augustine was still a heathen, and not a Christian, a man about twenty-six years old, so that he could not take an interest in all the matters. The third, at Ephesus, he did not live to see; still less the fourth, at Chalcedon. All this comes from the histories and the reckoning of the years; it is certain.

I must say this because of the saying of St. Augustine, that the great chief councils are to be regarded, because much depends on them, in order that his opinion may be rightly understood. He was speaking of only two councils, Nicaea and Constantinople, which he had not seen, but afterwards learned about from writings; and at their time no bishop was over any other. The bishops, neither the bishop of Rome nor any other, could never have brought these councils into existence, if the emperors had not called them together. And so I judge, in my folly, that the great, or universal, councils are so called because the bishops were called together out of all lands by the monarch, the great, chief, or universal, ruler.

For no matter how wild it makes all the papists, history testifies that, if the Emperor Constantine had not called the first Council at Nicaea, Pope Sylvester would have had to leave it uncalled. And what would the poor bishop of Rome have done, for the bishops in Asia and Greece were not subject to him? If he could have done it, without the power of the Emperor Constantine, he would have put it, not in Asia, far across the sea, where no one cared anything about his authority (as he well knew by experience), but in Italy, at Rome, or somewhere nearby, and he would have compelled the emperor to come thither. I have the same to say of the other three councils, named above. If the emperors Gratian, Theodosius, Theodosius II, and Marcian had not assembled those three great councils, they would never have been held for the sake of the bishop of Rome or the other bishops; for the bishops in other lands cared as much about the Roman bishop, as the bishops of Mainz, Trier and Cologne, now care about the authority of one another; indeed they cared much less.

Yet one sees in the histories that the Roman bishops, even before that time, were always seeking after lordship over the other bishops, but could not get it because of the monarch. They wrote many letters, now to Africa, now to Asia, and so on, even before the Nicene Council, saying that nothing was to be ordered publicly without the Roman See. But no one paid any attention to it at the time, and the bishops in Asia, Africa, and Egypt acted as though they did not hear it. They gave the people fine words, and they were humble, but they yielded nothing. You will discover this if you read the histories and compare them carefully; but you must pay no attention to their cries and those of their hypocrites, but look the texts and histories in the face or see them as a mirror.

Now when the word "Council" (partly because of the above-mentioned letter of Augustine) was in high honor among Christians throughout the world, and the fine monarchs, or emperors, were gone, the Roman bishops were always considering how they might get possession of the name "Council," so that all Christendom would have to believe what they said, and how, under this fine name, they might secretly become monarchs. This is the truth and it smites their conscience, if they could have a conscience. And that is what actually happened. They accomplished it, so that they have now become Constantine, Gratian, Theodosius, Marcian, and much more than these monarchs and their four great councils. For the pope's councils now are called, *Sic volo, sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas*; not in all the world, to be sure, nor throughout the Church, but in that part of the Roman Empire that Charles the Great had. At last, possessed by all the devils, they shamefully overthrew some of the emperors, trod them under foot, and betrayed them in many ways; and they would still do the same thing, if they could. f195

Enough, for the present, about what St. Augustine says of the councils! We would also show what he believes about the fathers. He says, in the letter to St. Jerome, which Gratian also quotes, in dist. 9., "I have learned to hold the Scriptures alone inerrant; all others, I so read that, however holy or learned they may be, I do not hold what they teach to be true, unless they prove, from Scripture or reason, that it must be so." Furthermore, in the same section of the Decretum is St. Augustine's saying, from the preface to his book *De trinitate*, "Do not follow my writings as Holy Scripture. When you find in Holy Scripture anything that you did not believe before, believe it without doubt; but in my writings, you should hold nothing for certain, concerning which you were before uncertain, unless I have proved that it is certain." Many more sayings of this kind are in other passages of his writings. He says, for example, "As I read the books of others, so will I have mine read." The other sayings I shall pass by for the present.

The papists know very well that there are many of these passages here and there in Augustine and some bits of them have been put in the Decretum. Nevertheless, they act against their own consciences, and pass over these sayings, or suppress them, and set the fathers, the councils, nay, even the bishops of Rome, who have commonly been very unlearned men, above everything. St. Augustine must have detected many faults in the fathers who were before him, because he wants to be impartial and have all of them, including himself, subject to Holy Scripture. Otherwise, why should he have needed to guard himself against them by saying, "However holy or learned they may be"? He might have said, "Yes, everything that they write I consider equal to Holy Scripture, because they are so holy and learned," but he says "No." So he also says in another letter to St. Jerome, who was angry because St. Augustine was not satisfied with one point in his commentary on Galatians, "Dear brother (for he was a fine, kindly man), I hope that you would not have your books considered equal to the books of the apostles and prophets."

I would be ashamed to death, if such a good, fine man were to write such letters to me and ask me not to think my books equal to the books of the apostles and prophets, as St. Augustine writes to St. Jerome. But what we are now concerned with is the fact that St. Augustine observed that the fathers were sometimes human and had not overcome Romans 7:18; therefore he will not rely on them, — neither on his predecessors, holy and learned fathers though they were, nor on himself, and still less upon his successors, who would be smaller men — but he will have the Scriptures as master and judge. So it has been said above by Bernard that the oaks and pines were his masters, and he would rather drink from the spring than from the rill. He could not have said this, if he had held the books of the fathers equal to Holy Scripture and had found no fault in them; but he would have said, "It is all the same whether I drink from the Scriptures or the fathers." He does not do that, but lets the rill flow on, and drinks from the spring.

What are we to do, then? If we are to bring the Church back to the doctrine and opinion of the fathers, there stands St. Augustine, and confuses us and lets us find no end to our differences of opinion, because he will not have reliance put upon the fathers, bishops, or councils, no matter how holy and learned they may be, nor on himself, but refers us to the Scriptures; otherwise, he says, everything is uncertain, and lost, and vain. But to exclude St. Augustine is in conflict with our purpose, which is to have a Church that will accord with the doctrine of the fathers; for if St. Augustine is thrown out of their number, the others are not worth much, and it is intolerable nonsense not to consider St. Augustine one of the best fathers, since throughout all Christendom he is esteemed the highest of them, and both Church and school have hitherto preserved his writings best of all, as is plain. And yet you compel us to this endless trouble and labor of holding to the

councils and fathers, against the Scriptures, and judging ourselves by them! Before that happens we shall all be dead; the Last Day will come long before that.

However, we shall put aside St. Augustine, Bernard, and those who write such things, and take up the councils and fathers themselves and see whether we should be able to direct our life by them. But in order not to make too long a story of it, we shall take up particularly the first two great councils, which St. Augustine praises; namely, those of Nicaea and Constantinople, although he did not see them. Nay, in order to make our case altogether certain, and in order that we may make no mistakes and have no fears, we shall take up the first council, that of the apostles, held at Jerusalem, of which St. Luke writes in Acts 15:28. There it is written that the apostles daimed that the Holy Spirit ordered these things through them. *Visum est Spiritui Sancto et nobis, etc.*, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication, from which if ye abstain, ye do well."

There we hear that the Holy Ghost (as the preachers of councils boast) commands that we are to eat nothing that has been sacrificed to idols, no blood, nothing that has been strangled. Now if we would have a Church according to this council (as would be only right, since it is the highest and the first, and was held by the apostles themselves), we should have to teach and insist that no prince, lord, burgher, or peasant should henceforth eat geese, roe-deer, stag, or pork cooked in blood, and must also avoid carp and fish-jelly; for there is blood in them or, as the cooks say, "color." And especially must the burghers and peasants eat no red sausage, or bloodsausage, for that is not just thin blood, but blood that has been thickened and cooked, a very coarse blood. Likewise we must not eat rabbits or birds for, according to the laws of the chase, they are all strangled, even though they are not cooked in blood, but only fried.

If, then, we are to abstain from blood, according to this council, we must let the Jews be our masters, in church and kitchen, for they have a special, big book on the subject of blood-eating, so big that one cannot vault over it with a pole, and they look for blood so closely that they will not eat meat with any Gentile or Christian even though the meat is not strangled, but slaughtered as purely as possible (like the meat of oxen and calves) and the blood washed out with water; they would rather die than do it. God help us! how we Christians would be tormented over this council, in the two matters of eating blood and the meat of strangled animals alone! Let anyone who will start to bring the Church into obedience to this council; I shall follow him very gladly. Otherwise, I want to be excused from listening to this cry of "Councils! Councils! You do not keep the councils and fathers!" Or I will cry back, "You yourselves do not keep councils or fathers, because you treat this highest council and the highest fathers, the apostles themselves, with contempt! Why do you think that I ought or must keep councils and fathers, when you yourselves will not touch them with a finger?" I would say, as I said to the Sabbatarians, that they ought first to keep their Mosaic law, and then we, too, would keep it; but when they themselves do not and cannot keep it, it is laughable when they ask us to keep it.

You say it is not possible to introduce the rules of this council because opposite practices have become too widespread. That is no answer, for we have undertaken to govern ourselves according to the councils, and here it says, "The Holy Ghost has decreed." Against the Holy Ghost the plea that things have gone too far or taken too deep a hold, has no force, and that kind of excuses leaves no conscience sure of what to do. If we would be conciliar, we must keep this council above all others; if

not, then we may keep none of the other councils and thus be free from all councils. For in this council there were not simple bishops, as in the others, but the apostles themselves, who were the Holy Ghost's certain and highest fathers. Besides, it is not so impossible to avoid blood and things strangled! What would it be like, if we had to eat corn, herbs, beets, apples, and other fruits of the earth and the trees, as our ancestors did before the Flood, when it was not permitted to eat meat? We should not die of hunger, even if we were to eat neither meat nor fish. How many people, even today, have to live, eating fish or meat very seldom. Thus the plea of impossibility does not help to strengthen our conscience against the Holy Ghost, because without injury to body or soul, we could go back to living, not only without eating blood and things strangled, as Moses teaches, but also without fish and meat, as before the Flood. I am surprised that, with all the many spirits of disorder of these days, the devil has not brought up these beautiful ideas, which have such fine precedents of Scripture on their side.

If we were to say that all this was not only impossible, but had fallen of itself and come into disuse or gone out of use (as I am accustomed to call the canons which are no more in use *canones mortuos*, "dead canons"), this again would not stand the test. I know, to be sure, that the pope and his followers seek this way out, and pretend that the Church has the power to alter this council of the apostles. This is a lie! They cannot produce a single utterance of the Church which contains a commandment to do this or make any changes. Besides, it is not proper for the Church to alter an ordinance of the Holy Ghost, and it never does so. They do not see, however, blind leaders that they are, that with that kind of talk they are only preparing a rod for their own hide. If we allow that men have power to alter the ordinance and commandment of the Holy Ghost, we shall straightway tread the pope under foot, with all his breves and bulls, and say, — "If the first decrees of the apostles are not binding, though we are sure that the Holy Ghost established them, as they themselves say, *Visum est*, how much less shall the power and the decrees of the popes be binding, about which we are by no means so certain that the Holy Ghost was with them as He was with the apostles? We must let the apostles amount to something, too, and even though they were not above the popes, (as the heretic, Dr. Luther, holds), nevertheless, we must give them a seat alongside the popes. And as a proof of this, the popes have often been open and abandoned knaves, and again and again one of them has thrown away the decrees of another. The Holy Ghost cannot contradict Himself thus and the apostles were not such popes or knaves. Therefore there must be something else to say about this; these bad jokes will not work; unless one were to say that the Church was built upon a reed, which the wind blows hither and yon, according to the whim of the pope or of men. For the Church must not sway on a reed, but rest upon the rock and be firmly founded, as Matthew 7:26 and Matthew 16:18 say." But we were beginning to say that it has fallen of itself, without alteration by the Church, and therefore one need no longer keep it. Nay, dear friend, Male, says the jurist. If one is not to keep a law, or it is to become no law because it is not kept or has fallen, then let us be easy in our minds and keep no more laws. A whore can say that she is doing right because the sixth commandment has fallen and is not in use among adulterers and adulteresses. Nay, we children of Adam, together with the devils, will hold a council against God, and pass this resolution: "Listen, God, all your commandments have fallen and are no longer in use among us men and devils; therefore we ought no longer to keep them, but act against them; you ought to approve of that and not condemn us, since there is no sin, when the law has fallen." So robbers and murderers might also beatify themselves, and say: "We are no longer bound to be obedient to you princes and lords, but are right in fighting you and robbing you, for among us your law has fallen, etc."

Advise us, now, What we are to do. It does not help us that the apostolic council has fallen (which is the truth!) or been altered by the Church (which is a lie!). What harm would be done, if we were to scratch out the word, Holy Ghost, and let it be the apostles alone who made this decree, without the Holy Ghost? Perhaps that would help the case! If that is laughable, then think up something better! If one does not scratch out "Holy Ghost" from the council, then one of two things must happen, — either both we and the papists should keep this council; or we should be free from it and it need not be kept, and so we poor heretics would be rid of the cry, "Councils, Councils, Councils!" For if this council is not to be kept, then none of the rest is to be kept, as I have said. Otherwise, they should hear once more the cry, *Medice, cura te ipsum*, "Hans take yourself by the nose." Let them who raise this cry first keep it, and we will follow in their footsteps. If not, then their crying and sputtering of this word, "Councils, Councils" is not in earnest, but they are only using it to trample people in the face, to terrify weak consciences treacherously and wickedly, and to destroy simple souls.

I say all this about this council, because it is the first and the highest, so that we may think the matter over before we allow that the Church should live, or be ruled, according to the councils. If this council causes us so much confusion, what will it be like when we take up the others? It is true, I admit, that the word "Council" is easy to say, and a sermon about keeping the councils is easy to preach; but what attitude to take in order to put the councils in force again, — what about that, my dear friend? The pope and his followers are clever; they get off lightly by saying that he is above all councils and may keep what he will and allow others to keep them as far as he will. Yes, if the problem can be solved that way, then let us stop using the word "Council" and stop preaching that the councils shall be kept, and cry, instead, "Pope, pope! The pope's doctrine should be kept!" Thus we all get off easy and are fine Christians, like them! For what good will the council do us, if we cannot and will not keep it, but only boast the name or the letters that compose it?

Or (since we are talking about it, and must jest a little in this carnival-time f208), it seems better still to me, if it is only a matter of the letters C-o-u-n-c-i-l, without deeds or results, that we should make the penmen popes, cardinals, bishops, and preachers, They could write those letters finely, — big, little, black, red, green, yellow, and any way that was wanted. Then the Church would be ruled by the councils and there would be no need to keep what has been ordered by the councils, but the Church would have enough when it had the letters, C-o-u-n-c-i-l, C-o-u-n-c-i-l. But if the penmen do not please us, let us take painters and wood-carvers and printers, to paint and carve and print us beautiful councils, and then the Church is splendidly ruled. Let us make the painters, carvers and printers pope, cardinals and bishops! What would be the use, then, of asking any further how the decrees of the councils are to be kept? Letters and pictures are enough.

But think a little further! Suppose that all men were blind, and could not see these councils when they were written, painted, carved, printed! How, then, could the Church be ruled by the councils? My advice is to take the choristers at Halberstadt and Magdeburg, when they sing the *Quicumque* and let them shout, instead, "Council, Council" until the church and the whole dome shake. We could hear them away across the Elbe, even if we were all blind. Then the Church would be well ruled and these choristers would quickly be made popes, cardinals and bishops, because it is so easy for them to rule the Church, which has become an impossible task for the holy Fathers in Rome.

I shall say more about this council after awhile; this is getting too long, for I must not forget the Council of Nicaea,, which is the best, and the first, universal council after that of the apostles.

This council decrees, among other things, that Christians who have fallen are to be received back into penance for a period of seven years; if they die in the meantime, they are to be free, and are not to be denied the Sacrament. This decree the council-criers themselves do not keep, but act against it and consign dying Christians to purgatory with the remainder of their penance. If the pope were to keep this rule, the devil! what a poor beggar he would become, and all the monasteries along with him, if this mine, ore-pit, and trade — viz., purgatory, masses, pilgrimages, foundations, brotherhoods, indulgences, bulls, etc. — were to come to nothing. The devil protect the pope, with all cardinals, bishops, monks and nuns, so that the Church may not be ruled according to this council! What would become of them? But this decree concerns me, for I have urged it against the pope before now, and can readily imagine how they might turn it about and interpret it against me, and so I shall let it go now. I must deal just now with things that affect both parties, to the praise and honor of the council-criers!

The same council decrees that those who give up warfare for the sake of religion, and afterwards go to war again, are to spend five years among the catechumens, and two years after that are to be admitted to the Sacrament. I take the word “religion” to mean, here, the common Christian faith; of that more later. In order not to get off the track and be hindered in my course by such side-questions, I shall not here discuss whether the council was forbidding war or had the power and right to forbid it or condemn it, if the soldier did not otherwise deny the faith of which the former rule speaks. On the contrary, our question is whether this article — viz., that no soldier can be saved or be a Christian, — has hitherto been kept or whether it is to be kept henceforth as a matter of law. For the pope himself, with all his followers, must testify that this article has fallen and cannot possibly be set up again, far less even than the apostles’ decree against blood sausage, black jelly and the like, spoken of above. The council speaks, not of murderers, robbers, enemies, but de militia, i.e., of regular war, when a prince, king, or emperor is in the field with his banner, in which case, God Himself has commanded, in Romans 13:1, that people are to be in subjection and be obedient, even though the rulers were heathen, as St. Maurice and many others did, so long as they do not compel us to fight against God.

Now let us rule the Church according to this council! First let us ungird the sword from the emperor and then command that the whole world is to keep peace and no one is to begin war, or endure it; for war is forbidden by the Council of Nicaea on pain of seven years’ penance. What more do we want? The Church is ruled now; we need no soldiers; the devil is dead; and all the years since the time of this council have been golden years; nay, they have been eternal life itself, in perfect peace, if the council’s statute is right and is to be kept.

But we should have to have good and able painters to paint this Church for us so that we could see it; or, if we were blind we should have to have much greater shouters than the choristers of Halberstadt, so that we could hear it. Perhaps the penmen could write the letters C-o-u-n-c-i-l better than we poor Christians, because they have more colors and make better letters; but the work is not there, and we cannot be saved by letters, pictures and shouts. We must speak differently about this matter, and leave the letters, the pictures and the shouts to the papists. It will be for us to live according to the councils and not merely boast of the letters C-o-u-n-c-i-l; for we are to be Christians.

You say that the council is to be understood to speak of those Christians who run after war of their own accord, for the sake of money, and it is right thus to condemn them. In God’s name! I am willing to be an ignorant fool and ass for holding the councils so high! Interpret it that way, if you can, and I

shall be satisfied! But tell me this! Were you there in the Council of Nicaea, when this article was adopted, that you can say so certainly that this is its meaning? If not, where have you read this? The article says *drily, de militia*, "Of war"; it says nothing of unjust wars. It would not have been necessary for the council to condemn such wars, for they had already been highly condemned by reason among all the heathen, who were not Christians and had no councils.

If a king or prince has to fight and defend himself in a just war, he has to take what soldiers he can get. But if these volunteers are condemned, what will become of emperors, kings and princes, now that there are no soldiers to be had except volunteers? Tell me, are the lords to fight singlehanded, or weave straw-men to oppose their enemies. Ask the council's advice, whether this is to be done! Yes, good sir, it is easy to say that a council has given such a commandment, when one looks at the letters, as a cow at a door, not thinking of what goes along with it, or how one can keep it and live by it! And why have the popes and bishops themselves not kept it, who have been the cause of so much war and bloodshed throughout the world, and yet, are always crying, "Councils, Councils! Fathers, Fathers!" only that they themselves act against them and pick out of them the things that they want us to do?

"Ei, Luther, this way you bring the Council of Nicaea under suspicion of sedition! For if we were thus to teach that the emperor and his soldiers were condemned, even though they had a just cause, we should rightly be thought seditious on the basis of our own writings." I say, however, that I am now a good conciliarist, and must be; after awhile I shall say more of this, and explain myself. Now I say, as I said before, that the council cannot have been speaking of anything else than regular warfare, as it was then conducted in the Roman Empire, under this same emperor, Constantine, as under his heathen predecessors. The foot-soldiers were then known as *milites*. They were settled citizens, who had permanent pay, so that when the father died, or became too old, the son had to become a soldier, in his father's stead, and was forced to do so. The Turks still retain this custom. I have heard it said that the king of France does practically the same thing in Switzerland, and gives pay even to children. If this is true, it is not an invention.

The horsemen, too, were permanent, hereditary soldiers, and had their pay. They were called *equites*. These horsemen were like our nobles, who have to maintain horses and armor, for which they enjoy their fiefs. Thus the Roman Empire always had a certain number of both infantry and cavalry, receiving permanent pay. Therefore, I say that if the council is to be understood rightly, it must be understood to speak of nothing else than regular warfare, because it had to speak of the Roman soldiery, in which, according to St. Paul's teaching, many Christians had to serve obediently, — men like St. Maurice and his comrades and Jovinian, Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius before they became emperors. But if it was right, before baptism, to serve heathen emperors in war, why should it be wrong to render the same service to Christian emperors, after baptism? f224

Unless, perhaps, *religio*, in this place, means not the Christian faith, but monasticism. Then I should be caught, and according to this council, I should have to crawl back again into my cowl, whether I wanted to or not, and I should not know how to find St. Peter in heaven, because he was a fisherman before he was an apostle, and plied his fisherman's trade again after he became an apostle, though he had left it for Christ's sake.

Now suppose, that *religio* here means monkery, despite the fact that at that time there were no orders, and no such monasteries, or monks as today, although monasticism entered soon and rapidly thereafter. St. Anthony and his followers lived about that time, and all the monks call him father and

founder. But at this time "monk" meant what we now call "anchorite" or "hermit," and the Greek word monachos means solitarius, a "solitary," one who lives alone, apart from men, in a woods or a wilderness, or otherwise quite alone. I know of no such monks now, and there have been none of them for more than a thousand years, unless, perhaps you would call the poor prisoners in towers and dungeons monks; and, sad to say! they are real monks, for they sit alone, away from men. The monks of the papacy are more with people and less alone than any other folk are, for what class or rank in the world is more among people and less apart from them than these monks, unless it be claimed that the monasteries, in city and country, are not among men.

But let us let grammar go and talk of facts. Suppose that religio here does mean monasticism, as it existed at that time! Why, then, does this council condemn militia, i.e., obedience to temporal rulers, and say that monks, in this obedience, cannot be saved? We could endure it, if monasticism were praised, but when regular militia is condemned, as though St. Anthony could not serve the emperor in war with a good conscience, that is too much. Where would the emperor get his soldiers, if they all wanted to become monks and allege that they dared not serve in war? Tell me, good sir, what is the difference between this doctrine and sedition, especially if we were to teach it? And yet we know that this self-chosen monkery is not commanded by God, and obedience is commanded. If the monks would flee away from men, they ought to flee honorably and honestly and not leave a stench behind them; i.e., they ought not, by their flight, to put a stench upon other classes and their pursuits, as though these other things were utterly damnable and their self-chosen monkery must be pure balsam. For when one flees and becomes a monk, it sounds as though he were saying, "Pfui! How the people stink! How damnable is their state! I will be saved, and let them go to the devil!" If Christ had fled thus and become such a holy monk, who would have died for us or rendered satisfaction for us poor sinners? Would it have been the monks, with their strict lives of flight?

True, St. John the Baptist was in the wilderness, though not entirely away from people; but afterwards, when he had reached man's estate, he came back among people and preached. Christ — like Moses on Mount Sinai, — was forty days quite apart from men in the wilderness and neither ate nor drank; but He, too, came back among the people. Well, then, let us hold them for hermits and monks if we like; and yet neither of them condemns paid soldiers as a class, but John says to them, "Be satisfied with your wages and do no one violence or wrong." Christ went to the centurion at Capernaum, in order to help his servant, who served, beyond a doubt, for pay, and Christ does not call his class lost, but praises his faith above all Israel; and St. Peter allowed Comelius, at Caesarea, to remain centurion after his baptism, together with his servants, who were there in the pay of the Romans. How much less, then, ought St. Anthony and his monks to have cast a stench upon this ordinance of God, with his new and peculiar holiness; since he was a simple layman, wholly unlearned, and was not a preacher and held no office in the Church. To be sure, I believe that he was great before God, as were many others of his pupils; but the thing he undertook is full of offense and dangerous, though he was preserved in it, as the elect are preserved amid sins and other offenses. Nevertheless, it is not the example of his life that is to be praised, but the example and teaching of Christ and John.

Now whether religio means Christian faith or monkery, it follows from this council that militia, — which was at that time obedience to temporal order, — is to be regarded as either disobedience to God or as a stinking obedience, compared with human, self-chosen monkery. But the legend of St. Martin indicates that religio meant Christian faith; for when he desired to become a Christian, he gave up his hereditary militia, in which his father had been and in which, when he became too old, he

had caused his son Martin to be enrolled in his place, as the law and custom of the Roman Empire prescribed. And this act of his was given an evil interpretation, as though he feared the enemy and therefore fled away and became a Christian. This can be read in his legend. Thus it appears that at that time the notion had already grown up among the people, — not without the preaching of some bishops, — that militia was to be regarded a perilous and damned estate and that one who would serve God must flee from it. For St. Martin lived not long after the Council of Nicaea; he was a soldier under Julian. f227

If we are to keep this council, or re-establish it, we must flee with St. Anthony into the wilderness, make monks out of emperors and kings, and say that they cannot be Christians or be saved; or else preach that they live in perilous and stinking obedience and do not serve God. On the other hand, if we do not keep this council, we must not keep any. One is as good as another, for one Holy Ghost rules them all, and we do not want to have councils in paint or in letters, but real councils that can be followed. But I suspect that there is a swindle here and that the holy fathers never adopted this article, because they would certainly have shown consideration to the emperor Constantine, who had released them from the tyrants, not with St. Anthony's monkey, but with war and sword. It looks as though the other worthless bishops had patched this into the record, or patched it on at a later time. f229

Moreover the same council decrees that the Roman bishop, according to ancient custom, is to have the suburbicarian churches commended to him, as the bishop of Alexandria the churches in Egypt. I will not and cannot declare what suburbicariae means, since it is not my word; but it sounds as though it meant the churches located, prior to that time, in Italy, around the Roman churches, just as the churches in Egypt were around the churches at Alexandria. Interpret it as you will, however, I understand well that this council does not give the bishop of Rome any lordship over the surrounding churches, but commends them to him, in order that he may care for them; and it does this, not as though it had to be, *jure divino*, but because of ancient custom. Custom is not *scriptura sacra*, however, or God's Word. Moreover, it takes the churches of Egypt away from the bishop of Rome, — also according to ancient custom, — and commends them to the bishop of Alexandria. Likewise, it is quite thinkable that the churches in Syria were commended to the Bishop of Antioch or of Jerusalem, and not to the Bishop of Rome, since they were situated farther from Rome than Alexandria or Egypt.

Now if this council is to be valid for our churches and its decrees go into effect, we must first condemn the bishop of Rome as a tyrant and burn all his bulls and decretals with fire. For there is not one bull or decretal in which he does not boast, with great bellowing and threatening, that he is the supreme head and lord of all the churches on earth, to whom everything on earth must be subject in order to be saved. And this is nothing else than to say flatly, — "The Council of Nicaea is false, accursed, and damned, because it takes from me this lordship over all things, and makes the Bishop of Alexandria my equal." But the Turk and the Sultan long ago interpreted this article of the council and put it out of force, by the destruction of Alexandria, so that neither the pope nor we need bother about it. Thus we learn that the articles of the council are not all equally permanent, and to be kept forever, like articles of faith.

Moreover, this council decrees that those who make themselves eunuchs, because of the great and unbearable burning of the flesh, are not to be admitted to dergy or the offices of the Church. Again, it decrees that the bishops are to have no women around them or living with them, except a mother, sister, aunts (i.e., sisters of mother or father), or the like near relatives. Here I do not understand the

Holy Ghost at all, as He speaks in this council. Those who make themselves eunuchs, because of the unbearable burning of the flesh, are not fit for church offices; and they, too, are not fit who take or have wives, as a protection against this burning, according to St. Paul's advice, in 1 Corinthians 7:2. What is intended by this? Is a bishop, or preacher, then, to stick in this intolerable burning and not be able to rescue himself from this perilous state, either by making himself a eunuch or by marrying? And why command one who has a wife that he shall not have other women with him? That is unseemly even for laymen who are married. So, too, the matter of mother, sisters, aunts, would take care of itself, if the bishop had a wife; there would be no need of prohibitions. Or has the Holy Ghost nothing else to do in the councils, than bind and burden His servants with impossible, perilous, unnecessary laws? The histories say that St. Paphnutius, that important man, opposed the bishops in this council, when they undertook to forbid marriage, even to those who had previously taken wives, and wanted to forbid them to discharge the marriage-duty, even with their own wives. He advised against it, and said that if a man discharged the marriage-duty with his own wife, that, too, was chastity. It is written that he won; but these two decrees sound as though the bishops had gone ahead and forbidden wives absolutely; for there were also many unfit and false bishops along with the good majority in the council, such as the Arians and their sectaries, as the histories clearly show. Perhaps they had something to do with it! But of that more hereafter!

We shall now leave the councils, a little while, and take a look at the fathers. To be sure, Augustine leads us somewhat astray, because, as said above, he will have none of the fathers believed, but will have them all in the captivity and under the compulsion of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, we shall have a look at them.

St. Cyprian is one of the earliest fathers. He lived long before the Council of Nicaea, in the time of the martyrs, and was himself a celebrated martyr. He taught, and was very stiff about it, that those baptized by heretics must be rebaptized. He stuck to this opinion until his martyrdom, although vigorously admonished by other bishops, and St. Cornelius, bishop of Rome, who was martyred at the same time, would not hold with him. Later St. Augustine had great difficulty in excusing him, and had finally to resort to the idea that this error of his was washed away by the blood which he shed because of his love of Christ. So saying, St. Augustine condemns St. Cyprian's doctrine of rebaptism, which was afterwards repeatedly condemned, and rightly so. But we might well be happy over Cyprian, because in him Christ comforts us poor sinners mightily, by showing that even His great saints must still be human; and, indeed, St. Cyprian, that great man and beloved martyr, stumbled even more in other matters, just as plain, of which there is now no time to speak.

But where do we stand with the fathers who bequeathed this doctrine to St. Cyprian? You may read in the Ecclesiastical History, Book 7, pages one and two, what the great bishop Dionysius of Alexandria writes to bishop Sixtus of Rome, saying that in former times, before the bishops in Africa did it, it was done by great and important bishops and was decreed by the Council of Iconium, and that so important a fact should be considered before the practice was condemned. Besides, this article stands plainly in the proceedings of the Nicene Council, that the heretics, Paulianists or Photinians, are to be rebaptized; and this article gives St. Augustine much difficulty in his book On Heresies. He had worried long and much with the Anabaptists, the Donatists, but for the sake of this decree of the Nicene Council, he twists out of the difficulty with words like these: "It is to be believed that the Photinians did not keep the form of baptism, as other heretics did." Yes, it is to be believed by anyone who can believe it, when there is no proof! The Photinians either had or made another Gospel than the whole Church had, and it is rather to be believed that they used the common form;

for heretics have always been glad to boast the Scriptures on their side. Thus Anabaptism will maintain that it is right, against St. Augustine and all of us, because the Nicene Council and other councils and fathers before it agree with Cyprian. Moreover, the *Canones apostolorum*, the Apostolic Canons, have now been printed and circulated by many, in order that the Church may again be well ruled. Among them is this canon: "The Sacrament and the baptism of the heretics are to be regarded as nothing, but they are to be rebaptized." It is easy to reckon that if the apostles ordained this, it afterwards came down through the earlier fathers and councils (as Dionysius says) to St. Cyprian, and thence to the Council of Nicaea; for Cyprian was before the Council of Nicaea. If the apostles decreed this, then St. Cyprian is right and St. Augustine and the whole Church are overcome, and we with him, for we hold to his view; for who will teach contrary to the apostles? But if the apostles did not decree it, then these book-writers and magisters ought all to be drowned and hanged together, because they spread, print, and write such books under the apostles' names; they deserve, too, that no one should believe any of their books or utterances, since they are always producing these books which they themselves do not believe, and loading them upon us, with the letters C-o-u-n-c-i-l-, F-a-t-h-e-r-s. A chorister of Halberstadt could write these letters better than they, if it were only a matter of the letters, with which they endeavor to make fools of us.

Now if St. Cyprian and the Council of Nicaea and others had this rule of the apostles before them, how shall we harmonize the fathers? The apostles and Cyprian want rebaptism; St. Augustine and the whole Church afterwards want to have it considered wrong. Meanwhile, who is preaching to Christians, until this difference is healed and harmonized? O yes! it is good to juggle with councils and fathers, if one only fools with the letters or postpones a council all the time, as has happened these last twenty years, and does not consider, meanwhile, what becomes of the souls, who should be fed with sure teaching, as Christ says in John 21:1, *Pasce oves meas*. f247

I excuse St. Cyprian, insofar, at least, as he was not such an anabaptist as ours now are; for he held that there were no sacraments at all among the heretics and that they must, therefore, be baptized like other heathen, and the error of his heart was in thinking that he was not bestowing a second baptism, but baptizing an unbaptized heathen; for he neither knows nor holds to a rebaptism, but only one single baptism. Our anabaptists, however, confess that among us and under the papacy there is a true baptism, but since it is given or received by the unworthy, it is no baptism. This St. Cyprian would not have suffered, much less done.

I have wanted to say this, for myself, about the holy martyr, St. Cyprian, of whom I have a high opinion as regards his character and faith; for doctrine is subject to the saying of St. Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, *Omnia probate*, etc. But we are not now concerned with what I say, but with making the fathers agree with one another, so that one may be sure what and how to preach to poor Christians; for here the apostles and Cyprian are not at one with St. Augustine and the Church, on the subject of baptism. If we are to follow St. Augustine, we must condemn the apostles and their rules, and the Nicene Council, with the preceding councils and fathers, and with St. Cyprian; on the other hand, if St. Cyprian and the apostles are right, then St. Augustine and the Church are wrong. Who is to preach and baptize meanwhile, until we are at one in this matter? The papists boast the canons of the apostles and councils, together with the fathers, against us, and some of them are incorporated in Gratian's Canon Law, as a token. But suppose that the dam were to break, and some of these canons and councils were found heretical, as this one about rebaptism is, who could then prevent the flood from rolling over us and crying, in its roar, "You lie in everything that you write, say, print,

spit, and shout; no one can believe a word of it, even though you bring forward councils, fathers, and apostles in proof of it.”

Meanwhile, we cull out of the fathers and councils what we like; they what they like; and we cannot come to agreement, because the fathers are not in agreement any more than the councils are. Dear sir, who is to preach in the meantime to the poor souls who know nothing of this culling and quarreling? Is it feeding Christ’s sheep, when we do not know whether we are giving them grass or poison, hay or dung? We are to be doubtful and uncertain until it is settled, and a council decides it! Ah, what poor provision Christ made for His Church, if that is the way things were to go! No, it must go otherwise than we pretend to prove from councils and fathers; or else there must have been no Church since the time of the apostles; and this is not possible, for there stand the words, “I believe one holy, Christian Church” and “I am with you, even unto the end of the world.” The Man must be called *Ego veritas*; fathers and councils, compared with Him, must be called *Omnis homo mendax*, if they contradict each other.

I say these things, not for the sake of our own people, whom I will show, after awhile, what councils, fathers, and Church are, if they do not know it already, which may God forbid! But I am speaking for the sake of the shouters, who think nothing else than that we have not read the fathers and councils. To be sure, I have not read all the councils, and shall not read them all and lose all that time and effort, since I have read the four chief councils thoroughly, better than any of them have done. Also I make bold to say that, after the four chief councils, I will hold all the others of small value, even though I would hold some of them to be good. The fathers, I hope, are better known to me than to these shouters, who pinch out of them what they want and let the rest go, because it annoys them. Therefore we must go at the business another way.

Why do we quarrel? If we would harmonize the sayings of the fathers, let us take up the *Magister sententiarum*. In this work he was diligent beyond measure and went far ahead of us; for he, too, had this same difficulty with the lack of agreement in the fathers and wanted to remedy it, and, in my opinion, he did it better than we would. In no council, nor in all the councils, and in none of the fathers will you find as much as in the book of Sentences. The fathers and councils deal with some points of Christian doctrine, but none of them deals with them all, as this man does; at least he deals with most of them. But concerning the real articles, faith and justification, what he says is too thin and weak, though he gives high enough praise to the grace of God. As was said above, we can allow that Gratian has worked for us at the harmonizing of the councils, in which he went to great pains; but his teaching is not as pure as that of the *Magister sententiarum*, for he gives too much to the Roman bishop and applies everything to him; otherwise he would, perhaps, have done better with the harmonizing of the councils than we now could do.

If anyone would see still farther that the dear holy fathers were men, let him read the little book on the four chapters to the Corinthians by Dr. Pommer, our pastor. From it he must learn that St. Augustine was right, when he said *Noli meis etc.*, as we said above, viz., that he will not believe any of the fathers unless he has the Scriptures on his side. Dear Lord God! If the Christian faith were to depend on men, and be founded in human words, what were the need for the Holy Scriptures, or why has God given them? Let us throw them under the bench and lay the councils and the fathers on the desk instead! Or, if the fathers were not men, how shall we men be saved? If they were men, they must also have thought, spoken, and acted sometimes as we think, speak and act, and then

said, like us, the prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses"; especially since they have not the promise of the Spirit, like the apostles, and must be pupils of the apostles.

If the Holy Ghost had been so silly as to expect or trust that the councils and fathers would do everything well and make no mistakes, He would have had no need to warn His Church, before their time, that it should prove and examine all things and that men would build straw, hay, wood on the foundation. By this He foretells, not privately and feebly, but publicly and mightily, that in the holy Church there would be some builders of wood, straw, hay, i.e., teachers, who, although they would stay on the foundation, would suffer loss by fire, but would have to be saved. This cannot be understood to mean the heretics, for they lay another foundation, but these stay on the foundation, i.e., in the faith of Christ, are saved, and are called God's saints, and yet they have hay, straw, wood, which must be burned by the fire of Holy Scripture, though without injury to their salvation. So St. Augustine says of himself, *Errare potero; hereticus non ero*, "I can err, but I shall not be a heretic," for the reason that heretics not only err, but will not let themselves be corrected, defend their error as though it were right, and strive against known truth and their own consciences. Of them St. Paul says, in Titus 3:10-11, "A heretic shalt thou avoid, after one or two admonitions, and know that such a one is perverted and sins" *autokatakritos*, i.e., he remains condemned in obstinate and conscious error. But St. Augustine will confess his error willingly and allow himself to be told of it; therefore he cannot be a heretic, even though he were guilty of error. All the other saints do likewise and are willing to put their hay, straw, and wood into the fire, so that they may stay on the foundation of salvation, as we have done, and still do.

Accordingly, since it cannot be otherwise with the fathers, — I speak of the holy and good ones, — and when they build without the Scriptures, i.e., without gold, silver, precious stones, they have to build wood, straw and hay; therefore we must follow the judgment of St. Paul, and know how to distinguish between gold and wood, silver and straw, precious stones and hay. We must not let ourselves be forced by these unprofitable shouters to think wood and gold one and the same thing, silver and straw one thing, emeralds and hay one thing. We ought to ask them (if it could be done) that they first make themselves so clever as to take wood for gold, straw for silver, hay for pearls. Until then they ought to spare us, and not ascribe to us such folly or childishness.

All of us ought also to observe this wonderful thing about the Holy Ghost, — He willed to give the world all the books of Holy Scripture, both of the Old and New Testaments, out of the people of Abraham and through his seed, and He would not have one of them written by us Gentiles, anymore than He would choose the prophets and apostles from among the Gentiles. So St. Paul says, in Romans 3:2, "The Jews have the great advantage that the speech of God was entrusted to them"; and Psalm 147:19 says, "He made known His speech to Jacob and His laws to Israel"; He hath not done so to any Gentiles; and Christ Himself says, in John 4:22, "We know that salvation has come from the Jews"; and Romans 9:14 says, "Yours are the promise, the fathers, the law and Christ."

Therefore we Gentiles must not consider the writings of our fathers equal to Holy Scripture, but a little lower; for they are the children and heirs, we the guests and strangers, who have come to the children's table by grace, without any promise. Nay, we ought to thank God with humility and, like the Gentile woman, desire nothing more than to be the dogs who gather up the crumbs that fall from the master's table. As it is we go ahead and want to lift our fathers and ourselves up to the level of the apostles, not thinking that God might rather break us also to pieces, since He did not spare the natural branches, Abraham's seed, or heirs, because of their unbelief. Yet the accursed abomination

at Rome wants to have power even over the apostles and prophets, and alter the Scriptures to suit himself! Therefore Augustine is right, when he writes to St. Jerome, as was said above, "I do not believe, dear brother, that you would have your writings considered equal to the books of the apostles and prophets; God forbid that you should desire such a thing!"

Then, too, there is no council or father in which you can find, or from which you can learn, the whole of Christian doctrine. So the Nicene Council deals only with the doctrine that Christ is true God; the Council of Constantinople, that the Holy Ghost is God; the Council of Ephesus, that Christ is not two Persons, but one; the Council of Chalcedon, that Christ has not one nature, but two, deity and humanity. These are the four great, chief councils, and they have nothing more for us than these points, as we shall hear; but this is not the whole doctrine of Christian faith. St. Cyprian discusses how one is to suffer and die, firm in faith, rebaptizes heretics, and rebukes bad morals and the women. St. Hilary defends the Council of Nicaea and its statement that Christ is true God and discusses the Psalms a little. St. Jerome praises virginity and the hermits. St. Chrysostom teaches prayer, fasting, almsgiving, patience, etc. St. Ambrose contains much, but St. Augustine most of all, and therefore the *Magister sententiarum* takes most material from him.

In short, you may put them all together, both fathers and councils, and you cannot cull the whole doctrine of Christian faith out of them, though you keep on culling forever. If the Holy Scriptures had not made and preserved the Church, it would not have remained long because of the councils and fathers. As evidence let me ask, "Whence do the fathers and councils get what they teach and discuss? Think you that they were first discovered in their time or that the Holy Ghost was always giving them something new? How did the Church exist before these councils and fathers? Or were there no Christians before the rise of the councils and fathers? We must, therefore, speak differently of the councils and fathers, and look, not at the letters, but the meaning.

Let this suffice for the first part of this book! Let us catch our breath!

PART 2

First, Concerning the Councils. The word *concilium* gives us stupid folk immeasurable difficulties, even more than the words "fathers" and "Church." I would not be a judge and master here, but only express my ideas; if anyone else can do better, I wish him grace and luck. Amen. I take up the saying of St. Hilary's *De trinitate*, *Ex causis dicendis summenda est intelligentia dictorum*, i.e., "He who will understand what is said must see why or for what reasons it is said." *Sic ex causis agendi cognoscuntur acta*. The natural reason teaches the same thing, but I will give a homely illustration of it. If one peasant accuses another and says, "Sir judge, this man calls me a knave and a rascal," these words and letters, by themselves, convey the idea that the accuser is suffering great wrong and that these things are false, and mere lies. But if the defendant comes and gives the reason for these words, and says, "Sir judge, he is a knave and a rascal, for he was beaten out of the town of N. with rods, because of his rascality and it was only with difficulty, by the request of good men, that he was kept from hanging, and he is trying to cheat me here in my own house"; then the judge will get a new understanding of the words, as daily experience in government shows. Before one learns the reason for what is said, it is only words and letters, or choristers' shouts, or nuns' songs.

So Christ says to Peter, "What thou bindest on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what thou loosest shall be loosed." The pope takes these letters and goes with them into the land of the lotus-eaters, and interprets them thus: "What I do in heaven and earth is right; I have the keys to bind and loose

everything." Yes, even if we had eaten beets! But if one looks at the reasons, one finds that Christ is speaking of the binding and loosing of sin. The keys are keys to the kingdom of heaven, into which no one enters except through forgiveness of sin, and from which no one is excluded except those who are bound because of an impenitent life. Thus the words do not concern St. Peter's power, but the need of miserable sinners, or of proud sinners; but of these keys the pope makes two masterkeys to all kings' crowns and treasuries, to all the world's purse, body, honor, and goods. Like a fool he looks at the letters, and pays no heed to the reasons.

Thus there are many sayings in the Scriptures which, taken literally are contradictory, but if the causes are shown, everything is right. I believe, too, that the medical men and the jurists find a very great deal of this in their books also, like what I said above about the judge. What, indeed, is the whole life of man, except mere antilogiae, or "contradictions," until one hears the causes. My antilogists, therefore, are great, fine, pious sows and asses. They collect my antilogies and let the causes alone; nay, they darken the causes diligently, as though I could not also put forward antilogies, out of their books, which are not to be reconciled by any reasons. But enough of this! They are not worth so many words.

The Council of Nicea

We take up now the Council of Nicaea. It came into existence for this reason. The noble Emperor Constantine had become a Christian and had given the Christians peace from their tyrants and persecutors. His faith was so great and earnest and his intentions were so heartily good, that he overthrew his own brother-in-law, Licinius, — to whom he had given his sister, Constantia, and whom he had made co-emperor, — and deposed him because, after many admonitions, he would not desist from his shameful persecution of Christians.

Now when this fine emperor had made this peace for the Christians and done everything for their good, furthered the churches every way he could, and was so secure that he had the intention to go to war, outside the Empire, with the Persians: into this fair and peaceful paradise and peaceful time, came the old serpent and raised up Arius, a priest of Alexandria, against his bishop. He wanted to bring up a new doctrine against the old faith and be a big man; he attacked his bishop's doctrine, saying that Christ was not God; many priests and great, learned bishops lapsed to him and the trouble grew in many lands, until, at last, Arius ventured to declare that he was a martyr, saying that he was suffering for the truth's sake at the hands of his bishop, Alexander, who was not satisfied with this teaching and was writing scandalous letters against him to all countries.

When this came to the good emperor's attention, he acted like a wise prince, and wanted to quench the flames before the fire became any greater. He wrote a letter to both Bishop Alexander and Priest Arius, and admonished them so kindly and earnestly that nothing better could have been written. He told them that, with great difficulty, he had made peace in the Empire for the Christians, and they ought not now to start contention among themselves. It would be a great stumbling-block to the heathen, and they would, perhaps, fall away from the faith again (as indeed happened, and he complains of it), and he would be prevented from moving against the Persians. In short, it is a humble Christian letter from so great an emperor to these two men. In my opinion, it is almost too humble; for knowing my own rough pen, I know that I could never have brought so humble a composition out of my ink-bottle, especially if I had been an emperor, and such an emperor.

This letter did not help, however. Arius had, by this time, gained a large following and wanted to go through headlong against his bishop. The good emperor did not desist either. He sent a personal

ambassador, a great bishop, famous throughout the world, Hosius of Cordova in Spain, to Egypt, to the two in Alexandria, in order to settle the case. That did not help, either, and the fire spread as when a forest burns. Then the good emperor did the last thing possible. He had the best and most famous bishops gathered from all lands; commanded that they were to be brought to Nicaea by the imperial asses, horses and mules; and hoped through them, to settle the case peaceably. Truly, there assembled there many fine bishops and fathers; especially famous were Jacobus of Nisibis and Paphnutius of Ptolemais who had suffered great affliction under Licinius and done miracles; but there were also some Arian bishops among them, like mouse-dirt in the pepper.

The emperor was happy and hoped that the case would end well, and he entertained them honorably and well. Then some of them went ahead and brought the emperor schedules of accusation, telling what one bishop had against another; and they asked the emperor's decision. But he rejected them; he had nothing to do with the quarrels of the bishops, but only wanted a true judgment of this article about Christ and had not summoned the council because of their contentions. When they would not desist, he bade that all the schedules be brought to him, and read none of them, but threw them all into the fire. And yet he sent them away with kind words, saying that he could not be judge of those whom God had set as judges over him, and admonishing them to take hold of the chief matter. That is my idea of a wise, gentle, patient prince; another would have been angry at such bishops, and knocked the cask to pieces. At the same time, he showed what was in his mind, when he burned their petitions, without regard to their episcopal dignity, and so reminded them of their childish conduct, since they had been called together on a far more important matter.

When the council began, he sat down among the bishops on a chair lower than theirs. The bishop of Rome, Sylvester, was not present, but, as some say, he had sent two priests. After the bishop of Antioch, Eustathius, who presided at the council, had thanked the emperor and praised him for his kindnesses, the doctrine of Arius was publicly read, for it seems that he was not present, being neither a bishop nor a bishop's representative. It was to the effect that Christ was not God, but was created and made by God, as the histories further record. Then the holy fathers and bishops rose from their chairs in indignation and tore the schedule to pieces, and said it was not true. Thus Arius was publicly condemned by the council with great indignation. So deeply were the fathers hurt and so intolerable was it for them to hear the blasphemy of this Arius! All the bishops signed this condemnation, even the Arian bishops, though they did it with a false heart, as afterwards appeared, except two bishops from Egypt, who did not sign. Then the emperor dissolved the council that very day, and he and the council wrote letters throughout the world about this action; and the Emperor Constantine was heartily glad that the case was settled and disposed of, and treated them most kindly, especially those who had suffered persecution.

From this it is easy to see why the council came together and what it had to do; namely, preserve the ancient article of faith, that Christ is true God, against the new wisdom of Arius, who wanted, on the basis of reason, to alter and condemn it; and he was himself condemned. The council did not discover this article or set it up as something that was new and had not existed in the Church before, but only defended it against the heresy of Arius. This appears in the fact that the fathers were impatient and tore up the schedule, thus confessing that since the days of the apostles, they had learned and taught another doctrine in their churches. Otherwise what would have become of the Christians who, before the council, for more than three hundred years, since the days of the apostles,

had believed and had prayed to the dear Lord Jesus and called upon Him as true God, and had died for it and been miserably persecuted?

I must point this out in passing. For the pope's sycophants have fallen into such gross folly as to think that the councils have the power and right to set up new articles of faith and to change old ones. That is not true, and we Christians ought to tear up their schedules also. No councils have done it or can do it; for articles of faith must not grow on earth, by means of the councils, as from some new, private inspiration, but they must be given and revealed from heaven by the Holy Ghost; otherwise they are not articles of faith, as we shall hear later. So this Council of Nicaea, as I have said, did not invent this article that Christ is God or set it up as a new thing, but it was done by the Holy Ghost, who came from heaven upon the apostles publicly, on the day of Pentecost, and through the Scriptures revealed Christ as true God, as He had promised to the apostles. From the apostles it remained, and came down to this council, and so on down to us; and it will remain till the end of the world, as He says, "Lo, I am with you unto the end of the world."

If we had nothing with which to defend this article except this council, we should be in a bad way, and I myself should not believe the council, but say, "They are men." But St. John the Evangelist and St. Paul, Peter and the other apostles hold firm and give us a good foundation and defense, for to them it was revealed by the Holy Ghost, publicly given from heaven, and from them the Church had it, before this council, and the council, too, had it from them. Both before the council, when Arius first began, and in the council and after the council, they defended themselves hard with the Scriptures, especially with St. John's Gospel, and disputed sharply, as the books of Athanasius and Hilary bear witness. So, too, the *Historia Tripartita* says, in Book 5, chapter 29, "At Nicaea the faith was grounded on the Scriptures of the apostles." Otherwise, if the Holy Scriptures of the prophets and apostles had not done it, the mere words of the council would do nothing and its decisions accomplish nothing.

This article, then, concerning the deity of Christ, is the main thing about this council, nay, it is the whole council. It was the reason for the calling of the council, and on the day that it was adopted, as I said, the council was dissolved.

On another day, however, when the Emperor Constantine is not reported to have been present, they came together again and discussed other matters, which concerned the external, temporal government of the Church. Among them, beyond doubt, were the things contained in the schedules that Constantine had previously thrown into the fire, when he would not be a judge; therefore they had to come together and settle these things for themselves, without the emperor. The greater part of them is merely priests' quarreling: — there are not to be two bishops in one city; no bishop of a small church is to be ambitious for a greater one; deacons, or servants of a church, are not to leave their own church and slip hither and thither among other churches; no one is to ordain the people of any bishop without his knowledge and consent; no bishop is to accept a man who has been expelled by another bishop; the bishop of Jerusalem is to retain his ancient privilege of dignity above others; and more of that kind of talk. Who can hold these things for articles of faith? What of them can one preach to the people in the Church? What difference do these things make to Church or people? Unless, of course, they are to be treated as a history from which one can learn that at that time, too, there were everywhere in the Church self-willed, wicked, disorderly bishops, priests, clergy, and people, who were more concerned about honors and power and wealth than about God and His kingdom, and that people needed to be on their guard against them.

It is easy to reckon that Constantine did not assemble the council because of these things, or he would have done it even before the Arian misery began. Why should he worry about how these things were done? They were all things that the bishops had to control for themselves, each in his own church, as they had done before and as the articles themselves declare. It would have been a sin and a shame to assemble so great a council for such little matters; for our human reason, which God has given us, is sufficient for the ordering of these external things, and there is no need for the Holy Ghost, who is to reveal Christ, to turn aside into these matters, which are subject to the reason; unless, of course, one wants to call everything that Christian people do, even eating and drinking, the work of the Holy Ghost. Otherwise the Holy Ghost, because of His teaching, must have other things to do than these external works, subject to the reason.

Moreover all of those who were at this council were not good men; they were not all Paphnutii, Jacobs, and Eustathii. Seventeen Arian bishops were counted among them, though they had to bow and dissemble before the others. The History of Theodoret says there were twenty articles, Rufinus makes them twenty-three. Now whether the Arians or others afterwards added to the number or subtracted from them or set up other articles (for the one which St. Paphnutius is said to have prevented, concerning the wives of priests, is not included) I cannot say. I do know, however, that all these articles have been long dead and buried in the books and gone to decay; also that they can never rise again, as Constantine meant and prophesied by his action when he threw them into the fire and burned them. For they are not kept and cannot be kept. It was building hay, straw, wood (as St. Paul says) on the foundation; therefore, in time, the fire consumed them, as other temporal, transient things pass away. But if they had been articles of faith or commandments of God, they would have remained, like the article concerning the deity of Christ.

And yet, among these wooden articles, there is one in which a spark of fire has remained until now. It is the article about the Easter date. To be sure, we do not keep this article quite correctly, as the mathematicians or astronomers prove to us, since the equinox in our time is quite different than in that time, and our Easter is often kept too late in the year. In ancient days, right after the apostles, the dispute over the Easter date began, and the bishops made heretics of one another and excommunicated one another over such little, unnecessary matters, until it was a sin and a shame. Some wanted to keep it, like the Jews, on a certain day according to the law of Moses; the rest, in order not to be considered Jewish, wanted to keep the Sunday after. The bishop of Rome, Victor, about a hundred and eighty years before this council, who also became a martyr, excommunicated all the bishops and churches in Asia, because they did not keep Easter as he did; so early did the Roman bishops grasp at majesty and power! But Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, in France, who had known Polycarp, a disciple of St. John the Evangelist, rebuked him and quieted the case, so that Victor had to be content. Therefore Constantine had to take up this matter and help settle it in the council; and he decreed that the same Easter date should be kept throughout the world; see the Tripartita, book 9, chapter 38.

Now there is need for a reformation; the calendar should be corrected and Easter put farther back, where it belongs. But no one can do this except their high majesties, the emperors and kings. They would have to agree to send out a command to all the world at the same time, saying when Easter should henceforth be kept. Otherwise, if one land were to begin without another, and worldly trade, such as yearly markets, fairs, and other business, were to be governed by the present date, the people of that land would get to the markets of another land at the wrong time and there would be a wild confusion and disturbance in affairs of every kind. But it would be a fine thing, and easy to do, if

their high majesties would do it, since it has all been finely worked out by the astronomers, and all that is needed is a decree or command. Meanwhile we keep the glimmering ember of the Nicene Council, that Easter remains on a Sunday, though the time see-saw as it may. These are called *festiva mobilia*; I call them see-saw festivals, for Easter, with its dependent festivals, changes every year, coming now early, now late in the year, and does not stay fixed, like other festivals, upon a certain day.

This see-sawing of the festivals comes about because the ancient fathers (as I said), right at the beginning, wanted to keep Easter at the time that Moses established, viz., in the full moon of March nearest the equinox; and yet they did not want to judaize entirely, or keep Easter, with the Jews, on the day of the full moon; therefore, as Christians, they let the law of Moses go and took the Sunday after the full moon of March. So it happened last year, 1538, that the Jews kept their Easter on the Saturday after *Invocavit*, as our churches call it; that was five weeks before we kept Easter. Now the Jews laugh at that and make fun of us Christians, saying that we do not keep Easter right, and do not even know how to keep it right. Thus they strengthen themselves in their unbelief. That irritates our people, so that they would gladly see the calendar corrected by the high majesties, since without their co-operation it is not possible, still less advisable.

In my opinion, however, the thing has happened with Easter that Christ speaks of in Matthew 9:16, "If one patches an old coat with new cloth, the rent becomes worse; and if one puts new wine into old, bad casks, the old hoops are sprung and the new wine leaks out." They want to keep one piece of the old law of Moses; namely, that the March full moon is to be observed: that is the old coat. Then, as Christians, freed by Christ from the law of Moses, they do not want to be subject to the day of the full moon, but would have the following Sunday instead: that is the new patch on the old coat. Therefore the endless contention and the endless see-sawing have made so much trouble in the Church, and must do so till the end of the world, and there can be neither measure nor end to the books about it. Christ has had special reasons for permitting this and letting it go on, for He always proves His strength in weakness, and teaches us to recognize how weak we are.

How much better it would have been, if they had let Moses' Easter law die altogether and had kept none of the old coat at all! For Christ, toward whom this law was directed, has clean abolished it by His Passion and Resurrection; He slew it and buried it forever, rent the veil of the Temple in twain, and then broke and destroyed Jerusalem, with priesthood, principedom, law, and everything. Instead, they should have noted the days of the Passion, the Burial, and the Resurrection, reckoned by the sun, and set a fixed date in the calendar, as they did with Christmas, New Year, the Day of the Holy Kings, Candlemas, the Annunciation, the Feast of St. John, and other days, which are called fixed festivals, not see-saw festivals. Then it would have been known for certain, every year, when Easter must come, and the festivals that depend on it, without this great bother and disputation.

Nay, you say, Sunday must be held in honor because of Christ's Resurrection, and it is called *dies dominica*, on that account, and Easter must be put on it, because Christ rose on the day after the Sabbath, which we now call Saturday. That is, indeed, an argument that moved them; but *dies dominica* does not mean Sunday, but "Lord's Day," and why could not any day on which Easter had come be called *dies dominica*, "the Lord's Day"? Is not Christmas also *dies dominica*, "Lord's Day," i.e., the day on which the Lord's special act, His birth, was done; and yet it does not come, every year, on Sunday? It is called Christ's Day, i.e., the Lord's Day, even if it comes on Friday, for the reason that it has a fixed letter in the calendar, reckoned by the sun. In the same way, Easter, too, could have a

fixed letter in the calendar, whether it came on Friday or Wednesday, as is the case with Christmas. That way we should be well rid of the law of Moses, with its March full moon. No one asks today whether the moon is full or not on Christmas, but we stick to the days reckoned by the sun without reckoning by the moon.

It might be argued that, since the equinox holds its place, but the year, in the calendar, is too late and does not keep pace with it, the equinox would be farther and farther from a fixed Easter day, as it would also be farther and farther from the Day of St. Philip and St. James, and from other festivals. What do we Christians care if our Easter came on the Day of St. Philip and St. James, which will not happen, I hope, before the end of the world? Moreover, we hold all days as Easter days, with our preaching and our faith in Christ, and it is enough that Easter be kept once in a year on a special day, as a plain and public and perceptible reminder, not only because one can then discuss the history of the Resurrection more diligently before the people, but also in order that people may arrange their business affairs according to the season of year, just as we have the seasons of St. Michael, St. Martin, St. Catherine, St. John, Sts. Peter and Paul, etc.

But the possibility of making this arrangement has long been denied us, even from the beginning, because the fathers did not do it. The old coat has stayed, along with its big rent, and it may continue to stay this way till the Last Day. Things are going toward their end, and if the old coat has stood the patching and tearing for around fourteen hundred years, it can stand the patching and tearing for another hundred; for I hope that everything will soon have an end. Easter has now been see-sawing for about fourteen hundred years, and it may keep on see-sawing for the short time that is left, since no one will do anything about it, and those who would like to do something cannot.

I am indulging in this long and needless talk, only so that I may have expressed my opinion, in case any of the sects were, in time, to be bold enough to move the Easter festival to another date than that which we now observe. And I believe that if the Anabaptists had been learned enough in astronomy to understand this matter, they would have rushed in headlong and, after the fashion of sects, have wanted to bring something new into the world, and keep Easter differently from the rest of the world. But since they are unlearned in the sciences, the devil has not been able to use them as that kind of instrument or tool.

Therefore my advice is to let it alone and let it be kept as it now is, and patch and tear the old coat, and let Easter see-saw back and forth until the Last Day, or until the monarchs agree to change it together, in view of these facts. It breaks no one's legs and St. Peter's boat will not be hurt by it, since it is neither heresy nor sin, but only a solecism, or error, in astronomy, which serves the temporal government rather than the Church, though the ancient fathers, in ignorance, thought otherwise and made heretics of one another and excommunicated one another over it. If the Jews laugh at us, thinking that we do this in ignorance, we laugh back still more, because they keep their Easter so stiffly and so vainly, not knowing that Christ fulfilled it all fifteen hundred years ago, abolished it and destroyed it. What we do is done willfully and knowingly, and not in ignorance. We know better than they how Easter should be kept according to the law of Moses, but we will not and ought not keep it so, for we have the Lord of Moses and of all things, and He says, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." How much more is He Lord of Easter and Pentecost, which, in the law of Moses, are less than the Sabbath, for the Sabbath is on the tables of Moses, while Easter and Pentecost are elsewhere than on the tables. Moreover, we have St. Paul, who flatly forbids anyone to be bound to the holidays, feasts and anniversaries of Moses.

Therefore it is, and ought to be, in our power and freedom to keep Easter when we will; and even though we made a Sunday of a Friday or vice versa, nevertheless it would be right, so long as it were done in agreement by the rulers and the Christians, as I have said. Moses is dead and buried through Christ, and days or times ought not be lords over Christians, but Christians are free lords over days and times, to fix them as they will, or as seems right to them. Christ made all things free when He abolished Moses; only we let things remain as they are, since there is no peril, error, sin, or heresy in it, and we would not change anything needlessly or at our own individual whim, because of others who also hold to Easter as well as we. We know that we can be saved without Easter and Pentecost, Sunday and Friday, and that we cannot be damned because of Easter, Pentecost, Sunday, or Friday, as St. Paul teaches us.

But to come back to the council, I say that we make too much of this chip of the Nicene Council, and the pope afterwards made it not only gold, silver, precious stones, but even a foundation, i.e., an article of faith, without which we cannot be saved, and they all call it a commandment and an act of obedience to the Church; thus they are far worse than the Jews. The Jews have on their side the text of Moses, commanded at that time by God; but these people have on their side only their own opinions. They go ahead and want to make a new coat out of Moses' old rags. They allege that they are keeping Moses, and yet their case is nothing but a story, or dream, about Moses, who has been dead so long, and was buried, as the Scriptures say, by God Himself — i.e., by Christ, so that no one has found his grave; they would conjure up Moses before our eyes, as though he were alive, and do not see that (as St. Paul says in Galatians 5:3) if they keep one part of Moses, they must keep the whole of Moses. Therefore, if they consider it necessary to keep Easter in the month of March, as a part of his law, they must also keep the whole law of the paschal lamb and become mere Jews and keep, with the Jews, a bodily paschal lamb; if not, they must let it all go, the full moon, too, with all the rest of Moses, or at least, they must not consider it necessary to salvation, like an article of faith. And this is what I believe that the fathers, especially the best of them, did in this council.

This council, then, dealt chiefly with the article that Christ is true God. It was for this that it was summoned and because of this it is called a council. Beside this, they dealt with certain accidental, physical, external, temporal matters, which it is right to consider worldly, not comparable with the articles of faith, and not to be kept as a permanent law, for they have passed and fallen out of use. The council had to arrange these bodily matters also, for at their time they were appropriate and necessary; but they no longer concern us, in our time, at all, and it is neither possible nor profitable for us to keep them. As an evidence, — it is false and wrong that heretics are to be rebaptized, and yet this article was established by the fathers themselves and not patched in by the Arians or the other worthless bishops.

Thus the Council of Jerusalem, also, beside the main points, had to dispose of some non-essential, external articles, which were necessary at that time, about blood, things strangled, and idolatry; but not with the intention that this should remain in the Church as a permanent law, like an article of faith, for it has fallen. Why should we not take a look at this council, too, and see how it is to be understood by the causes that forced it into existence?

This was the cause of it. The Gentiles, who were converted by Barnabas and Paul, had, by the Gospel, received the Holy Ghost, as well as the Jews, and yet they were not under the law, like the Jews. Then the Jews insisted strongly that the Gentiles must be circumcised and bidden to keep the law of Moses, or they could not be saved. These were hard, sharp, heavy words, — they could not be saved

without the law of Moses and circumcision. The Pharisees who had become believers in Christ insisted on this more than the others, according to Acts 15:5. Then the apostles and elders came together about this matter, and when they had disputed much and sharply, St. Peter rose and preached the powerful and beautiful sermon of Acts 15:7-11, —

“Dear brethren, ye know how that God chose that through my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe; and God, the knower of hearts, bare them witness and gave them the Holy Ghost, even as unto us, and made no difference between us and them, and purified their hearts by faith. Why, then, do ye now tempt God by laying a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, in like manner as they.”

This sermon sounds almost as though St. Peter were angry and displeased at the hard words of the Pharisees, who said that they could not be saved if they were not circumcised and did not keep the law of Moses, as I said above. He gives them back hard and sharp words and says, “Ye know well that they heard the Word by me and such people as Cornelius and his household became believers, and, as proof, you grumbled against me and accused me, because I had gone to the Gentiles and converted and baptized them (Acts 10:1 and Acts 11:1). What, have you forgotten that when you would lay upon the Gentiles a yoke that neither our fathers nor we could carry? What is it but tempting God, if we lay on others an unnecessary burden, which we ourselves cannot bear anymore than they? Especially since you know that God has given them the Spirit without this burden and made them equal to us, after we, too, have received the same Spirit, not because of the burden of good works, but out of grace, as was the case with our fathers also. For since we have been unable to bear the burden, we have deserved wrath far more than grace, because it was our duty to bear it and we had obligated ourselves to do so.”

This is the substance and main affair of this council, viz., the fact that the Pharisees wanted to set up, against the word of grace, the works, or merits, of the law, as necessary to salvation. That way, the word of grace would have gone to nothing, together with Christ and the Holy Ghost. Therefore St. Peter fights it and argues against it so hard, and will have men saved entirely by the grace of Jesus Christ alone, without any works. Not satisfied with that, he was so bold as to say that all their fathers, patriarchs, prophets, and the entire holy Church in Israel had been saved only by the grace of Jesus Christ and nothing else and been condemned only because they had tempted God by wanting to be saved by other means. I think we can call this real preaching, and knocking the bottom out of the cask! Ought not this heretic be burned to death? He forbids all good works and holds that grace and faith are alone sufficient for salvation, and always has been, in the case of all the saints and all the ancestors of all the world. We must needs be called heretics and devils now, because we teach nothing else than this sermon of St. Peter's and the decree of this council, as all the world now knows better than did the Pharisees whom St. Peter here rebuked.

But St. Peter is far above us, and a strange man indeed, to preach only the grace of God unto salvation, which everybody hears gladly. He also says, that neither they themselves nor their fathers have been able to bear this burden. That is as much as to say, in good German, “We apostles, and whoever we are, together with our ancestors, — patriarchs, prophets, and the whole people of God, — have not kept God's commandments, are sinners, and are damned.” He is not speaking of blood-sausage or black jelly, but of the law of Moses, and he says, “No one has kept it, or can keep it”; as Christ says, in John 7:19, “None of you keepeth the law.” That, in my opinion, is preaching the law

unto damnation, and making himself a condemned sinner! How does it come, then, that the alleged heir of St. Peter's chair calls himself "Most Holy," and elevates to sainthood those whom he chooses because of their works, not because of the grace of Christ? And where do the monks stand, who bear a burden heavier than that of the law, so that they can sell their surplus holiness? We have no such queer folk as Peter, for we dare not hold the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the holy Church as sinners, but must call even the pope "Most Holy" and "Saint of Saints," i.e., Christ.

But St. Peter deserves a very gracious and honorable absolution and is not to be considered queer at all; for in this great article, he preaches, first, the law, that we all are sinners; second, that only the grace of Christ saves us, even the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the entire holy Church from the beginning, all of whom he makes sinners and condemned men. In the third place, long before the Council of Nicaea, he teaches that Christ is true God. For he says that all the saints must be lost, if they are not saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. To bestow grace and salvation, as Lord, He must be true God, who can take away sin by grace, and death and hell by salvation. This no creature will do, unless it were the "Most Holy" at Rome, though without injury to St. Peter's sermon. In the fourth place, he who holds otherwise, and teaches that sinners can be saved or obtain grace by the law or their own works, is a tempter of God.

It may be said that this "burden" should be interpreted to mean the law of Moses and circumcision, not the Ten Commandments and good works. Let anyone interpret it so, if he please; I am satisfied. If you can keep the Ten Commandments more easily than the Mosaic ceremonies, go on and be holier than Sts. Peter and Paul; I am so weak in the Ten Commandments that I think it would be far easier for me to keep all the Mosaic ceremonies, if the Ten Commandments did not weigh me down. But this is not the time to argue that point; it has been fully discussed, otherwise and elsewhere. Even human reason must judge and admit, however, that the Ten Commandments, or the works of the Ten Commandments, are not and cannot be called the grace of Jesus Christ, but are something altogether different, and must have another name. Now St. Peter says here that we must be saved through the grace of Jesus Christ; but grace cannot be received or held with the works of our hands, but with faith, in our hearts. That is certainly true.

It is marvelous to see how St. Peter, who, as an apostle, had the right and power, together with other apostles, to set up this article as something new, — for which reason they are called the foundation of the Church, — nevertheless goes back and cites the holy Church of God of former times, the Church of all the patriarchs and prophets, and as much as says, "This is not a new doctrine, for so all our ancestors and all the saints taught and believed. Why, then, do we undertake to teach another and better doctrine, thereby tempting God and leading our brethren's consciences astray, and burdening them?"

That, I say, is the substance or chief thing in this council, for which it was called, or came together. When that was decided the council closed and everything was settled. But the papal ass does not see or heed this chief matter and gapes at the other four things that James adds, — blood, things strangled, idolatry, and fornication. By so doing, they hope to strengthen their tyranny, and they allege that since the Church has changed these articles, they have power to change the articles of faith and the councils; that is to say, "We are the Church, we can decree and do what we please." Listen, papal ass! You are a plain ass; nay, you are a filthy sow. The article of this council has not fallen and has not been changed, but has remained always, from the beginning, as St. Peter says, and will remain until the end of the world; for there have always been holy men, who have been saved

only by the grace of Christ and not by the law. Even under the devil of the papacy, there have remained the text and the faith of the Gospel, baptism, the Sacrament, the keys, and the name of Jesus Christ, though the pope, with his accursed lies, has stormed against them and has shamefully misled the world. So, too, it was said of the Nicene Council, that its decree existed before it and remained after it. The decrees of the true councils must remain forever, and they have always remained, especially the chief articles, because of which they came into existence and got the name of councils.

What shall we say, however, about this council of the apostles, when St. James makes exceptions of the four points, — blood, things strangled, idolatry, and fornication? Is not the council contradicting itself, and is not the Holy Ghost in disagreement with Himself? The two speeches are plainly and palpably contradictory, — not laying the burden of the law of Moses, and yet laying it. Play the sophist, if you will, and say that what was spoken of in the council was not the whole law of Moses, but portions of it some of which might be laid and others not laid upon the Gentiles. But that will not do; for St. Paul decides in Galatians 5:3, that if a man keeps one part of the law, he is bound to keep the law entirely, and it is equivalent to acknowledging that one is bound to keep the whole law; otherwise one would pay no heed to it at all. Here, too, there would be new cloth on an old coat, and the rent would be worse. It is also evident that these points are in the law of Moses and nowhere in the Gentiles' law. For where would have been the necessity to lay them upon the Gentiles, if they had already been accustomed to them in their native law? How, then, do we reconcile these two, — no law and the whole law?

Well, if we cannot make them agree, we must let St. James go with his article, and keep St. Peter with his chief article for the sake of which this council was held. Without St. Peter's article, no one can be saved; but Cornelius and the Gentiles whom St. Peter had baptized, at his house along with him, were holy and saved before St. James came along with his article, as St. Peter says in this council. I touched the question above, whether one may, with a good conscience, allow that these points have fallen, since the Holy Ghost rules the council and makes all these decrees; but it is a much more sharply disputed question, whether the council is against itself and disagrees with itself. While desiring to relieve us of an impossible burden, it lays upon us a still more impossible one, when it says that we are, at one and the same time, to do nothing and do everything. To be sure, now that it has fallen, we do well to stick to the one part, to St. Peter's articles, i.e., to the genuine Christian faith.

Only the commandment against fornication, which is the fourth point in St. James' article, has not fallen, though, to be sure, the courtesans and condemned lords were on the way to let it fall twenty years ago, when they began to consider fornication not a mortal, but a venial sin, advocating the principle that nature must take its course; and that is the way that the holy people at Rome still regard it. And the reason why these leaders of the blind took this view was that St. James puts fornication with the other three points that have fallen, from which they conclude that if the prohibition of blood, things strangled and idolatry no longer hold, then neither does the prohibition of fornication hold any longer, since it occurs among these others, and except for that, is a natural human act. Let them go; they are worthy of nothing better!

I shall state my opinion; let someone else improve on it! I have now said often that the councils are to be looked at and estimated from the point of view of the chief subject which gave occasion for the council. That is the council in essence, the real body of the council, according to which all else is to be

judged, and to which all else is to be fitted, as a garment fits the body that wears it, or has it on; if a man takes it off and throws it away, it is no longer a garment. There cannot be a council or any other assembly, — even a chapter or a diet, — but what, after the chief business is settled, there are not one or two little, accidental matters to be patched up, or arranged. In the Nicene Council, when it had been settled that Christ is true God, there came in the external matters of the Easter date and the quarrels of the priests; and here, too, St. James' article comes in after the chief article of St. Peter.

It was, then, the final opinion and decision of all the apostles, and the council, that men must be saved, without the law or the burden of the law, only by the faith of Jesus Christ. When St. Peter, St. Paul and their party had gained this decision, they were happy and well satisfied, for it was according to this decision that they had worked, and had striven against the Pharisees and Jews who had become Christians and still wanted to retain the law. When St. James, then, added his article, they could put up with it, since this was not laid on the Gentiles as a law or burden of law, as the letter of the council announces: *Nihil oneris*, "We will therefore lay upon you no burden, except that ye abstain from blood," etc. Indeed, they might well have endured it, if St. James had added even more things, such as the rule about leprosy and the like; and the Ten Commandments remain, even without these things. These things, however, are to be no law or burden, say they, but things that are necessary for other reasons. But if a burden is no more a burden, it is good to bear; and if law is no longer law, it is good to keep, like the Ten Commandments. How much more is that true of ceremonies, especially if they are abolished or if very few are retained! Of this more elsewhere! If the pope were to relieve us of his burden, so that it need no longer be law, we should readily obey him, especially if he were to retain a little of it and abolish the most of it. Therefore St. James and his article must endure an interpretation that makes St. Peter's article, concerning grace, without the law, to remain pure and firm and to rule alone, without the law.

We shall also look at the reason for this side-issue of St. James', in order that we may understand this council entirely. With the Jews the law of Moses was, so to speak, inborn; it was suckled into them, made a part of them, ingrained in them from youth up, so that it became almost their very nature, as St. Paul says, in Galatians 2:15, "We are Jews by nature," i.e., born Mosaic (for he is speaking of the law and not only of birth). Therefore they could not stand the life of the Gentiles, or endure it when they were compared with the Gentiles among whom they were scattered in the lands, when they saw that the Gentiles ate blood, things strangled, and meat offered to idols, and yet boasted that they were God's people, or Christians. This moved St. James to guard against this offense, so that the Gentiles might not abuse their freedom too wantonly, to spite the Jews, but act soberly, so that the Jews, so deeply saturated with the law might not be offended and therefore spit upon the Gospel. For, dear God, we must have patience with sick and erring men. Even we drunken Germans are sometimes wise and say, "A load of hay must make way for a drunken man." No one can win his spurs against sick people, or a master's degree over ignoramuses.

And yet St. James acts quite soberly. He entirely disregards the whole law of Moses about sacrifice and all the other points that had to be observed in Jerusalem and Palestine, and takes up only the four points on which the Jews outside Jerusalem, among the Gentiles, took offense. For the Jews, dispersed among the Gentiles, had to see the way the Gentiles acted, had to live with them and, sometimes, eat with them. It was very annoying, and it was wrong, to set before a Jew blood-sausage, have cooked in blood, blood-jellies, and meat sacrificed to idols, especially if I knew that he could not endure it and must take it as an insult. It would be the same as though I were to say,

“Listen, Jew! Even though I could bring you to Christ, if I did not eat blood-sausage, or set it before you, I will not do it, but will scare you away from Christ and chase you to hell with blood-sausage.” Would that be kind? I shall not ask if it would be Christian! Must not everyone often keep silence and not contradict another, when he sees and knows that things that he would speak and do would be to the other’s injury, especially if it were against God? Now the Gentiles of these days were violent toward the Jews and very proud, because they were their lords; the Jews, in turn, were intolerant, because they thought that they alone were God’s people. Many histories give powerful testimony to this.

The good advice of St. James was, therefore, the very finest means to peace, and to the salvation of many. It was that the Gentiles, since they had now attained Christ’s grace without the law and without merit, should show themselves helpful, in a few matters, to the Jews, as to sick and erring folk, in order that they also might come to the same grace. It did not harm the Gentiles in the eyes of God to avoid the public, open use of blood, things strangled, and meat sacrificed to idols (though in conscience they were already free, through grace, on all these points) and for the benefit and salvation of the Jews, to desist from giving wanton offense. In the absence of Jews, they could eat and drink what they pleased, without risk to conscience. The Jews, too, would likewise be free in conscience, but could not change the old external custom, for *Consuetudo est altera natura*, especially when it has grown out of God’s law. Thus fairness and reason also teach that one should not flout and hinder others, but serve them and be helpful to them, according to the commandment, “Love thy neighbor,” etc.

These two articles, — that of St. Peter and that of St. James, — are, therefore, contradictory and not contradictory. St. Peter’s article is about faith, St. James’ about love. St. Peter’s article suffers no law, eats blood, things strangled, meat sacrificed to idols, yes, and the devil, too, and gives no heed to it. It deals with God, not with man, and does nothing but believe on the gracious God. St. James’ article, however, lives and eats with men; it directs everything to the one purpose of bringing men to St. Peter’s article, and guards diligently against hindering anyone. Now the office of love is so discharged on earth that the object of love, that which is loved and helped, is changeable and transient. Love cannot have the same object forever, but one object passes away, and another comes in its place. Thus love must continue to love until the end of the world. When the Jews had been scattered, or became obdurate, and the Gentiles no longer had to practice love toward them, this whole article fell. It was not altered by the power of the Church, as the papists lyingly declare, but since the cause of it was no longer there, Christians freely ate blood and black jelly, from which they had for a time abstained on account of the Jews, and for their good, even though they had not been bound, in the eyes of God, to do so, because of their faith. If St. James had wanted to lay these points upon them as law, he would have had to lay the whole law upon them, as St. Paul says in Galatians 5:3, “He that keeps one law must keep all.” That would be flatly against St. Peter’s article, which St. James approves. He puts fornication in among these things, however, though it remains condemned forever in the Ten Commandments; and this is the reason. Among the Gentiles, fornication was considered a small sin; nay, no sin at all. You read this in the books of the heathen, and twenty years ago, as I indicated above, the courtesans and worthless priests began publicly to say and believe the same thing. Among the Gentiles, therefore, it was no greater sin to commit fornication than to eat blood-sausage, hares cooked in blood, blood-jellies, or meat sacrificed to idols. Read in the histories how unwilling the Romans were to take wives, so that the Emperor Augustus had to compel them to marry; for they thought that fornication was right and that their rights were violated when the

attempt was made to compel them to marry. Therefore St. James would teach the Gentiles that, even without the compulsion of their rulers, they ought, of their own accord, to give up fornication and live in the married state, chastely and purely. This the Jews did, and they took grave offense at the freedom of fornication, and could not believe that the Gentiles could come to God's grace and become God's people, because of this difference in foods and in living.

The apostles, therefore, did not lay the law upon the Gentiles, and yet they allowed it to the Jews for a time, preaching grace boldly meanwhile. Thus we see that St. Paul when among the Jews, lived as a Jew; when among the Gentiles, as a Gentile; so that he might win all. He circumcised his disciple, Timothy, who was already a believer, not because it must be so, but, as St. Luke says, for the sake of the Jews of the place, that he might not offend them. Afterwards, he had himself purified in the Temple, with the Jews, and sacrificed according to the law of Moses; all which he did, as St. Augustine says in that fine and now famous word, *Oportuit synagogam cum honore sepelire, i.e., in order to bury Moses, or his church and law, with honor.*

How this council and the articles of both St. Peter and St. James were afterwards kept, you will discover abundantly in St. Paul's Epistles, in which he complains everywhere about the false apostles, who insist on the law as a necessity to the detriment of grace, and seduce whole houses and countries, and lead them back to the law; and that under the name of Christ.

After the Nicene Council the case was still worse. The rascal Arius humbled himself and accepted the council in the presence of the Emperor Constantine, even with an oath, and therefore the emperor allowed him to come back. Then he began to fan the flames in earnest and the bishops of his party, especially after Constantine's death, through his son, the Emperor Constantius, whom they had won over, played the game so horribly that throughout the world Constantius drove out all the true bishops, except two, — Gregory and Basil. Some say, here, that Constantine, the father, became an Arian before he died and in his will commended to his son, Constantius, an Arian priest who had been faithfully commended to him by his sister, Constantia, on her death-bed, and that it was through him that the Arians afterwards became so powerful.

Such histories warn us to pray for great lords, because the devil seeks them most of all, since he can do the greatest harm through them; also that we ourselves are to be careful, and not readily to give credence to sectarian spirits, even if they humble themselves as completely as this rascal Arius did. It is said, *Aliquando compugnuntur et mali*, but they keep behind the hill till they get air and room, and then they fall to, like Arius, and do the things that they had in mind before. I do not wonder greatly that the fathers laid such severe and lengthy penance on renegade Christians. They would have had experience with them, and would have known how false their humility was, and how hard it was for them to humble themselves to penitence sincerely and from their hearts, as Sirach also says, *Ab inimico reconciliato*, etc.

Briefly, if one does not know the meaning of *osculum Judae*, "a Judaskiss," let him read the story of Arius under Constantine, and he will have to say that Arius went far beyond Judas. He deceived the good Emperor Constantine with these fair words, — "We believe in one God, one Word, by Whom all things were made," etc. Tell me, what Christian could hold these words heretical, or think that Arius still held Christ to be a creature? But that became clear when he came to trial. In the same way Auxentius, bishop of Milan, the immediate predecessor of St. Ambrose, fooled the people with such words that, on first impression I almost became angry at St. Hilary, when I read the words, *Blasphemia Auxentii* on the title page of Auxentius' Confessions. I would have staked my body and

soul on Auxentius' word that he held Christ to be true God. I hope, too, that amid these blind and deceptive words, many good, simple folk remained by their former faith and were preserved in it, because they were unable to understand these words otherwise than as an expression of the faith that had existed from the beginning. Indeed, no one could understand them otherwise unless he knew the private interpretation that the Arians gave them.

Because it is so necessary for Christians to know this illustration, and because the ordinary reader of history does not examine it so closely and does not think how profitable it is as a warning against all other spirits of division, whom the devil, their god, makes so slippery that they can never be seized or grasped; — for these reasons I shall briefly state this case, under a few heads.

First, Arius taught that Christ was not God, but a creature. Then the good bishops extorted from him the confession that Christ was God like St. Peter and Paul and like the angels who are called in the Scriptures "gods" and "Sons of God" (1 Corinthians 8:5, John 10:34, Psalm 82:6, Job 38:7).

Secondly, When the fathers discovered this they forced him farther, until he and his followers granted that Christ was real and true God. They submitted to these words for the sake of appearances, since this had been the teaching theretofore in all the churches. Among themselves, however, (and this is especially true of Eusebius of Nicomedia, Arius' chief patron) they interpreted these words as follows: — *Omne factum dei est verum*, "Everything created, or made, by God is true and real; what is false God has not made, therefore we are willing to confess that Christ is real, true God, though among ourselves we hold Him to be a made God, like Moses and all the saints." Here they admitted everything that we now sing on Sunday in the churches, since the Nicene Council, *Deum de deo, Lumen de lumine, Deum verum de deo vero.* f313

Thirdly, When this false trick came out, and it became known that, in spite of these words, they still held Christ to be a creature, the dispute became sharper until they had to confess that Christ had existed before the whole world. Who, then, could believe otherwise than that Arius and his bishops were true Christians and had been unjustly condemned by the Nicene Council? This is what they were at soon after the Nicene Council, which had made short work of them and stated the faith as it was; for they wanted to undo the Nicene Council, and attacked one point after another.

Fourthly, This blind evasion was noticed, viz., that Christ was to be and be called a creature, though with the explanation that He was before all the world, i.e., He was created or made before all the world, or before all other creatures. Then they were compelled to confess that all the world and all things were made by Him, as John 1:3 says; yet among their own people they interpreted this to mean that Christ was first made, and then all things were made by Him. Fifthly, It was then easy for them to confess, *genitum, non factum*, viz., that Christ was born of God, not created; born as all Christians, born of God, are sons of God (John 1:12); not created among other creatures, but before all creatures.

Sixthly, Then it came to the heart of the matter, viz., that Christ is *homoousios* with the Father, i.e., that Christ is of one and the same deity with the Father, and has one and the same power. Then they could no longer find any trick or hole or scheme or hoax. *Homoousios* means "of one essence, or nature," or "of the same and not of a second essence," as the fathers had decreed in the council, and as is sung in Latin, *consubstantialis*; some afterwards said *coexistentialis*, *coessentialis*. They had accepted this at Nicaea, in the council, and they still accepted it when they had to speak in the presence of the emperor or of the fathers; but among themselves they attacked it bitterly. They declared that this word was not in the Scriptures; they held many councils, even in Constantine's

time, seeking to weaken the Council of Nicaea; they started much trouble. At last they made the hearts of our party so timid that even St. Jerome was perplexed, and wrote a letter of complaint to Damasus, Bishop of Rome, and began to ask that the word Homoousios be scratched out. "For," he says, "there is some kind of poison in the letters, which makes them so objectionable to the Arians." There is a Dialog still extant, in which Athanasius and Arius dispute before an official named Probus about this word Homoousios. When Arius insisted vigorously that this word was not in the Scriptures, Athanasius caught him in his own trap, and said, "Neither are these other words in the Scriptures, *innascibilis, ingenuus Deus*, meaning "God is unborn"; for these the Arians had used to prove that Christ could not be God, because He was born and God was unborn; and Probus decided against Arius. For while it is true that in matters concerning God nothing should be taught except the Scriptures (as St. Hilary says in his *De trinitate*), that means only that nothing should be taught that is different from the Scriptures. It cannot be held that one cannot use more words or other words than those that are in the Scriptures, especially in controversy. When the heretics would falsify the case with false evasions and pervert the words of Scripture, it was necessary to comprise in a short word of summary the meaning, which the Scriptures put in many sayings, and ask whether they held Christ homoousios; for this was the meaning of the Scriptures in all the words which they perverted, in their own circles, with false interpretations, but had freely confessed before the emperor and in the council. It is just as though the Pelagians were to try to entrap us with the words "original sin" or "Adam's-plague," because these words do not occur in the Scriptures, and yet the Scriptures do powerfully teach what these words mean, saying that we are conceived in sin (Psalm 51:7), are all by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3), and must all be sinners because of one man's sin (Romans 5:12).

Now tell me, if Arius were to come before you today and confess the whole creed of the Nicene Council, as we sing it today in our churches, could you hold him a heretic? I myself would say that he was right. And suppose that underneath it all he was a rascal and believed something different and afterwards interpreted the words differently and taught differently; would I not have been finely deceived? Therefore I do not believe that Constantine became an Arian, but that he stuck by the Nicene Council. What happened to him was that he was deceived, and believed that Arius held just what the Nicene Council did. He demanded an oath from him to that effect, as was said above, and then commanded that they should receive him again in Alexandria. When Athanasius would not do this, because he knew the false Arius better than Constantine did, he had to be driven out; for it may well be that Constantine got the idea that Arius, this good Christian, had been condemned at Nicaea out of envy or jealousy, especially since the Arians, Eusebius of Nicomedia above all, espoused his cause with the emperor, filled his ears with stories, and glorified Arius. For great kings and lords, even though they are good men, do not always have angels and St. John the Baptist (Mark 6:18) about them at court, but often Satan (1 Kings 22:22) and Judas and Doeg (1 Samuel 22:9), as the book of Kings show. It is a good sign that Constantine, before his death, recalled Athanasius, though the Arians strove hard to prevent it (3 Tripart 11). Thus he shows that it was not his desire to reject the Nicene Council and its doctrine, but that he would gladly have brought everything into unity.

That is just what some of our false papal scribblers are doing now. They pretend that they would teach faith and good works in order to bedeck themselves and besmirch us, as though they had always so taught and we had wrongly accused them of teaching otherwise. Their intention is, when they have decorated themselves with sheeps' clothing, as though they were just like us, to bring their wolf back again into the sheep-pen. It is not their serious purpose to teach faith and good works; but

since, like the Arians, they cannot keep their poison and wolfishness and set them up again by any other means than this sheeps' clothing of faith and good works, they deck themselves up in it and conceal the wolfskin, until they get back in the sheep-pen. They must be treated as they treat our people, and we must bid them revoke their abominations and prove their revocation with deeds, by abolishing all the abuses that ruled, contrary to faith and good works, in their churches, among their people. Thus they can be known by their fruits. If they do not do this, then their mere words and gestures are sheep skins, and cannot be believed. So Arius, too, should have recanted, acknowledged his error, and actually contradicted himself, in doctrine and life, as St. Augustine contradicted his Manichaeism, and as many men today are contradicting their former papistry and monkery; among whom, by God's grace, I can count myself. But they will have it that they have not erred, and will not do God the honor of confessing it; just as the Arians wanted to defend their lies and would not have it thought that the council had condemned them.

The lesson of these histories we should well observe, especially those of us who must be preachers and have command to feed Christ's flock, so that we may see well to it, or be good bishops, as St. Peter says in 1 Peter 5:2 (for episcopus, or bishop, means one who looks well to things, who is alert, who watches diligently), so that we may not be taken unawares by the devil. Here we see how he can twist and disguise himself in such masterly style that he becomes far fairer than an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), and false bishops are holier than the true bishops, and the wolf is more righteous than any sheep. We have not to deal now with the plain, black, papal spirits outside the Scriptures; they are accommodating themselves to the Scriptures and to our doctrine, want to be like us and yet tear us to pieces. The Holy Ghost alone must help, and we must pray with diligence, or we have lost entirely.

From all this it is evident why the council was held, — not on account of outward ceremonies, but on account of the high article of the deity of Christ. It was around this that the controversy arose; it was this that was chiefly discussed in the council and afterwards assailed by the unspeakable ragings of the devil, in which the other articles were not remembered. The wretched business lasted nearly three hundred years among the Christians, so that Augustine holds that Arius' punishment in hell becomes greater everyday, as long as this error lasts, for Mohammed came out of this sect. It is evident, too, that what I undertook to show is true, viz., that this council neither devised nor established anything new, but defended the old faith against the new error of Arius. From this fact one cannot conclude that the councils have power to devise and set up new articles concerning faith and good works, still less that the pope at Rome has this power, as they falsely claim.

Let this be enough, for the time, about the first chief council of Nicaea.

The Council of Constantinople

The second chief council, that of Constantinople, was assembled about fifty years after the Nicene Council, under the Emperors Gratian and Theodosius. This was the cause of it. Arius had denied the deity of Christ and the Holy Ghost. Meanwhile a new sect arose, the Macedonians, for one error always brings another, one disaster another, without end and cessation.

These Macedonians praised the decision of the Nicene Council that Christ was God and vigorously condemned Arius. They taught, however, that the Holy Ghost was not true God, but a creature of God, through whom God moves, enlightens, comforts, and strengthens the hearts of men, and does all that the Scriptures say the Holy Ghost does. This sect took strong hold among many great, learned, and able bishops. It came about this way. Macedonius was bishop of Constantinople, the great

capital of the whole Eastern part of the Empire, where the imperial court was. This bishop began the sect, and the fact that the foremost bishop, the bishop of the imperial residence, Constantinople, taught thus, produced a great effect. Almost everyone in the lands around Constantinople, which depended on Constantinople, fell to him and attached themselves to him, and Macedonius was not idle; he urged his cause hard, and would have liked to draw the whole world into his following, as the devil does in all sects.

The good bishops were all too weak to resist this sect of bishops. Formerly a simple priest of Alexandria, Arius, had started such a confusion; but here it was not a priest, nor even an ordinary bishop, but the bishop of the foremost city, the bishop of the imperial palace at Constantinople, that started the confusion, and the bishops had to appeal again to the emperor to assemble another great council to resist this error. This the good Emperor Theodosius did and put it in the city of Constantinople itself, in the district of the church where Macedonius had been bishop; just as the other time Constantine had put the Nicene Council at Nicaea, where the bishop was Theognis, who helped Eusebius of Nicomedia to support Arius and afterward to bring him back again. The next year Damasus, bishop of Rome, also held a council and would have liked to have the matter dealt with at Rome, so that the Roman See might get the power to call councils and judge all cases. It was to be known as a universal council; for as the highest bishop in the world, he called the fathers who had held the council at Constantinople in the previous year; but they would not come. However, they did write him a fine Christian letter, telling him what they had done in the Council of Constantinople. They notified him, among other things, that they had condemned the heresy of Macedonius and that they had appointed new bishops of Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem. O, but they ought not to have done that without the knowledge and consent of the bishop of Rome, who wanted to have the sole power to call councils (which he was not able to do), to judge all heresy (which he could not), and to change bishops (which was not his business)!

They gave him other good slaps, besides. They told him that in the new church at Constantinople (for the city of Constantinople had been built recently) they had appointed Nectarius bishop, at Antioch Flavian, at Jerusalem Cyril. These three points were most vexatious to the bishop of Rome; nay, it was intolerable that he should have to hear or see them. First, they call Constantinople a new church and appoint a bishop there, though without the knowledge and consent of the bishop of Rome, no new church or new bishop ought to be created. The second is still worse, for they call the church at Antioch the first and oldest of the churches, in which (as they prove by St. Luke, in Acts 11:26) the believers in Christ were first called Christians; moreover St. Peter and St. Paul and many of the greatest apostles preached there for more than seven years. That was the same as to say in my German: "Listen, Lord bishop of Rome! You are not the first or highest bishop; but if there is to be only one church, it ought more fittingly be the Church of Antioch, which has on its side the Scriptures of St. Luke and actual facts, while Rome has on its side neither Scriptures nor facts!"

They were fine and able people, however, and they wanted to check the proud spirit of Rome soberly and gently, in Christian love and humility, and, as Sirach says, "to spit on the sparks," and exhort the bishop of Rome to remember that the Gospel had not come from Rome to Antioch, but from Antioch to Rome; therefore, if it came to a question of precedence, Antioch, the oldest church, ought rightly to have precedence over Rome, the new church. This ambition, as the words show, had vexed these fine, holy fathers sorely, and that was proper. If there had been a Doctor Luther in the council, so mild a letter would not have been written to the bishop of Rome, if he could have had anything to do

with it. In a word, there were people in this council with whom none of the bishops of Rome of all time could compare. f330

The third point is worst of all, when they call the church at Jerusalem the mother of all churches. The reason is that Christ, the Lord, was Himself bishop there, and as a sign of it, sacrificed Himself on the cross for the sins of all the world. There the Holy Ghost was given from heaven, on the Day of Pentecost. There all the apostles together ruled the Church; not Peter only, of whom the bishop of Rome boasts. No single one of these things happened at Rome. Hereby they soberly admonish the bishop of Rome to remember that he is very far from being the bishop of Jerusalem, the mother-church, but that his church at Rome is a daughter-church, which did not have Christ and the apostles and did not bring Jerusalem to the faith; on the contrary, he and his church were brought to the faith by it. St. Paul humbles the Corinthians the very same way, telling them that the Gospel did not come from them, but came to them from others.

At last, however, they go beyond all bounds and appoint a patriarch in the new church at Constantinople, and do it without the previous knowledge and consent of the bishop of Rome, as though, in matters of this kind, his knowledge made no difference at all. Here, as the pope's flatterers themselves say, is the beginning of the everlasting controversy and contention between the bishop of Rome and the bishop of Constantinople over the primacy, or supreme authority. For when the bishop of Constantinople, though he was in a new city, was made a patriarch and given an equal position with the bishop of Rome, the latter feared that the bishop of Constantinople would claim the primacy; as actually happened afterwards. The bishops of Constantinople argued that the emperor had his residence, or court, at Constantinople and not at Rome, and Constantinople was called New Rome; therefore he must be the supreme bishop because he was bishop of the imperial city and court. On the other hand, the bishop of Rome argued that Rome was true Rome, and the emperor was called Roman emperor, not Constantinopolitan emperor, and Rome was earlier than Constantinople. They daved at each other with such childish, womanish, foolish scurrilities that it is a sin and a shame to hear and read them.

The dispute lasted until the time when Phocas was emperor, the man who had the good Emperor Maurice, his lord and predecessor, whose captain he had been, and whom the histories call a saint, beheaded with his wife and children. This pious Cain confirmed to the pious Pope Boniface of Rome the supremacy over all bishops, and there could have been no better man to confirm this supremacy than this shameful murderer of emperors. Thus Rome had as good a beginning for its papacy as it had had for its empire, when, in earlier days, Romulus slew his brother, Remus, so that he might rule alone and call the city after himself. Nevertheless, the bishops of Constantinople cared nothing for that, and the contention went on and on, though meanwhile the Roman bishops, over and above the confirmation of Phocas, began to deck themselves with fig-leaves and cried, with great bellowings, that the church of Rome was supreme, not by man's ordering, but by Christ's own institution, according to Matthew 16:18, Tu es Petrus, etc. But the people at Constantinople saw that those at Rome were unlearned and quoted Christ's words falsely and inappropriately, and they did not accept the argument. Thus the two churches, Rome and Constantinople, wrangled over the worthless primacy with lame, vain scurrilities, until at last the devil devoured them both: that of Constantinople by the Turks and Mohammed, that of Rome by the pope and his blasphemous decrees.

I tell all this in order that it may be seen what misery was caused by this fine Council of Constantinople, because the bishop of that city was made patriarch. To be sure, the misery would

not have been avoided even though no patriarch of Constantinople had been appointed, for the ambitious devil's head at Rome had already begun to make these demands of the bishops everywhere (as was said above), and if the bishop of Constantinople had not fallen foul of him, he would have rubbed against those of Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch; for he would not put up with the decree of the Council of Nicaea, in which he had been put on equality with the bishop of Alexandria and beneath the bishop of Jerusalem. He will be head of the Church without the councils and fathers, *jure divino* as he roars, blasphemes, and lies in his decrees.

This, then, was the second great council, at Constantinople. It did three things. First, it confirmed the doctrine that the Holy Ghost is true God and condemned Macedonius, who held and taught that the Holy Ghost is a creature. Second, it deposed the heretical bishops and appointed real bishops, especially at Antioch and Jerusalem. Third, it made Bishop Nectarius of Constantinople a patriarch, which made the bishops of Rome wild, mad, and crazy, although the good fathers may have done it with the best intentions.

The first thing is the main thing, and is the sole reason why this council was held. From this the intention of the council can be understood. It was to do no more, and did no more, than preserve the article concerning the deity of the Holy Ghost. When it had done that, it had finished the work for which it was summoned.

The second thing, the deposition of bishops, is not an article of faith, but an external tangible work. Even reason ought and can do it, and for this it is not necessary, as it is when dealing with articles of faith, to have the Holy Ghost in any special way, or to assemble a council. Therefore it must have been done at another session, after the session of the council. They did not establish anew the churches or bishoprics at Antioch and Jerusalem, but they let them stay as they had been from the beginning; all they did was to put other persons into them. The offices must always have been in the Church from the beginning and must continue until the end; but other persons must be put into them constantly; — Matthias after Judas (Acts 1:26), and living bishops after those who have died. This is not properly the work of a council but may be done, — indeed it must be done, — both before and after the councils, as the necessities of the churches demand.

Councils cannot be held everyday, but there is daily need for persons who can be put in the offices of the Church as often as they fall vacant.

The third thing was new. They made a patriarch with the best of human intentions. How it turned out, we have told above; what a shameful wrangling and contention the two bishops started over it, so that it is plain that the Holy Ghost did not order it so; for it is not an article of faith, but an external, tangible work of the reason, or of flesh and blood. What difference does it make to the Holy Ghost, which bishop has precedence and which comes after? He has other things to do than this worldly child's play. This is not only a lesson, to teach us that the councils have no power to establish new good works, still less articles of faith; but it is also a warning that councils ought not to appoint or establish anything new, for they should know that they are not assembled for that purpose, but to defend the old faith against new teachers; though, to be sure, they may put new persons in old offices (but then persons cannot be called articles of faith or good works, since they are uncertain, mortal men), and this has to be done outside the councils, in the churches, more than in the councils; nay, it must be done every day.

Even the fathers of the council themselves confess that they established nothing new, when they write, as has been said to Damasus, bishop of Rome, and say, among other things, "We know that

this is the old, true faith, which is according to baptism, and teaches us to believe on the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Indeed, they say nothing at all about the third point, the patriarch of Constantinople, perhaps because they thought that this was not the point on account of which they had come to the council and it was no heresy, if a Christian were not to hold, as an article of faith, that the bishop was a patriarch; just as today there are many people who are neither heretics nor lost because they do not hold the pope to be the head of the Church, notwithstanding his councils, decretals, bulls and bellowings. Perhaps, on the other hand, they did not do this by unanimous consent, but it was done by the Emperor Theodosius; for the other histories declare that Theodosius instigated it and pushed it; and he had no power to set up articles of faith.

Since, then, they themselves say and confess that it is the old, true faith, in which we were baptized and instructed, why shall we grant to the councils the high authority to set up new articles of faith and burn as heretics all those who do not believe them? That is not understanding the councils rightly and knowing what a council is and what its office and action are; it is rather looking at the letters and giving them all power, even over God. Of that more hereafter! We shall now take a brief glance at the other two chief councils besides.

The Council of Ephesus

The third great council was held under Theodosius II, grandson of Theodosius I, of whom I spoke in discussing the second council. This emperor summoned two hundred bishops to come together to Ephesus. The Latin writers would like to weave the pope into the story, but it is a fact, nevertheless, that it was not the pope, but the emperor, who had to summon this council, for now that there was a patriarch at Constantinople who was on equal footing with the bishop of Rome, the bishops of the East cared far less about the bishop of Rome than before. It was, therefore, impossible for the bishop of Rome to call this council, especially at Ephesus, which lay far across the sea, in Asia. If he could have done so, he would have put it nearer Rome, as Damasus tried to do with the former council, that of Constantinople. To be sure, he is said to have had his legates there. That may be, but they did not preside.

The reason for this council was as follows: The dear fathers and fine bishops were gone, — St. Ambrose, St. Martin, St. Jerome, St. Augustine (who died that very year), St. Hilary, St. Eusebius, and others like them, and in their place had come other fathers, who were not their equals. Therefore the Emperor Theodosius was no longer willing to have a bishop of Constantinople chosen from among the priests or clergy of the city of Constantinople, for the reason that they were commonly proud, ambitious, and headstrong and usually caused nothing but trouble. Even St. John Chrysostom was such a person, as the *Historia tripartita* tells. Therefore the emperor had an *advena*, as they called him, brought from Antioch. His name was Nestorius and he was a man of strict and chaste life, loud-voiced and eloquent, and violently opposed to all heretics. He had to become bishop and patriarch of Constantinople. So the emperor made a great effort and had no success; he tried to run out of the rain and fell in the water.

Nestorius began to defend his priest Anastasius, who had preached that the Holy Virgin should not be called Mother of God, for since she was human she could not bear God. This gave offense to all Christians and they took no other meaning from it than that he held that Christ, born of Mary, was not God, but a mere man, like all of us; and out of this there arose such a state of affairs that the emperor had to call a council to help things.

The great bishops came together to Ephesus, though slowly, — Nestorius with many others, Cyril from Alexandria, Juvenalis from Jerusalem, and when John of Antioch delayed his coming, Cyril (who was opposed to Nestorius) and Juvenal condemned Nestorius, and he and his followers, in turn, condemned them. When John of Antioch arrived and found this division, he was angry at Cyril because he had so hot-headedly and hastily condemned Nestorius, and the two went at each other and each condemned the other and deposed the other from his bishopric.

When Nestorius saw that such a disturbance had arisen, he said, "Oh, let us do away with what causes so much trouble and admit that Mary may be called Mother of God." But this recantation did not help; he had to stay under condemnation and in exile. To be sure, the two bishops, of Antioch and Alexandria, did condemn one another, even after the council, when they were back at home again; but at last they were reconciled. Nevertheless, it is offensive and distressing to read how these people in high station acted. They needed a Constantine to throw their contentious letters into the fire; but those who could have done that were gone. Now if Nestorius was in such error that he held Christ not for God, but for mere man, then he was justly condemned, for his teaching was much worse than that of Arius or Macedonius.

That is the third great council. It did nothing more than that. And yet we see that it set up no new articles, but defended the old, true faith against the new doctrine of Nestorius, if that is what he taught; and on this basis, we cannot grant the councils the power to establish new articles. For that Christ is true God was defended before, in the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople, as a true, old article, held from the beginning and proved by the Holy Scriptures and now testified over against the new heresy of Arius. The other decrees established there have to do with bodily matters and are not articles of faith and we pass them by.

In order, however, that we may understand this council thoroughly, we shall say a little more about it. At one time I myself could not understand what Nestorius' error was, and thought that Nestorius denied the deity of Christ, and held Christ for nothing more than a mere man, as the pope's decrees and all the papal authors say; but by their own words, when I looked at them rightly, I was forced to another conclusion, for they accuse him of making Christ two Persons, God and man. Some, who also could not understand the case, imagined that he taught as follows: Christ was first born of Mary as mere man, and then lived such a holy life that the Godhead united with Him and thus He became God. And their writings are so confused that I think that they themselves do not know, to the present day, why they condemned Nestorius. Observe that they admit that Nestorius held Christ for God and man; only he is said to have made two Persons of Him. From this it is certain that Nestorius did not hold Christ for a mere man, as we all thought, since he also holds Him for God, as their own words say. The only knot that remains is that he is said to have taken Christ, really and truly God and man, for a dual Person, divine and human. That is one thing.

Now he who divides Christ and makes two Persons of Him, makes two Christs, — a divine Christ who is altogether God and not a man at all, and a human Christ, who is altogether man, and not God; otherwise there could not be two Persons. It is sure, however, that Nestorius did not believe that there were two Christs, but only one single Christ, as their own words imply, when they say that Nestorius held Christ, viz., the one, same, real Christ and no other, to be two Persons. Therefore it must be false and wrong to say that he held Christ to be two Persons. The two things cannot stand together, viz., that Christ is two Persons and yet is the same, single Christ; but, as said, if there are two Persons, there are two Christs, and not one Christ. But Nestorius holds to no more than one

Christ. Therefore he could not have held Christ to be two Persons, or he would have contradicted himself and said yes and no in one statement. So, too, it is not written anywhere in the histories that Nestorius held Christ to be two Persons, except that the popes and their histories make that quibble; though even they themselves admit that they imagine that Nestorius taught that after His birth from Mary, Christ became God, or was united to God in one Person. Their conscience or their misunderstanding forced them to this, since they had to admit that Nestorius did not teach that there was more than one single Christ.

The question then is, What was Nestorius condemned for, and why was this third great council held against him, if he taught nothing else except that Christ was true God and man, and was one Christ, not two, i.e., one Person in two natures, as we all believe, and as the whole Church has believed from the beginning? For it appears that the pope and his followers have invented the story that Nestorius held Christ for a mere man and not also for God, and that he held Christ for two Persons, or two Christs. This appears, I say, not only from the histories, but from the very words of the popes and their writers. What, then, was Nestorius' error, so that we may know the cause of this council?

You may read it for yourself in a page or two of the Tripartite History, Book 12, chapter 4, and can read it in half of a quarter of an hour. There is written everything that can actually be known about Nestorius and this council. See if I hit it. The fault was this: Nestorius was a proud, unlearned man, and when he became a great bishop and patriarch, he thought that he must be considered the most learned man on earth, and needed neither to read any of the books of his forbears or of other people, nor to learn to speak after their fashion. On the contrary, since he was eloquent with a loud voice, he wanted to be a self-made Doctor or Master, and would have it that whatever he said was right. With this pride, he attacked the statement that Mary was the mother, or bearer of God. Then he found other proud bishops who were not pleased with his pride, especially Cyril of Alexandria, for there was no Augustine or Ambrose at hand. Nestorius had learned in the church of Antioch that Christ was true God begotten of the Father (the belief defended in the Council of Nicaea) and afterwards born of the Virgin Mary, as true man. Nestorius had no doubts on either of these points; nay, he persecuted the Arians, condemned in the Nicene Council, so violently that he caused many deaths and much bloodshed by it. So firmly did he hold that Christ is true God and man.

Moreover, he admitted that Christ, God's Son, was born of the Virgin Mary according to His humanity, not according to His divinity, as we, and all Christians, also say. But there he struck a difficulty. He would not have it that Mary should be called, on that account, mother of God, since Christ was not born of her according to His divinity; or, to speak plainly, — he believed that Christ did not have His deity from her, as He had His humanity. That was his whole fight! God cannot be born or have His divine nature from a human being; and a human being cannot bear God or give God His divine nature. The unlearned, rude, proud man stood on the phrase, "God born of Mary," and interpreted "born" by grammar or philosophy, as though it meant to have the nature of deity from the one who bore Him. Thus the Tripartita says, "He held these words in abomination"; and so do we and all Christians, if we understand them in that sense.

From this it is evident that Nestorius, an ignorant and proud bishop, thinks of Christ in a really serious way, but, in his ignorance, does not know what he is saying. He has no right to speak of such matters, and yet he would be a Magister and speak of them. We, too, know very well that Christ did not derive His deity from Mary; but it does not follow that it must, therefore, be false to say, "God was born of Mary" and "God is Mary's Son" and "Mary is God's mother." I must give you a plain

illustration. If a woman bears a child, a worthless Nestorius (so the Tripartita calls him!) can be proud and ignorant, and raise the quibble, "This woman has borne the child, but she is not its mother, for the reason that the soul of the child is not of her nature or blood, but is infused from elsewhere, i.e., from God. Therefore, this child is, indeed, born of the woman according to the body; but since its soul is not from her body, she is not the child's mother, because she is not the mother of its soul."

Such a wretched sophist does not deny that the two natures, body and soul, are one person; nor does he say that there are two persons, or two children; but he confesses that two natures, body and soul, are one person, or one child, and that the mother has borne not two children, but one; but he does not see what he is denying or what he is saying. Just such a man was Nestorius. He admits that Christ is God and man in one Person; but since His deity does not come from His mother, Mary, she ought not to be called the mother of God. This was rightly condemned in the council, and ought to be condemned. Although Nestorius holds a right opinion on one point of the main matter, viz., that Christ is God and man, nevertheless, the other point is not to be endured. It is expressed in words and sayings, like "God was not born of Mary and was not crucified by the Jews." The sophist says correctly, on one point, that the mother cannot bear, or give, the child's soul, but it is not to be endured when he says that the child is not the mother's natural child and the mother not the child's natural mother.

In a word, the proud unlearned bishop started a Greek, that is, a bad quarrel as the Roman Cicero says of the Greeks, *Jam diu torquet controversia verbi homines graculos, contentionis cupidores, quam veritatis*. He who admits that a mother has borne a child, which is both body and soul, ought also to say and believe that the mother has borne the whole child, and is its mother, even though she may not be the mother of its soul. Otherwise it would have to follow that no woman would be the mother of a child, and the commandment, "Honor thy father and mother" would be abolished. It should, therefore, be said that Mary is the true, natural mother of the child called Jesus Christ, and the true mother and bearer of God. Thus whatever else can be said of children's mothers can be said of her; they suckle their children, bathe them, give them food and drink, and Mary suckled God, rocked God, made broth and soup for God. For God and man are one Person, one Christ, one Son, one Jesus, not two persons, not two Christs, not two sons, not two Jesuses; just as your son is not two sons, two Hanses, two shoemakers, etc., even though he has two natures, body and soul, — body from you, soul from God alone.

Nestorius' error, then, is not that he holds Christ to be a mere man or that he makes two Persons of Him; on the contrary he confesses that there are two natures in one Person, but he will not admit a *communicatio idiomatum*. I cannot say that in German in one word. *Idioma* means that which attaches to a nature, or is its property, such as dying, suffering, weeping, laughing, eating, drinking, sleeping, sorrowing, rejoicing, being born, having a mother, sucking the breast, walking, standing, working, sitting, lying down, and other things of the kind. These are called *idiomata humanae naturae*, that is, properties that attach to a man by nature, things that he can, or even must, do or suffer; for *idioma* in Greek is the same thing as *proprium* in Latin. Let us call it "property." Again, *idioma deitatis*, is a property of divine nature, such as to be immortal, omnipotent, infinite, not to be born, or eat, drink, sleep, stand, walk, sorrow, weep. Why say more? To be God is an immeasurably different thing than to be a man. Therefore the *idiomata* of the two natures cannot coincide. That is the opinion of Nestorius. Now if I preached thus: "Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth (for so the Gospels call Him, *filium fabri*), goes on the street and brings his mother a pitcher of water and a pennyworth of bread, to eat and drink with her; and this carpenter, Jesus, is real, true God in one

Person”; then Nestorius would grant me that and say that was true. But if I were to say: “God goes on the street, and gets water and bread, to eat with His mother”; then Nestorius would not admit that, but would say, “Getting water, buying bread, having a mother, eating and drinking with her, — these are *idiomata*, properties, of human not of divine nature.” Therefore, if I were to say: “The carpenter, Jesus, was crucified by the Jews, and this same Jesus is true God,” Nestorius would say that this was true. But if I say, “God was crucified by the Jews,” he says, “No! The Cross, suffering and death are not the *idioma*, or property, of divine, but of human nature.”

If ordinary Christians hear this, they can think nothing else than that he holds Christ to be a mere man, and separates the persons, which he does not intend to do, though his words make it appear that he is doing it. Thus it is apparent what an altogether mad saint and ignorant man he was; for after admitting that God and man were united and mingled in one Person, he can nowise avoid the conclusion that the *idiomata* of the two natures should also be united and mingled. Otherwise what would it mean, to say that God and man are united in one Person? His folly is exactly that against which it is taught in the schools, *Qui concedit antecedens bonae consequentiae, non potest negare consequens*; in German we say, “If the one thing is true, the other must be; if the second is not true, neither is the first.” Anyone who admits that Grete is your wife, cannot deny that her child is your child, if she is a good wife. When these things are taught in the schools, no one can believe that there can be anybody crude enough to deny them; but ask the governors and the jurists whether they have not often had parties before them who confess one thing and will not admit the consequences of it.

It might be alleged that Nestorius had been acting the rascal when he confessed that Christ was God, and one Person. No! The proud man was not clever enough for that; he meant it seriously. In one of his sermons, says the *Tripartita*, he cried, “Nay, my dear Jew, you need not act so proudly! You could not crucify God.” What he would say is that Christ is God, but God was not crucified. And in the council, in the presence of Bishop Cyril, he says, “Many confess that Christ is God, but I shall never say that God is *bitris* or *trinitris*” that is to say, “Jesus is God, as many of us confess, but that God is born two or three times, — that I shall not teach.” What is in his mind, as the *Tripartita* indicates, is that God and death do not agree together, for he thinks it terrible to hear that God died. His meaning was that, according to His divinity, Christ is immortal; but he had not enough brains to express it that way. Then there is the added fact that the other bishops were also proud, and did not consider how the wounds could be healed, but how they could be torn open and made worse.

Speaking logically, then, it must follow from Nestorius’ opinion, that Christ is a mere man and two persons; but that was not his opinion, for the crude, unlearned man did not see that he was proposing the impossible when he seriously held Christ to be God and man in one Person and, at the same time, would not ascribe the *idiomata* of the two natures to the Person of Christ. He wants to hold the first statement as true, but he will not grant that which follows out of that first statement. Thus he shows that he himself does not rightly understand what he is denying.

We Christians must ascribe all the *idiomata* of the two natures to His Person. Christ is God and man in one Person. Therefore what is said of Him as man must also be said of Him as God, viz., Christ died, and Christ is God, therefore God died; not God apart from humanity, but God united with humanity. Of God apart from humanity both statements are false, viz., Christ is God and God died. Both are false, for God is not man. But if Nestorius thinks it strange that God dies, he should remember that it is also strange that God becomes man, for thereby the immortal God becomes something that must die, suffer, and have all the human *idiomata*. What would that man be, with whom God is personally

united, if he were not to have true human *idiomata*? He would have to be a phantom, as the Manicheans had taught. On the other hand, what is said of God must also be ascribed to the man, i.e., God created the world and is almighty; the man Christ is God; therefore, the man Christ created the world and is almighty. The reason for this is that God and man have become one Person and therefore the Person bears the *idiomata* of both natures.

Ah, Lord God! Over this blessed, comforting article men ought always rejoice, in true faith, without disputes and without doubts! We ought to sing, and give praise and thanks to God the Father, that He has allowed His dear Son to become like us, a man and our brother! But that wretched Satan, through proud and ambitious and wicked people, raises up such bad feeling that this dear and blessed joy must be hindered and spoiled! We Christians must know that if God is not in the scale to give it weight, our side of the scale sinks to the ground. That is to say, if it cannot be said that God, not a mere man, died for us, we are lost. But if God's death and a dying God are in the balance, His side goes down and ours comes up, as though it were light and empty; but He can also leap up again, or spring out of the scale. He could not be in the scale, however, unless He had become a man like us, so that we could speak of God dying, God's suffering, God's blood, God's death. For in His own nature, God cannot die; but when God and man are united in one Person, then, if the man dies with whom God is one thing, or one Person, then it can be truly called God's death.

Besides, this council condemned too little of Nestorius' doctrine. It dealt only with the one *idioma*, viz., that God was born of Mary. Therefore, the histories say that, in this council it was resolved, against Nestorius, that Mary should be called *theotokos*, "the one who bore God," though Nestorius denied to God in Christ all the *idiomata* of the human nature such as death, cross, passion, and everything that is not suitable to God. They ought, therefore, to have resolved, not only that Mary was *theotokos*, but also that Pilate and the Jews were crucifiers and murderers of God. Afterwards, indeed, he was condemned with reference to all the *idiomata*, by saying, "Nestorius denies that Christ is God and one Person." That is true in effect and in logic, but it is too blunt and far-fetched, and Nestorius could get no other idea from it than that he was being treated unjustly and wrongly; for he had never taught that in so many words, but, on the contrary, had always said that Christ was real and true God and was not two persons, and he had persecuted the Arians hard in behalf of this belief. People like him cannot make syllogisms or draw logical conclusions, and see that one who denies the *idiomata*, or properties, of a nature, can be said to deny the substance, or nature, itself. The decision should have run thus, — "Although Nestorius confesses that Christ is true God and man, one Person; nevertheless, since he does not grant the *idiomata* of the human nature to the divine Person of Christ, he is wrong, and it is the same as if he had denied the nature itself." And they ought not to have picked out the one *idioma*, which concerned His mother, Mary. In that way, the case of this council would have been more clearly understood and it is my opinion that very few people have understood it heretofore. From Platina and his ilk, it is impossible to understand it.

I, too, have had to deal with Nestorians, and they fought against me very stubbornly, saying that the deity of Christ could not suffer. For example, even Zwingli wrote against me concerning the text, *Verbum caro factum est*. He simply would not have it that *factum* should agree with *verbum*, but would have it read, *Verbum caro facta est*, for the reason that God could not be made anything. At that time I did not know that that was the notion of Nestorius, because I did not understand the council, but I recognized the error of it from the Holy Scriptures, Augustine, and the Master of Sentences. Who knows how many Nestorians there are under the papacy, who boast greatly about this council, and do not know of what it is that they are boasting? The human reason would be wise

on this point and not suffer it that God should die or have a human kind of being, even though it believes, because of custom, that Christ is God, as did Nestorius.

So, then, this council established nothing new concerning the faith, as was said above, but defended the old faith against the new opinions of Nestorius, and we cannot use it as an example, or grant, because of it, that the councils have power to fix new or different articles of faith. This article was in the Church from the very first, and was not newly made by the council, but was preserved by the Gospel, or the Holy Scriptures. There it stands, in St. Luke 1:32, that the angel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary that that which should be born of her was the Son of the Highest; and St. Elizabeth asks, "Whence cometh it that the mother of the Lord should come to me?" All the angels, at Christmas, say, "To you is born this day a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Moreover, St. Paul says, in Galatians 4:4, "God sent His Son, born of a woman."

These texts, I know for sure, hold firmly enough that Mary is mother of God. So St. Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 2:8, "The princes of this world crucified the Lord of Majesty"; and in Acts 20:28, "God has purchased the Church with His own blood" (though God has no blood, if we are to judge by human reason); and in Philippians 2:6, "Christ, though He was equal to God, became a servant and was found in the fashion of all men"; and the childrens' creed, *Symbolum Apostolorum*, says, "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived, born of Mary, suffered, was crucified, dead, buried," etc. There stand the idioms of human nature plain enough, and they are ascribed to the only Son and Lord, Whom we believe to be equal to the Father, and true God. Let this be enough about this council.

The Council of Chalcedon

The fourth great council was held at Chalcedon in Pontus, or Asia, about twenty-two or twenty-three years after the third great council, by the Emperor Marcian, who was Emperor at Constantinople after Theodosius II. It was in the year 455. Thus the four great councils were held within the space of one hundred and thirty years, for the council at Nicaea was held in 325, but before them and along with them and after them, there were many other councils, held here and there by the bishops themselves, without the emperors. These four, however, could not come together without the emperors. Such very faulty men were the holy fathers that it was not easy for one of them to yield to another, as the histories, unfortunately, show. And this is a special consolation for us, to show us that we need not despair; since the Holy Ghost was in some of these fathers and they had to be holy and be saved.

What the reason for this council was, I myself would be glad to learn from someone else, for there is no trustworthy history that comes down this far. The *Ecclesiastica* ends with the first council, that of Nicaea; the *Tripartita* and *Theodoret* with the third council, at Ephesus; from that point on we must believe the histories of the popes and their followers only, and to believe them is a dubious procedure, for strong and evident reasons. Up to the present time, they have so drawn everything into their own hands, and have told and still tell such lies about their own majesty, that no one can build any certainty upon them. Now advise me how I am going to be saved, since I do not understand this council or know what it did? And what has become of the dear saints and Christians who, through all these centuries, have not known what this council established? For there must always be saints on earth, and if they die, other saints must live, from the world's beginning to its end or the article of the Creed would be false, "I believe one holy, Christian Church, a communion of saints," and Christ would have been lying, when He said, "I am with you until the end of the world." There

must, I say, always be living saints on earth, wherever they may be, or Christ's Kingdom would have an end and there would be no one to pray the Lord's Prayer, confess the Creed, be baptized, go to the Sacrament, be absolved, etc.

Well, then, Platina and others say that this was the reason for it. There was at Constantinople an abbot, — they called him Archimandrite, — named Eutyches, who brought out against Nestorius another doctrine, and taught that Christ was one Person, in the divine nature only. Against this, the fathers in the council determined that Christ is one Person and two natures; and this is true and is the Christian faith. According to the pope's histories, however, he taught that after the deity had taken on humanity and Christ had thus become one Person, only the deity remained and Christ is to be considered only God, and not man. If that was Eutyches' opinion, he is almost another Nestorius, who is said to have taught that Christ is two persons and yet one Person, for Eutyches must also have taught that in Christ there are two persons, and yet only one Person; and Pope Leo says in a letter that Eutyches and Nestorius teach contradictory heresies. And, indeed, it is true that he who teaches that Christ is two and yet one in person or nature and, again, that in Christ there are two natures and yet one nature, is teaching contradictions, nay, self-contradictions.

If the papists had known, however, that these were not the opinions of Nestorius and Eutyches, they ought properly to have refrained from such language and spoken a little more plainly and in terminis propriis, i.e., they ought to have used their very words. Otherwise the heretics think that they are being treated unjustly and overcome with false words and false interpretations of their words, as I said above about Nestorius.

That Eutyches did not hold that there was only one nature in Christ appears from the papists' own words, when they say, Eutyches confessed that there are two natures in Christ, viz., the deity assumed humanity. One who confesses this says that Christ has more than one nature. But they do not tell us what Eutyches means by saying that afterwards only the divine nature in Christ remained, without the human nature. Thus they let the matter hang in the air, as though Eutyches had held, at the same time, that Christ had two natures and not two, but one. Thus the histories afterwards become uncertain and obscure, so that no one can understand what Eutyches meant or what the pope's histories mean, and thus they lost this council and the reason for its assembling. We cannot find it from the histories of the councils or the papal letters. On the other hand, the pope's historians ought not to write so roughly and clumsily, and babble out their own words to us, unless we are to gather from them that they understood this council almost as well as I do.

I shall speak out my own ideas. If I hit the mark, well and good; if not, the Christian faith will not fall. Eutyches' opinion, like that of Nestorius, is wrong on the subject of the *idiomata*, but in a different way. Nestorius will not ascribe the *idiomata* of humanity to the divinity in Christ, though he stands firm in the belief that Christ is God and man. Eutyches, on the other hand, will not ascribe the *idiomata* of divinity to the humanity, though he holds, with equal firmness, that Christ is true God and man. It is as though I preached that the Word, God's Son, is creator of heaven and earth, equal to the Father in eternity, and that Word, the same Son of God, is true man. This Eutyches grants me. He has no doubts about that. But if I go on and preach that this man Christ is creator of heaven and earth, Eutyches stumbles and is outraged at the words, "A man creates heaven and earth." He says, "No! Such a divine *idioma* as creating heaven and earth, does not befit man." But he does not stop to think that he has previously admitted that Christ is true God and man in one Person, and now will not admit the conclusion, the *consequens bonae consequentiae*. For one who confesses that God and

man are one Person must simply and absolutely admit that, because of this union of the two natures in one Person, this man Christ, born of Mary, is creator of heaven and earth, since that is what He has become in one Person, viz., God, who created heaven and earth.

This conclusion Eutyches does not understand and yet says firmly, "Christ is God and man," not seeing that he must deny the human nature of Christ, if he refuses to ascribe the divine *idiomata* to the human nature. That would be dividing the Person, and Christ would not be man. That is what they would show who say of Eutyches that he did not allow the human nature in Christ to remain, *scilicet in consequenti*, though he confesses, *scilicet in antecedenti*, that the divine and human natures are one Christ, one Person, and two natures. In a word, as said above, he who confesses the two natures in Christ, God and man, must also ascribe the *idiomata* of both to the person, for to be God and man is to be nothing, if not to have the *idiomata* of both. Therefore, both Nestorius and Eutyches were rightly condemned because of their error in understanding Christ.

It is true, to be sure, that Eutyches had, perhaps, a greater temptation than Nestorius, for many of the human *idiomata* have been left behind by Christ, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, sorrowing, suffering, dying, being buried, etc. He now sits at the right hand of God, and no longer eats, drinks, sleeps, sorrows, suffers, dies, to all eternity, as will happen with us also when we pass out of this life, into that, according to 1 Corinthians 15:1. These are temporal and transient *idiomata*; but the *idiomata* of the nature remain, such as having body and soul, skin and hair, blood and flesh, marrow and bones and all the members of a human nature. Therefore it must be said that this man, Christ, flesh and blood of Mary, is creator of heaven and earth, has overcome death, abolished sin, broken hell in pieces. These are all divine *idiomata*, and yet it is right and Christian to ascribe them all to the Person who is flesh and blood of Mary, because there are not two persons, but one.

Your son Peter is called a scholar, though this *idioma* is only of the soul, not of the body, and a Eutyches might juggle with the words, and say, "No! Peter is not a scholar, but his soul is." On the other hand, a Nestorius might say, "No! I did not flog your son, but only his body." That would sound as though they would make of Peter two persons, or retain only one nature for him, and yet it would not be so meant. That is ignorance and stupidity and shows that they were bad logicians. But that kind of ignorance is not rare in the world and shows itself in other matters also. People often admit something and yet deny what must logically follow from it. That is what is meant by *antecedente concessio*, negate consequens. There are today many great lords and scholars who confess, freely and firmly, that our doctrine of faith, which justifies without merit, by pure grace, is true; and yet they take offense when it is said that monasticism and worship of saints and the like should, therefore, be let go and be despised; though logic compels that conclusion. No man can be justified except by faith; it follows, that one cannot be justified by the monastic life. Then why hold on to it? What is the use of it?

But I shall take myself, too, by the nose and not be so ungrateful as to forget my own folly. Twenty years ago I taught, as I still do, that faith alone justifies, without works. If, at that time, however, someone had risen up and taught that monkery and nunnery ought to be called idolatry and the mass an abomination, if I had not helped burn him at the stake, I should, at least, have believed that burning at the stake served him right; and thoughtless fool that I was! — I could not see the consequence, which I ought to have admitted, viz., that if faith alone does it, monkery and the mass could not do it. What was still worse, I knew that these were doctrines and works of men, and yet I did not ascribe the same value to good works commanded by God and done in faith. In truth, I gave a

fine illustration of my Nestorius and my Eutyches, though with reference to other things, when I admitted one thing and did not agree to the other thing, which followed from it. So Nestorius admits that Christ is God and man and will not agree that this God was born and died, though this follows from the first statement.

Moreover, Luther accuses the papists of teaching neither faith nor good works, and they, in turn, have no rest, and accuse Luther still more violently of teaching wrongly concerning the Christian faith and of forbidding good works. What, then, is the issue? Why are they not one, since they confess the same things? I shall tell you. There is a Nestorius here who has gone astray on the *idiomata*. Luther wants good works, but they are not to have glorious, divine *idiomata*, so that they make satisfaction for sin, reconcile God's wrath, and justify sinners. These *idiomata* belong to Another, Whose name is "Lamb of God, that beareth the sins of the world." Yea, verily these *idiomata* should be left to the blood and death of Christ; good works should have other *idiomata*, other merits, other rewards. This the papists do not want, but they ascribe to good works the power to make satisfaction for sins and make people righteous. Therefore they cry out that Luther teaches no good works, but forbids them. They do not see the logical consequence, however. If one teaches good works which make satisfaction for sin, it is just the same as though one taught no good works at all, for such good works are nihil in rerum natura, they are nothing and nowhere, and cannot be. Therefore in the very act of teaching and confessing good works, firmly and completely, they teach no good works at all.

Here you see Nestorius' logic. He admits the antecedent and denies the consequence, and thus he makes the antecedent false. If the one is true, the other must also be true in any real, logical argument. On the other hand, if the latter statement be false, the former must also be false. Good works make satisfaction for sin, — they not only admit this, but even insist upon it; but the other statement, viz., that such works are not good, nay, are nothing and not works at all, — this they condemn. And yet the latter statement follows compellingly out of the former; for good works that make satisfaction for sin are the same as no good works; just as it follows compellingly, *Qui docet id quod non est, docet nihil*, "He who teaches what is not, teaches nothing." So one may speak, too, of faith. He who teaches a faith that does not justify alone and without works, teaches no faith; for the faith that justifies with or by works, is nothing at all.

I will give a still plainer illustration. Some jurists admit that it is right for a priest to marry, but do not admit the consequence, viz., that a priest's children are heirs. That is the same thing as saying that a priest's marriage is fornication, for if there is a marriage, the child must be an heir; if it is not an heir, there is no marriage. This is called in the schools, *negare consequens antecedentis concessi in bona consequentia, and destructo consequente, retinere antecedens*. This is impossible, and those who do it are known for gross, ignorant people; but it was the failing of both Nestorius and Eutyches, as it is of many other people in other matters. It is sure that both of them were serious in holding that Christ is God and man in one Person, as we gather from the histories, and even from the acts of the councils, and yet they could not agree to the result, or conclusion, that the Person, Who is God and man, was crucified and made the heavens, but thought that Christ could not be crucified and man could not make the heavens.

And what shall we say of ourselves? The apostles at Jerusalem, together with many thousands of the Jews, had been justified by faith alone, i.e., by the grace of Christ; but they had their Nestorius and Eutyches sticking in them and did not see the consequence, viz., that the law of Moses did not and could not contribute anything to this, but wanted to give it the *idiomata* which belong only to the

Lamb of God, and said, as we have noted above, that the Gentiles could not be saved, unless they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses. That was the same thing as denying Christ and His grace, as St. Paul says in Galatians 2:21, "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ has died in vain"; and in Romans 11:6, "If it is of grace, then it is not of works." But those at Jerusalem spoke thus: "It is, indeed, grace alone, but it must also be works alone; for without the law, no one can be saved, though a man must be saved by grace alone, without the law." In plain German, that is cutting off one's own nose, and not understanding what one says. The schools call it, as I have said, *antecedens concedere*, and *consequens negare*; or *consequens destruere* and *antecedens affirmare*. It is saying Yes and No at the same time about the same thing. This no one must do, unless he is utterly ignorant or a hopeless scoffer. That is what my Antinomians, too, are doing today. They are preaching finely and (I can think nothing else) with real seriousness about Christ's grace, the forgiveness of sins, and the other things that can be said concerning redemption. But they flee the consequence of this, as though it were the very devil, and will not speak to the people about the Third Article, which is sanctification, i.e., the new life in Christ. For they think that they ought not to terrify people, or disturb them, but always to preach in a comforting way about grace and the forgiveness of sins in Christ, and utterly avoid such words as these: "Listen! You want to be a Christian and yet remain an adulterer, fornicator, drunken swine, proud, covetous, a usurer, envious, revengeful, malicious!" On the contrary, they say: "Listen! Though you are an adulterer, a fornicator, a miser, or any other kind of sinner, only believe, and you will be saved and need not fear the law; Christ has fulfilled it all!"

Tell me, is that not granting the premise and denying the conclusion? Nay, it is taking away Christ and bringing Him to nought, at the same time that He is most highly preached. It is saying Yes and No to the same thing. There is no such Christ, Who has died for these sinners who, after forgiveness of sins, do not leave their sins and lead a new life. Thus they finely preach the logic of Nestorius and Eutyches, that Christ is this and is yet not this. They are fine Easter preachers, but shamefully poor Pentecost preachers, for they preach nothing de sanctificatione et vivificatione Spiritus Sancti, i.e., concerning sanctification by the Holy Ghost, but preach only about redemption by Christ, though Christ, Whom they extol so highly (and rightly so!) is Christ, i.e., He has purchased redemption from sin and death, in order that the Holy Ghost shall make new men of us, in place of the old Adam, so that we die unto sin and live unto righteousness, as St. Paul teaches in Romans 6:1, beginning and increasing this life here on earth, and completing it yonder. What Christ has earned for us is not only *gratia*, "grace," but also *donum*, the "gift" of the Holy Ghost, so that we might not only have forgiveness of sin, but also cease from sinning. Whoever, then, does not cease from sinning, but continues in his former wicked life, must have another Christ from the Antinomians, for the real Christ is not there, even though all the angels were to cry only "Christ! Christ!"; and he must be damned with his new Christ.

See what bad logicians we are in high matters, which are above us or in which we are not practiced, so that at one and the same time, we can believe a thing and not believe it! In lower things, however, we are very keen logicians! A farmer, however stupid he may be, understands and reckons it out at once that he who gives me a groschen gives me no gulden, for it follows as a matter of course, and he sees the logic clearly. But our Antinomians do not see that they preach Christ without the Holy Ghost and against the Holy Ghost, because they are willing to let the people continue in their old life, and yet declare them saved, though the logic of it is that a Christian should have the Holy Ghost and lead a new life, or know that he has no Christ. These asses, then, want to be better logicians than

Master Philip and Aristotle, to say nothing of Luther. The pope alone must feel them; they fly too high for me. So, then, the logic of Nestorius and Eutyches is a common plague, especially in matters of Holy Scripture; in other matters it knows how to conduct itself. To be sure, it gives the jurists and rulers trouble enough in subtle cases, where they sometimes hear Yes and No at once and have difficulty in telling them apart.

Now if Eutyches or Nestorius, after being instructed by the bishops remained stiff and proud in his opinion, — though I cannot determine this, according to the histories, — then they were justly condemned, not only as heretics, but as gross fools. But if they did not stand stiffly on their own opinions (and the acts of the councils report that Eutyches, especially, did not) and the bishops condemned them without giving kindly instruction to the erring ones, according to Paul's teaching, in Galatians 6:1, — even then they judged the case aright, though they will have to answer to the true Judge for their pride and hasty action (for these councils have attained great reputation and there were more than six hundred and thirty bishops at this one). I remember Master John Wesel, who was preacher at Mainz and formerly ruled the University of Erfurt with his books, from which I myself got my Master's degree there, — how he was condemned by the abandoned, proud murderers, known as "inquisitors (I ought to say 'inventors') of heresy," Dominicans, because he would not say "I believe that there is a God," but "I know that there is a God"; for all the schools held that the existence of God is known of itself, as St. Paul also says in Romans 1:19. How the barefoot murderers at Eisenach dealt with John Hilten is told in the Apology. f378

Suppose that, without any warning, there were to come to you and me an honorable man, who could make the case sound strange with the uncouthness of his words, and he were to say: "I want to tell you! A new prophet has arisen who teaches that if a man is entirely holy, he cannot only do miracles, but create heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and angels, making them out of nothing, as some of the scholastic doctors have argued in discussing Book 4 of the Sentences. What is still worse, he says that the old God is dead, etc." Here you and I would say: "This must be the devil and his dam. The Scripture says, 'I am God, and change not'; and Paul says, Qui solus immortalitatem habet. 'Who alone hath immortality.' What is the use of many words? God lives alone and is Himself life." Then he would begin: "That is what you yourself teach. You say that Christ is a man, entirely holy, who made heaven and earth, and that He is also true God, Who died for you on the Cross." See how we have, all unwittingly, become blasphemous Nestorians and Eutycheses by confessing that Christ, one Person, has died for us and has created heaven and earth, though we have just said that it must be the devil and his dam who says that a man created heaven and earth and that God died; and yet logical consistency compels us to say this, because we believe that Christ is God and man in one Person. There you see how the idiomata get thoughtless people all mixed up and lead them astray unwittingly. In such a case we ought to come along with gentle instruction, and not proudly condemn those who have erred. God grant that I may not be telling the truth, but I fear that at the Last Day some heretics will be judges and some of the bishops who have judged them will be condemned. "God is wonderful and incomprehensible in His judgments" though we know that "He is gracious to the humble and resisteth the proud"; and especially in the ranks of those who have a place in the councils and the Church, nothing should be done from zelo, i.e., envy and pride. God cannot suffer it.

These are my ideas about Eutyches. If I have not hit the mark, I have missed it; and it is their fault. Why did they not treat the subject better and describe it more diligently so that it could be understood more clearly? And what would we do if the acts of this council were lost? The Christian faith would not sink. More things and better things than the acts of this council have been lost. St.

Augustine himself complains that he finds almost nothing in the writings of his predecessors that help him against Pelagius, and yet such a great matter must have been much discussed. I have formed my ideas in accordance with the words of the Roman bishop Leo who says that the heresies of Eutyches and Nestorius are opposite and contradictory of one another. Now it is certain from the Tripartita, that Nestorius confessed, even violently, that Christ is true God and man and was no Arian; for the Arians held that Christ is simply not God, and he drove them out and persecuted them even to the point of murder and slaughter. But his heresy lay in this, that the idiomata confused him and led him astray so that he could not see how God could be born of a woman and crucified. Therefore, Eutyches' opposite heresy must have been that he did, indeed, hold Christ for God and man but would not give the idiomata of the divine nature to the man, just as Nestorius would not ascribe the idiomata of the human nature to God, in the one Person of Christ. This is what is meant by saying that the two are opposite and contradictory.

If it was his intention simply to deny the human nature in Christ, then his heresy is not the opposite of that of Nestorius, but he must have been raving mad to think that in Christ deity and humanity were united and yet that only one nature, the divine, remained. That would have been opposed not only to Nestorius but to all believers and unbelievers, to all heretics and true Christians, to all heathen and all men; for no man ever taught a thing like that. Nevertheless they describe these matters in such a way as to testify that Eutyches confessed that in Christ deity and humanity were united in one Person, and yet they say the other thing also, as though they intended that nobody should understand it; therefore we will not understand it. Why should we, when we have a better understanding of it already. Eutyches said in the council that he had not spoken words like those of which they accused him when he was said to have denied the human nature. From this one can mark that he was in error and did not wish to deny the human nature in Christ. But if I were Doctor Luther, I would like to hear from these papal writers how they themselves could believe their own words, when they said that Nestorius held that there were two persons in Christ and yet only one person, and that Eutyches held that there were two natures in Christ and yet only one nature. I think, indeed, that they, too, are Nestorian and Eutychian logicians; I say nothing about their theology; perhaps they are compelled to be antilogicians.

To come back to the council! We find that here, too, this council established no new article of faith, and so cannot be used as a proof that councils have power to load new articles of faith upon the Church. For this article is far more abundantly and mightily grounded in Scripture, as in John 5:27, "The Father hath given power to the Son to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man." Here, according to Eutyches' opinion, Christ would have had to say, "Because he is the Son of God." For to execute judgment is an idiom of the divine nature and not of the human nature; but Christ ascribes it to His human nature, the Son of man, i.e., the son of the Virgin Mary. In Matthew 22:43, also, Christ asks the Pharisees how it agrees that David calls Christ "Lord," though He is to be his son and his seed. "If He is David's son, or seed, how, then, does He sit at the right hand of God?" Here Eutyches would have had to say that not David's seed, but only God's son can sit at the right hand of God. Nevertheless he confesses that David's son and God's Son are one person; but where the person sits, there sits God's Son and David's. Eutyches did not see this consequence, and therefore had to let men think that he held Christ to be not a man, but only a divine person and nature, though this was not what he meant.

In a word, all the prophets and all the Scriptures which ascribe to Christ, or Messiah, an everlasting kingdom and redemption from sin, death, and hell are all against Eutyches, for they all say that "the

seed of the woman shall trample on the head of the serpent," (Genesis 3:15), that is, shall overcome sin, death, devil, hell; and these are idiomatics of divine nature, not of the woman's seed. And all the world is to be blessed through the seed of Abraham (Genesis 22:18), that is, sin, death, hell, the curse of God, are to be taken away, and these, too, are idiomatics not of Abraham's seed, but of divine nature. Later on, the glorious, mighty prophecies of David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the prophets say of David's seed that he shall establish eternal righteousness, that is, abolish sin, death, and hell; these are idiomatics of divine majesty and nature, and yet they are ascribed, throughout the Scriptures, to the son of David, Christ, the son of the Virgin Mary. Even though I have not this council or do not understand it aright, nevertheless, I have these Scriptures and understand them aright, and it is the duty of the council to hold what they teach; and for me that is more certain than all councils.

Anyone who will may read further into the story of this council; I have read myself into a bad humor with it. There is in it so much quarreling and disturbance and disorder that I must almost believe the great Nazianzen, the teacher of St. Jerome, who lived before this time and saw better councils and fathers, and yet says, "To tell the truth, one ought to flee all the councils of bishops, for I have never seen any good results from the councils, not even the abolition of evil, but only ambition, disputes over precedence, etc." I wonder how it happens that they have not long since made him out the worst of heretics because of these words. But what he says is true. In the councils the bishops are ambitious, proud, quarrelsome, and violent; and you will find that in this council, though it is not necessary, to be sure, that all who teach correctly or uphold correct doctrine shall be holy men. Balaam was a true prophet and Judas was a true apostle and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat and teach correctly. We, too, therefore, must have for our faith something more and something more certain than the councils. That something more and more certain is the Holy Scriptures.

That he speaks the truth when he says that he has seen no good result of the councils, the histories plainly teach us. For before the Nicene Council the Arian heresy was a jest compared with the misery that it created after the council, as was said above. So it went also with the other councils, as in the cases of Macedonius and Nestorius, for the party that was condemned held together all the more firmly, wanted to justify itself and be uncondemned, and fanned the flame more violently than before against the councils, which did not rightly understand them. So it happened to us Germans at the Council of Constance. The pope was made subject to the council and was deposed by it and his tyranny and simony were severely condemned. But since that time the pope is possessed with seven worse devils and his tyranny and simony have just gotten a good start. He devours and robs and steals all the endowed places, the monastic houses and the churches; he sells indulgences, grace, law, God, Christ, and the Holy Ghost; he betrays, ruins, and disturbs emperor and kings; he makes war, sheds blood, and kills bodies and souls, so that one must comprehend what god it is who keeps house at Rome. This is the reward we Germans have for deposing and reforming the popes at the Council of Constance. I think, indeed, that this was the right end for this council. Depose more popes next time, and reform them, if seven devils are not enough for them, so that there may be seventy-seven legions of them to fight against you; if, indeed, there is any room there for more devils to get into them and they are not already filled up with devils. This was the reformation of the Council of Constance.

We now have the four chief councils and the causes for which they were held. The first, at Nicaea, defended the deity of Christ against Arius; the second, at Constantinople, defended the deity of the Holy Ghost against Macedonius; the third, at Ephesus, defended the one Person of Christ against Nestorius; the fourth, at Chalcedon, defended the two natures in Christ against Eutyches: — but they

did not thereby establish any new article of faith. For these four articles are established far more abundantly and powerfully in St. John's Gospel alone, even though the other evangelists and St. Paul and St. Peter had written nothing about them, though all these, together with the prophets, teach them and testify mightily to them. These four councils the bishops of Rome, according to their decree, hold to be like the four evangelists, as though these matters, together with all articles of faith, did not stand far more richly in the Gospels and as though the councils had not taken them from the Gospels; so finely do those asses of bishops understand what the Gospels and the councils are! And if these four chief councils do not intend to make or establish anything new in the way of articles of faith, and cannot do so, as they themselves confess, how much less can such power be ascribed to the other councils, which must be held of smaller account, if these four are to be called the chief councils.

This is the way in which we are to understand all other councils also, whether large or small, even though there were many thousands of them. They set up nothing new, either in faith or good works, but rather, as the highest judges, and greatest bishops under Christ, they defend the ancient faith and the ancient good works, though, to be sure, they do deal besides with temporal, transient, changing things, to meet the need of their own times. This, however, has to be done, even outside the councils, in the parishes and schools. But if they do establish anything new in faith or good works, be assured that the Holy Spirit is not there, but the unholy spirit with his angels. For they can do this only without the Holy Scriptures and outside of them, nay, contrary to the Holy Scriptures, as Christ says, "He that is not with me is against me." The Holy Ghost can neither know nor do anything more than St. Paul, when he says, in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "I know nothing save Jesus Christ, the crucified," and the Holy Ghost is not given us in order to put anything into our minds or teach us anything apart from Christ, but he is to teach us and call to our remembrance all that is in Christ, in whom lie hidden all treasures of wisdom and understanding. He is to make Him clear to us, as Christ says, and not praise up our reason or opinion, or make it an idol.

Therefore, such councils apart from the Scriptures are councils of Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod, as the apostles say in Acts 4:26, *Convenerunt in unum adversus Dominum*, "They take counsel, or hold councils, against God and His Christ"; and all the evangelists say that the high-priests and Pharisees took counsel, or assembled councils, how they might kill Christ, as David had prophesied in Psalm 2:1, saying that they would take counsel against God and His Anointed and call Christ's preaching "bands" and "cords," and break them asunder and cast them from them. This is what most of the pope's councils have been. In them he sets himself up in Christ's stead as head of the Church, puts the Holy Scriptures beneath him and rends them asunder, as his decrees show. Thus at Constance he condemned both kinds in the sacrament and before that he tore marriage asunder, forbade it and condemned it, and actually crucified and buried the Christ.

And now we come to the main question because of which I am writing this book. What is a council, or what is its work? If it is not to set up new articles of faith, then all the world has heretofore been wretchedly deceived, for it knows nothing else and holds nothing else except that what a council decides is an article of faith, or at least a work necessary to salvation, so that he who does not keep the council's decree can never be saved, because he is disobedient to the Holy Ghost, the council's Master. Ah, well! I think that my conscience is clear, and no council, as I said above, has power to establish new articles of faith, because the four chief councils did not do so. Therefore I shall here speak my opinion and answer the main question as follows.

First. A council has no power to establish new articles of faith, despite the fact that the Holy Ghost is in it; for even the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem (Acts 16:1) established nothing new in the way of faith, but only St. Peter's conclusion, viz., that all their ancestors had believed this article. A man must be saved without the law, only through the grace of Christ.

Second. A council has the power, and is bound, to suppress and condemn new articles of faith according to Holy Scripture and the ancient faith as the Council of Nicaea condemned the new article of Arius, that of Constantinople the new article of Macedonius, that of Ephesus the new article of Nestorius, that of Chalcedon the new article of Eutyches.

Third. A council has no power to command new good works. Nor can it do so, for all good works are already abundantly commanded in Holy Scripture. What more good works can one imagine than those which the Holy Ghost has taught in the Scriptures, such as humility, patience, gentleness, mercy, faithfulness, faith, kindness, peace, obedience, selfcontrol, chastity, giving, serving, etc., in a word, love? What good work can one imagine that is not included in the command of love? If it is outside of love, what kind of a good work is it? For love, according to St. Paul's teaching, is the fulfillment of all commandments, as Christ Himself also says in Matthew 5:44.

Fourth. A council has the power, and is bound, to condemn wicked works that are contrary to love, according to the Scriptures and the ancient way of the Church, and to rebuke the individuals who are guilty of them, as the decree of the Nicene Council rebukes the ambition of other vices of the bishops and deacons.

In this connection we ought to speak of two kinds of wicked works. Some of them, such as avarice, murder, adultery, ambition, and the like, are openly wicked. These we find condemned by the councils, as they are also condemned, without the councils, in Holy Scripture and are punished by the temporal law. But beside these there are other new good works, which are not called wicked, but are beautifully wicked, fine vices, holy idolatries, invented by the special saints or even the mad saints; in a word, they are a white devil, a bright Satan. These wicked works (I should rather say, these new good works!) the councils ought to condemn to the uttermost and as sharply as possible, for they are perilous to the Christian faith and are an offense to the Christian life, and cause both to be deformed or despised.

So when a weak Christian sees or hears a holy hermit or monk who leads a life of peculiar strictness beyond the old, ordinary Christian way, he stumbles, and thinks that, compared with this new saint, the life of all the old Christians is nothing, or is entirely worldly and perilous. That is the source of this abomination that has made its way into all the world: a Christian burgher or peasant who has a true, pure Christian faith toward Christ and practices the true, old, good works, such as humility, patience, mildness, chastity, love, and faithfulness to his neighbor, and diligence and care in his work, office, calling, and station, — such a man is a real old saint and Christian; but he must stink and be nothing at all compared with the new saint who, underneath his special dress, food, fasting, bed, outward conduct, and the like new works, is a proud, ambitious, wrathful, impatient, hateful, lustful, presumptuous, false Christian. Such people St. Paul himself calls proud and self-willed saints, who choose for themselves a new kind of life and a new way of serving God (a way that God has not commanded!) over and above the Christian Church's old, true, common way of living and serving God, which God has ordained and commanded.

The elect may be preserved amid these new and offensive works, but they will have to take off this new skin and be saved in the old Christian skin. This is what happened to St. Anthony when he had to

learn that a shoemaker or tanner in Alexandria was a better Christian than he with his monkery, and he confessed, also, that he had not progressed as far as that shoemaker. So it was, too, with the great saint, John, primus eremita, who prophesied for the Emperor Theodosius and was highly praised by St. Augustine. When the people, among them St. Jerome, admired the severity of his life, he gave this answer: — “Why do you look for anything special among us? Have you not something better in your parish-churches, where the Scriptures and the examples of prophets and apostles are preached to you?” That is taking off the cowl and subjecting oneself to Holy Scripture and praising only the common Christian way of life. Paphnutius also had to learn that he was on a level with a fiddler who had been a murderer, and with two wives who had lain with their husbands that very night, and had to say, “One must despise no rank in life.” The same thing happened to St. Bernard, to Bonaventura, and doubtless to many other good men; when they had to feel at last that their new holiness and monkery could not stand against sin and death, then they crept to the cross and were saved in the old Christian faith, without their new holiness, as the words of St. Bernard testify in many places.

In none of the councils, especially the four chief ones, do we find these new good works condemned, except that one or two small councils, especially that of twenty bishops at Gangra (the proceedings of which have recently been printed) have done something in the matter; but they have rather allowed this new holiness to get the upper hand until the Christian Church is scarcely recognizable any longer. They have acted like lazy gardeners who let the suckers get such headway that the old, true tree has to suffer, or be ruined. Even as early as the time of St. Anthony monkery had made such headway that in the days of the fourth council there was already an abbey near Constantinople of which Eutyches was abbot, though the monasteries were not the imperial castles of stone that they afterwards became. For they call him archimandrite, and mandre is said to mean a simple fence or hedge such as is made of bushes and plants and shoots to keep in cattle or as a pen for sheep; and Eutyches, as the head of it, lived, with his followers, inside such a hedge, and led a separated life. From this one can understand what a monastery was when as yet there was no monastery enclosed with walls.

But just as happens in a garden where the suckers grow far higher than the true, fruit-bearing shoots, so it goes also in the garden of the Church; these new saints, who grow out at the side and yet want to be Christians and live from the sap of the tree, increase more mightily than the true, old saints of the Christian faith and life. And now that I have come to that, I must tell what I have noticed in the histories. St. Bernard was an abbot for thirty-six years, and in those years founded one hundred and sixty houses of his order, and everyone knows what kind of monasteries the Cistercians have; they may have been smaller, perhaps, at that time, but now they are regular principedoms. I will say still more. At that time, i.e., in the reigns of Emperors Henry III, IV, and V, within a period of twenty years, many princely monastic orders sprang up, — Grandiomontensians, Reformed Regular Canons, Carthusians and Cistercians. And what has come of it in the four hundred years since then? I verily believe that one might say it has rained and snowed monks, and it would be no wonder if there were no town or village left where there was not a monastic house or two, or at least a terminary or stationary. The histories blame Emperor Valentinian because he used monks in war. To be sure! The idle people were getting too many! We read also of some of the kings of France that they had to forbid men, especially serfs, to become monks, for they sought freedom under the cowl and everybody was running into the monasteries.

The world wants to be cheated. If you want to catch many robins or other birds, you must put an owl on the trap or lime-rod and you will get them. So when the devil wants to catch Christians, he has to set up a monk's cowl or, as Christ calls it, a sour, hypocritical face; then we wonder more at these owls than at the true sufferings, blood, wounds, death, and resurrection, endured because of our sin, which we see and hear in Christ our Lord. Thus we fall, in a crowd and with all our might, away from the Christian faith and upon the new holiness, that is, we fall into the snares and traps of the devil. We must always have something new. Christ's death and resurrection are old, and so are faith and love; they are common and therefore can have no more value, but we must have new things to tickle our ears, as St. Paul says. It serves us right, since our ears itch so that we can no longer endure the old, real truth, *ut acervimus*, that we load upon ourselves great heaps of new doctrines, as has happened and will continue to happen. The later councils, especially the papal councils (for they were afterwards almost all papal) not only left these new good works uncondemned, but exalted them high above the old good works throughout the world, so that the pope canonized, or exalted, many saints from the monastic orders.

At first it had, indeed, a fine appearance, but at last there came out of it a horrible abomination, as everyone added to it from day to day. St. Francis' beginning looked fine, but the thing has now become so raw that they even put cowls on the dead, so that the dead may be saved in them. Is that not a terrible thing? That is the way it is when one begins to fall away from Christ; when one has started to fall, he cannot stop. What happened in our own time in the Netherlands? Madame Margaret commanded that after her death she should be made a nun. It was done. They dressed her in a nun's garb, sat her at a table, offered her food and drink, and treated her as a princess is treated at table. Thus she did penance for her sin and became a holy nun. But when this had lasted some days, the pious Emperor Charles heard of it and had it stopped. If he had not done so, I believe that this example would have flooded the whole world. This is what the new holiness does and must do because it wants to improve on the true, old Christian holiness, which does not play the fool in this manner, but abides and constantly practices faith, love, humility, self-control, patience, etc., so that we see in it nothing abominable, but only lovely, gracious, quiet, sober, useful examples, pleasing to God and man. But the new holiness makes a great uproar with peculiar, new kinds of conduct so as to entice light souls to itself; it makes great pretensions, but there is nothing back of them, as St. Peter says. Again, Gerson says of the Carthusians that they do right when they hold so stiffly to their rule as to eat no meat, even though they have to die for lack of it. Now in a case of this kind, if a godly physician observes that the sick man would be helped by a chicken-stew or a bit of meat, and not otherwise, they do not follow the physician, but the sick man must sooner die. Here I rather praise St. Augustine, who puts it into his rule that the physician's advice is to be asked, and says, "They are not all of equal ability, and therefore are not all to be held alike." That is right fine *epieikeia* and it does not compel them to remain monks forever, for the monastery was no prison, but a voluntary association of some priests. Dr. Staupitz once told me that he had heard the bishop of Worms, who was a Dahlberg, say that if St. Augustine had written nothing but his rule, we should have to say that he was an able and wise man. That is true. For he would have utterly condemned these Carthusians as murderers and their monasteries as veritable places of death, as in truth they are. At Erfurt I myself saw in the Carthusian monastery a sick man walking with a crutch. He was still a young man. When I asked him whether they did not relieve him of duty in the choir and the watch, he said sadly, "I must go on." f409

It has served us right, however, God sent us His Son to be teacher and savior; not satisfied with that, He himself preaches from His high throne in heaven and says, *Hunc audite*, "Hear ye Him." With the apostles, we ought to fall down and think that we heard nothing else in all the world; but we allow the Father and the Son to preach in vain and go on and invent our own preaching. Therefore it goes as Psalm 81:11 says, "My people hearken not to my voice: — so I let them go after the imagination of their heart." Thence come such fine *ethelothreskeiai* and *apheidiai* (Colossians 2:16), "Self-chosen spirituality and mercilessness to our own bodies," so that we destroy our own lives, though God has commanded that we are to care for the body, and not to kill it. Do you not think that if according to St. Augustine's rule and St. Paul's doctrine they had let the physicians advise them about the bodies of the religious, especially women, it would have helped many a fine person, who must otherwise have gone mad or died, as experience taught us? But this has been the time of wrath, in which this new and mad holiness has had to reign, as a punishment on the world.

Fifth. A council has no power to impose upon Christians new ceremonies, — such as feast-days, festivals, food, drink, garb, — that are to be observed on pain of mortal sin or at peril of conscience. If they do this, there stands St. Augustine to Januarius, and says, *Hoc genus liberas habet observationes*, and Christ appointed few ceremonies. Since a council has no power to impose them, we have power to omit them; nay, St. Paul forbids us to keep them, in Colossians 2:16 saying, "Let not your conscience be troubled over a part of days and fasts, food or drink, etc." f412

Sixth. A council has the power, and is bound, to condemn such ceremonies according to the Scriptures, for they are unchristian and set up a new idolatry, or service of God that God has not commanded, but forbidden.

Seventh. A council has no power to interfere in worldly law and government, for St. Paul says, "He who will serve God in spiritual strife must cast off worldly affairs."

Eighth. A council has the power, and is bound, to condemn attempts of this kind and new laws, according to the Scriptures, that is, to cast the pope's decretals into the fire.

Ninth. A council has no power to make statutes or decrees that seek nothing else than tyranny, that is, statutes which give the bishops authority and power to command what they will and make everybody tremble and obey. On the contrary, it has the power, and is bound, to condemn such things according to Holy Scripture, 1 Peter 5:1, "Ye shall not lord it over the people"; and Christ says *Vos non sic*, "He that would be highest, let him be your servant."

Tenth. A council has power to appoint some ceremonies, provided, first, that they do not strengthen the bishops' tyranny! second, that they are needful and profitable to the people and provide a fine and orderly discipline and way of life. Thus it is needful to have some days and also some places for people to assemble; likewise definite hours for preaching, distributing the sacraments, and for praying, singing, and praising and thanking God. So St. Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 14:40, "Let all things be done in order and decently."

With such measures the bishops' tyranny is not sought, but the need, the profit, and the order of the people. In short, we must have such things, and cannot do without them, if the Church is to abide.

Yet if anyone from necessity, illness, hindrance, or whatever it may be, can sometimes not keep these rules, it is not a sin. It is all for his benefit, not for that of the bishop and if he is a Christian, he will not seek his own harm. What difference does it make to God if a man does not will to be in such an assembly? Every man will find that out for himself. In a word, if a man is a Christian he is not

bound by such ordinances; he will keep them rather than break them, if he can be unhindered. Therefore, no law can be made for him about such matters; he would be glad to do more than such a law would demand. But if a man haughtily and proudly and wantonly despises them, let him go; for such a man will despise higher laws, God's laws or man's.

Perhaps you might say here, "What will you finally make of the councils if you clip their powers so close? In this way a pastor, or even a schoolteacher (to say nothing of parents!) would have more power over the Church than a council." I reply: Do you think, then, that the offices of pastor and school-teacher are so small that they might not be compared with the councils? If there were no pastors or bishops, where would a council be gathered from? If there were no schools, where would we get pastors? I speak of school-teachers who not only teach children and young people the arts, but train them in Christian doctrine and faithfully impress it upon them, and of such pastors as teach God's Word faithfully and purely. I can easily show that the poor, insignificant pastor at Hippo, St. Augustine taught more than all the councils (to say nothing of the most holy popes at Rome, whom I fear to mention!) I will go even farther and say that more is given us in the Children's Creed than in all the councils, and the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments teach more than all the councils teach; and not only do they teach, but they guard against the preaching of anything new that is contrary to the old doctrine. God help me, how the papists will tear these words out of their connection, shout them to bits, torture them to death, and prove that they are self-contradictory, but meanwhile they will let the reasons for my saying them remain; for they are pious and honorable people, who can do nothing but calumniate and lie, and I really ought to be afraid of them; but then God would not forgive me. I cannot do it and must let them go on slandering and lying.

But now let you and me talk about this thing. What can a council do, or what is its value? Listen to their own words. Anathematizamus, that is their office; "We condemn!" Indeed, they speak far more humbly and say, not, "We condemn," but Anathematizat ecclesia, "The holy Christian Church condemns." The council's condemnation would not frighten me, but the holy Church's condemnation would slay me in an instant because of the Man who says, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world." This Man's condemnation is not to be endured! But the councils, in citing the holy Christian Church as the true supreme Judge on earth, confess that they are not arbitrary judges, but that the judge is the Church, which preaches, believes, and confesses the Holy Scriptures, as we shall hear. A thief or murderer could enslave the judge, if he were only an individual man, but the law and the land are united in the judge and he is their servant; of these the criminal must be afraid.

A council, then, is nothing else than a consistory or court in which the judges, after hearing the parties, give their verdict, but with proper humility, saying, "According to the law our office is anathematizare, 'to condemn'; not, however, according to our own idea or will, or to newly invented law, but according to the old law, which is recognized as law throughout the empire." Thus a council condemns even a heretic, not according to its own opinion, but according to the imperial law, i.e., according to the Holy Scriptures, which they confess to be the law of the holy Church. This law, empire, and judge is verily to be feared on peril of eternal damnation, for the law is God's Word, the empire is God's Church, and the judge is the officer, or servant, of both.

The servant, or judge, of this empire is not, however, the council alone, but every pastor and school-master. Moreover a council cannot exercise its judicial office everlastingly and without interruption, for the bishops cannot always remain gathered together, but can only come together in certain times of need and anathematize, or be judges. So, if an Arius in Alexandria grows too strong for his pastor

or bishop attaches the people to him, and draws in other pastors and people, even from the country, so that the pastor at Alexandria gets the worst of it and in his judicial office can no longer defend the law of the empire, that is, the true Christian faith; — in such a need and at such a time, the other pastors and bishops ought to run with all their might to the help of the pastor of Alexandria against Arius, defend the true Christian faith, and condemn Arius in order to save others, so that such a miserable state of affairs may not get the upper hand entirely. If the pastors were unable to come, the good Emperor Constantine ought to contribute his power, and help the bishops together. It is just as when a fire breaks out; if the man who lives in the house cannot subdue it, all the neighbors ought to run together and help put it out; and if they do not run together, the government must help, and command that they must run together, and anathematize or condemn the fire, so that the other houses may be saved.

The council, therefore, is the great servant, or judge, for this empire and its law; but when the time of need is past, it has completed its duty. So, in temporal government, the high, great judges have to take hold, when the lower, smaller courts would be too weak to resist the evil, until the matter comes, at last, to the highest, greatest court, the diet, which cannot be perpetual, but breaks up again, when the necessity has been met, and commits the case to the lower courts again. At the diets, however, it happens now and then that new laws and more laws must be made and old ones must be altered and amended or even abolished, and one cannot speak perpetually of a perpetual law; for this is a temporal government, which rules over temporal things that alter and change, and therefore the laws that are made for these temporal things must also change. If the thing for which the law is made is no longer there, then the law is nothing. Thus the city of Rome no longer has the ranks and the organization that it once had, and therefore the laws that were made for these things are dead and no longer in force. Transient things have transient laws.

But in the empire of the Church the rule is, “God’s Word abideth forever.” Men must judge according to it and not make new or other words of God, or establish new or other articles of faith. Therefore pastors and schoolmasters are the lowly, but daily, permanent, perpetual judges who incessantly anathematize, that is, guard against the devil and his raging. A council, since it is a great judge, must make old and great rascals good, or kill them, but it cannot produce any others; a pastor and a school-master have to do with small, young rascals, and are constantly producing new people to be bishops and, if necessary, to form councils. A council chops the great limbs off the trees or roots the evil trees out altogether; but a pastor and a school-master produce young trees and saplings in the garden. They have a precious office and work and are the Church’s finest jewels; they preserve the Church. Therefore, all lords should do their part to see that pastors and schools are preserved; for if we cannot have councils, the parishes and schools, small though they are, are perpetual and useful councils.

One sees how highly the ancient emperors prized the parishes and schools by the richness of the endowments which they gave them. That these were originally schools is shown by the names, provost, dean, scolasticus, cantor, canons, vicars, custodians, etc. But what has come out of them? Lord God! Would that they still were willing to do something, remain what they were, keep what they had, were princes and lords, but introduced hours of study again and compelled the canons, vicars, and choir-pupils to listen to lectures on Holy Scripture, so that they might again have something of the form of schools in order that we could have pastors and bishops, and they might be helping to rule the Church! O Lord God! What immeasurable good they could do the Church! And God would permit them to have their wealth and power, if they were to amend their shameful life!

But our sighs and complaints are vain. They neither hear nor see; they let the parishes be laid waste and the people, without God's Word, become rough and wild. I have heard from people whom I must believe that in many dioceses there are two, three, and four hundred good parishes vacant. Is not that a terrible, horrible thing among Christians? May God in heaven have mercy on us and hear our wretched sighings and laments! Amen.

To finish, at last, this matter of the councils, I hold that everyone can get from what has been said, an understanding of what a council is, and what its rights, powers, office, and work are, also of what councils are true and what are false councils. Their duty is to confess and defend the old faith against new articles of faith; also not to set up new good works against the old good works, but to defend the old good works against the new good works. To be sure, he who defends the old faith against the new faith, also defends the old good works against the new good works. For as is the faith, so are its fruits, viz., good works, though the two councils did not see this consequence; otherwise they would have condemned Eutyches not only because of the faith, which they did, but also because of his monkery, which they did not. On the contrary, they rather confirmed the latter and thus proved that they were poor logicians, stating a premise and not drawing the conclusion, and this becoming a plague to the whole world, for they had the same fault with regard to good works that Nestorius and Eutyches had with regard to faith. That is to say, God wills not only to make us children in faith, but in logic, too, He will hold us fools and count us as Eutyches and Nestorius, so that he may humble us. The theology of Nestorius and Eutyches was indeed condemned, but their bad logic always remains in the world, as at the beginning, affirming the premise and not admitting the conclusion. Why say much about it? Though you have all the councils, that does not yet make you a Christian; they give you too little. And though you have all the fathers, they, too, do not give you less than enough. You must go to the Holy Scriptures, where everything is abundantly given, or to the catechism, where it is given in brief; and there you will find far more than in all the councils and Fathers.

Finally. A council should have to do only with matters of faith, and that only when the faith is in special need. Openly evil works can be condemned, and good works administered at home by temporal government, pastors, and parents. But false good works belong to matters of faith, because they corrupt the true faith. Therefore they, too, belong in the council if the pastors are too weak, though the councils, as I have said, did not trouble themselves about them, except one or two of the little councils, like that at Gangra, mentioned above. Ceremonies ought to be left out of the councils entirely, back in the parishes, where they are at home, nay, in the schools, and the school-masters ought to be the masters of ceremonies, along with the pastors, for all the rest of the people learn the ceremonies from those who go to school, without rules and bother.

For example, what, when, and how the school-boys sing or pray in church, the people learn afterwards, and what they sing by the bier or at the grave, the others also learn. If they kneel down and fold their hands when the school-master raps with his stick at the singing of the *Et homo factus est*, the crowd does it after them, and if they doff their hats and bow their knees whenever the name of Jesus Christ is mentioned, and perform other Christian acts, the crowd does these things after them, without any preaching, moved by living examples. But under the pope all the ceremonies have been taken out of the schools and parishes except where the pope has sought his own tyranny, with foods, fasts, feasts, etc. Yet here, too, we must use moderation, in order that, in the end, the ceremonies may not become too many. Above all, however, we must see to it that they are not considered necessary to salvation, but only as serving outward discipline and order. They can be changed at any time and cannot be commanded as perpetual laws in the Church, as that ass of a

pope does, and set forth in the books with tyrannical threats; for they are entirely external, bodily, transitory, changeable things.

According to this, we would have, in our time, matters that would be more than important enough for the calling of a council. For we poor, wretched Christians, weak in faith and real Misergi; that is, “work-haters,” — those of us who are left — would have to accuse the pope and his followers on the ground of the article of St. Peter, of which you have heard before, viz., that it is tempting God when one lays upon believers intolerable burdens, which neither we nor our forefathers have been able to bear, and which the pope and his followers, especially, will not touch with one finger. St. Peter, indeed, speaks of the law of Moses, which God Himself commanded, but the pope has oppressed us with his foul, dirty, stinking burdens, so that the holy Church has become his privy chamber, and what issues from him has had to be worshiped as God. Moreover he has set fire to and burned up, not one or two churches, as did Arius and his like, but the whole Christian Church, and has utterly wiped out, so far as he could, St. Peter’s old, true article of faith; for that we must be saved only by the grace of Christ, as St. Peter testifies and as all Christendom from the beginning of the world has been saved, all patriarchs, prophets, kings, saints, etc.: — this he calls heresy, and he has condemned this article steadily, from the beginning, and cannot stop.

We call and cry for a council and beg the whole Church for counsel and help against this arch-burner of churches and slayer of Christians, so that we may get back again this article of St. Peter. But we demand, also, that no Nestorian or Eutychian logic be used, which admits or confesses one point, but denies the consequence, or other point. We demand the whole article, full and pure, as it was declared by St. Peter and taught by St. Paul. We demand, in a word, that everything be condemned whose condemnation is implied in this article; or, as St. Peter calls it, “the intolerable impossible burden,” and St. Augustine, “the countless burdens which the bishops have laid upon the Church.” What good does it do to admit the first point, viz., that we must be justified and saved only through the grace of Christ, and not allow the second point to follow from it? St. Paul says, “If it is grace, then it is not works; if works, then it is not grace”; and St. Peter, “If it is grace, then it is not the intolerable burden; if it is the intolerable burden, then it is not grace, and it is tempting God.” St. Augustine, too, says that since Christ would not burden the Church with many ceremonies, nay, would rather that it be free; therefore, it was not His will to have it oppressed by the countless burdens of the bishops, by means of which the Church has become worse than the Jews, who were burdened with God’s laws but not, like the Church, with human, presumptuous, arbitrary ordinances.

We would have this logic of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Augustine, which is the logic of the Holy Ghost. It admits the whole argument and does not break it up in Nestorian fashion, allowing the one point to be true and not allowing the other to be true, though the second follows from the first. Otherwise it would be like what is written of some of the kings of Israel and Judah, who established again the true worship of God but did not abolish the “high-places” and other altars and other worship. The prophet Elijah calls this “limping between the two sides,” and we Germans call it “wanting two brothers-in-law with one sister.” They wanted to give one people two kinds of gods, or, if they reformed things, to let another, strange god stay alongside the only God. They were stupid, Nestorian logicians, confessing that only one God must be worshiped and yet not seeing that it must follow (or not letting it follow) that all other gods must be put away or they could not have the one God. Therefore, in the council which we demand we shall not tolerate any Nestorius, who gives us one thing and takes from us the other, without which we cannot keep what he gives us and is a regular give-and-taker. For if it is granted us that the grace of Christ alone saves us, and if the

consequence of that is not granted us, viz., that works do not save us, but it is maintained that works are necessary for satisfaction or for righteousness, that is the same thing as taking from us the first thing, which was granted us, namely that grace alone saves us, without works. Thus we keep nothing, and the evil has become only worse.

I will say it in plain German! The pope, in a council, should not only utterly abolish all his tyranny of human commandments, but also hold with us that even the good works done according to God's commandments cannot help men to righteousness, to the blotting out of sin, to the attainment of God's grace, but that this can be done only by faith in Christ, who is a king of righteousness in us, by His precious blood, death, and resurrection, whereby He has blotted out sin for us, made satisfaction, reconciled God, and redeemed us from death, wrath and hell. Therefore he should condemn and burn all his bulls, decretals, books about indulgence, purgatory, monasticism, saint-worship, and pilgrimages, together with all the countless lies and idolatries, because they rage directly against this article of St. Peter's. He should also return all that has bought, stolen, robbed, plundered, or won, especially his falsely invented primacy, which he boasts as so necessary to salvation that no one can be saved who is not subject to him; for the pope's hat did not die for my sins and its name is not Christ and all Christians, before him and under him, have been made holy and saved without his hat.

This, I think, is a case important enough for the holding of a stately, sharp, mighty council. Emperor and kings ought to do their part here, and force the pope into it, if he is unwilling, as the emperors did in the four chief councils. But not all the bishops, abbots, monks, doctors, and the worthless rag-picker's rabble and great tail ought to come to it. If so, it will be a council that spends the first year in arriving and in quarreling about who shall have the highest place, who precede and who follow; the second year in reveling, banqueting, racing, and fencing; the third year in other matters, burning a John Hus or two, perhaps; meanwhile the cost would be mounting until it would be enough to support a campaign against the Turks. On the contrary, it would be necessary to summon from all lands the people who were really learned in the Scriptures and whose minds and hearts were seriously concerned with God's honor, the Christian faith, the welfare of souls, and the peace of the world. Among them there should also be some intelligent and faithful men of the worldly estate, for the case concerns them, too. If Sir Hans von Schwarzenberg were living, he could be trusted, and men like him. It would be sufficient if there were three hundred of them altogether, picked men, to whom land and people could be trusted. So the first council had only three hundred and eighteen members from all the lands which the Turks and our monarchs now rule, though seventy of them were false and Arians; the second, at Constantinople, had one hundred and fifty; the third, at Ephesus, two hundred; the fourth, at Chalcedon, had six hundred and thirty, almost as many as the others put together, and they were quite unequal to the fathers of Nicaea and Constantinople.

Moreover, the matters of all countries, which no one can or will judge, and old, obsolete, bad practices must not be raked up and all dumped on the neck of the council. There must be a Constantine there, who will rake up all these things and throw them into the fire, telling them to let these matters be judged and decided at home, in their own lands, but bidding them also get down to business and get away as quickly as possible. Then the pope's heresy, nay, his abominations, would be read out, point by point, and all of it shown to have been invented, contrary to St. Peter's article and the ancient, true faith of the Church, which has held St. Peter's article since the beginning of the world; and it would be quickly condemned.

“Nay,” you say, “such a council is never to be hoped for.” I think so myself, but if one is going to talk about it, and demand a council or wish for one, then one must wish for such a council, or else let it all go and wish for none, and keep quiet. The first council, at Nicaea, was such a council, and the second, at Constantinople, and these examples ought to be followed. And I am citing them to show that it would be the duty of emperor and kings, since they, too, are Christians, to assemble such a council for the rescue of many thousand souls whom the pope, with his tyranny and his avoidance of a council (so far as in him lies!), allows to go to destruction, and who, by means of a council, could all be brought back to St. Peter’s article and the true, ancient Christian faith, though they must otherwise be lost. They cannot get this doctrine of St. Peter’s, because they neither hear nor see anything of it.

Even though other monarchs would do nothing toward such a great council, the Emperor Charles and the German princes could hold a provincial council in Germany. Some think that a schism would grow out of that; but if we did our part and earnestly sought only God’s honor and the welfare of souls, who knows whether God could not yet turn the hearts of the other monarchs, so that in time they would praise and accept the judgment of this council; for it cannot happen suddenly. But if Germany were to accept it, it would have an echo in other lands also, whither it cannot, or can hardly, reach without a great preacher like a council, and a strong voice which reaches far.

Ah, well! If we must despair of a council, let us commend the case to the true judge, our merciful God. Meanwhile, we shall further the little councils and young councils, the parishes and schools, and press St. Peter’s article in every possible way, and maintain it against all the damned new articles of faith and new good works, with which the pope has flooded the world. I shall comfort myself when I see the children wearing bishop’s masks, thinking that God makes, and will make real bishops of these playbishops and, on the other hand, will hold those who, according to their name, ought be real bishops as play-bishops and mockers at His majesty; as Moses says, “I will make them wroth with that which is not my people and move them to bitterness with a foolish people, because they have made me wroth with that which is not God.” It will not be the first time that He has cast off bishops; He threatened it in Hosea 4:6, “Because thou rejectest the doctrine, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt not be my priest.” Et factum est ita, et ita fit. f433

Let that suffice about the councils. We shall now speak, at the end, about the Church.

PART 3

As they cry out “Fathers and Councils!” and do not know what fathers and councils are, but would only deafen us with the words, so they cry also about the Church; but as for saying what, who, or where the Church is, they do not render either the Church or God the service of asking the question or thinking about it. They would like to have men take them, — pope, cardinals, bishops, — for the Church and allow them, under this glorious name, to be nothing but pupils of the devil, who can practice nothing but knavery and rascality.

Well then, setting aside many writings and many divisions of the word church, we will this time stay by the Children’s Creed, which says, “I believe one holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints.” There the Creed indicates clearly what the Church is, namely, “a communion of saints,” that is, a group or assembly of such people as are Christians and holy. That is a Christian, holy group, or Church. But this word “church” is not German and does not convey the sense or idea that is to be taken from this article. In Acts 19:39, the chancellor calls ecclesia the assembly or people who had

run together in a crowd on the market-place, and says, "It can be settled in a regular assembly"; and again, "When he had thus spoken he dismissed the assembly." In this passage and others, *ecclesia*, or church, means nothing else than an assembled people, though they were heathen, and not Christians, just as the town-councilors summon the community to the town-hall. Now there are many peoples in the world, but the Christians are a peculiar people, a called people, and they are therefore called not simply *ecclesia*, "church," or "people," but *sancta, catholica, Christiana*, that is, "a Christian, holy people," which believes in Christ. Therefore, it is called a Christian people and has the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies it daily, not only through the forgiveness of sins, as the Antinomians foolishly believe, but by the abolition, purging out, and slaying of sins, and because of this they are called a holy people. "Holy Christian Church," then, is the same thing as "a people that is Christian and holy," or as we are accustomed to say, "the holy Christendom," or "the entire Christendom"; in the Old Testament it is called "God's people."

If these words had been used in the Creed: "I believe that there is a holy Christian people," it would have been easy to avoid all the misery that has come in with this blind, obscure word "church"; for the term "Christian, holy people" would have brought along with it, clearly and powerfully, both understanding and the judgment on the question "What is and what is not a church?" One who heard the words "Christian, holy people" would have been able to decide off-hand, "The pope is not a people, still less a holy Christian people." So, too, the bishops, priests, and monks are not a holy Christian people, for they do not believe in Christ, do not lead holy lives, and are the devil's wicked, shameful people. He who does not rightly believe in Christ, is not Christian or a Christian, and he who has not the Holy Ghost to resist sin, is not holy. Therefore they cannot be a Christian, holy people, that is, *sancta et catholica ecclesia*.

But because we use this blind word "church" in the Creed, the common man thinks of the stone house, which we call a church, and so the painters depict it; or if things turn out better, they paint the apostles, the disciples, and the Mother of God, as on Pentecost, with the Holy Ghost hovering over them. That will pass; but it is only the holy Christian Church of one time, the beginning. *Ecclesia*, however, ought to mean the holy Christian people, not only of the time of the apostles, who are long since dead, but clear to the end of the world, so that there is always living on earth a Christian, holy people in which Christ lives, works, and reigns per redemptionem, through grace and forgiveness of sins, the Holy Ghost per vivificationem et sanctificationem, through the daily purging out of sins and renewal of life, so that we do not remain in sin, but can and should lead a new life in good works of all kinds, such as the Ten Commandments, or Two Tables of Moses, require, and not in the old, wicked works: that is St. Paul's teaching. But the pope and his followers have applied both the name and the picture of the Church to themselves alone and to his shameful, accursed crowd, under this blind word *ecclesia*, "church."

Nevertheless they give themselves the right name when they call themselves *ecclesia* (if we interpret it so as to agree with their way of life), either *Romana* or *sancta*, and do not add (as, indeed, they cannot) *catholica*. For *ecclesia* means "a people," and that they are, as the Turks are also *ecclesia*, "a people." *Ecclesia Romana* means "a Roman people"; that, too, they are, and far more Roman than the heathen of ancient times were Roman. *Ecclesia Romana sancta* means "a holy Roman people," that, too, they are, for they have invented a far greater holiness than the Christian holiness, or than the holy Christian people have. Their holiness is a Roman holiness, *Romanae ecclesiae*, "a holiness of the Roman people," and they are now called even *sanctissimi, sacrosancti*, "the most holy," as Virgil speaks of *sacra fames, sacra hostia* and Plautus of *omnium sacerrimus*, for Christian holiness they

cannot endure. Therefore they cannot have the name "Christian Church" or "Christian people," if only for the reason that Christian Church is a name and Christian holiness a thing that is common to all churches and all Christians in the world; therefore, it is called catholicum. But this common name and common holiness they hold cheap and almost as nothing. In its stead, they have invented a peculiar, higher, different, better holiness than that of others. It is to be called sanctitas Romana et ecclesiae Romanae sanctitas, that is, "Roman holiness and the holiness of the Roman people." For Christian holiness, or the holiness of universal Christendom is that which comes when the Holy Spirit gives people faith in Christ, according to Acts 15:9, that is, He makes heart, soul, body, works and manner of life new and writes God's commandments, not on tables of stone, but on hearts of flesh according to 2 Corinthians 3:3. To speak plainly, according to the first Table He gives knowledge of God, so that those whom He enlightens can resist all heresies, in true faith, and overcome all false ideas and errors, and thus remain pure in faith against the devil. He also gives strength and comfort to feeble, despondent, weak consciences against the accusations and attacks of sin, so that souls are not despondent and do not despair and are not terrified at torment, pain, death, and God's wrath and judgment, but strengthened and comforted in hope, are bold and joyful in overcoming the devil. Thus He also gives true fear and love of God, so that we do not despise God and murmur or grow angry at His marvelous judgments, but love, praise, thank, and honor Him for all that happens. This is a new, holy life in the soul according to the First Table of Moses. It is called tres virtutes theologicas, "the three chief virtues of Christians," faith, hope, and love; and the Holy Ghost, who gives them and does and works these things for Christians whom Christ has won, is therefore called Sanctificator, or Vivificator. For the old Adam is dead and can do nothing, and must learn from the law that he can do nothing and is dead; he would not know it of himself.

In the Second Table, and in the body, He also sanctifies Christians and it is of His gift that they willingly obey parents and overlords, conduct themselves peacefully and humbly, are not wrathful or revengeful or malicious, not lewd, adulterers, unchaste, but pure and chaste, whether they have wives and children or not; and so forth. They do not steal or take usury, are not avaricious, do not cheat, etc., but work honorably, support themselves honestly, lend gladly, give and help whenever they can. Therefore, they do not lie, deceive, back-bite, but are kind, truthful, faithful, and reliable, and whatever else God's commandments require. This is done by the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies and awakens even the body to this new life, until it is completed in the life beyond. That is Christian holiness. There must always be such people on earth, even though there were but two or three of them, or they were only children; of old folk, there are, sad to say, very few! Those who are not of this sort ought not to count themselves Christians, and they ought not to be comforted, as one comforts Christians, with much talk about the forgiveness of sins and the grace of Christ, as the Antinomians do. For they, rejecting and not understanding the Ten Commandments, preach much about the grace of Christ instead. They strengthen and comfort those who remain in sins, telling them that they shall not fear sins or be terrified at them, since through Christ, these are all done away; and yet they see people going on, and let them go on, in open sins, without any renewal or improvement of their lives. From this one observes that they really do not understand the faith and Christ aright, and abolish Him even as they preach Him. For how can a man preach rightly about the works of the Holy Ghost in the First Table and speak about comfort, grace, forgiveness of sins, if he neither heeds nor practices the works of the Holy Ghost in the Second Table, which he can understand and experience, while he has never attempted or experienced those of the First Table? Therefore it is certain that they neither have nor understand either Christ or the Holy Ghost, and their talk is mere foam on their tongues, and they are, as has been said, good Nestorians and

Eutychians, who confess or teach Christ in the premise and deny Him in the conclusion, or *idionata*; that is, they teach Christ and destroy Him by teaching Him.

That, then, is Christian holiness. The pope will not have it; he must have a peculiar holiness that is far holier. Men must be taught chasubles, tonsures, cowls, garb, food, festivals, days, monkery, nunnery, masses, saintworship, and countless other points about external, bodily, transitory things. That one lives among these things without faith, fear of God, hope, love, and the other works of the Holy Ghost according to the First Table, but substitutes for them misbelief, uncertainty of heart, doubt, despising of God, impatience toward Him, a false trust in works (which is idolatry!) instead of a trust in the grace of Christ or His merits, making one's own satisfaction by works, even selling the surplus to others and taking in exchange the goods and wealth of all the world as though they had been well earned: all this is no hindrance and, in spite of it, a man can be holier than Christian holiness itself.

So in regard to the Second Table. It matters not that they teach disobedience to parents and superiors, or that they murder, fight, set people at odds, envy, hate, take revenge, are unchaste, lie, steal, take usury, deceive, and practice all kinds of knavery to the limit. Just throw a surplice over your head and you are holy with the Roman church's holiness, and can be saved without Christian holiness. But we will not concern ourselves about these filthy people; what we do for them is done in vain. *Venit ira dei super eos in finem*, as St. Paul says. We shall speak to one another about the Church.

The Creed teaches us that a people of God must be on earth and remain until the end of the world. This is an article of faith, which cannot cease until that comes which it believes, as Christ promises, "I am with you even unto the end of the world." But how can a poor, erring man know where this Christian, holy people in the world is? It ought to be in this life and on earth; for it believes that a heavenly nature and an eternal life are to come, but as yet it has them not; therefore it must be in this life and this world, and remain in them until the world's end. For it says, "I believe in another life," thereby confessing that it is not yet in that life, but believes in it, hopes for it, and loves it as its own true fatherland and life, though it must remain and endure, meanwhile, in exile, as we sing in the hymn to the Holy Ghost, "When we turn home again from this exile." Of this we shall now speak.

First, This Christian, holy people is to be known by this, that it has God's Word, though in quite unequal measure, as St. Paul says. Some have it altogether pure, others not entirely pure. Those who have it pure are called those who build on the foundation, gold, silver, precious stones; those who have it impure are they who build hay, straw, wood on the foundation, yet will be saved through fire. Of these more than enough has been said above. This is the main point. It is the high, chief, holy possession from which the Christian people take the name "holy," for God's Word is holy and sanctifies everything it touches; nay, it is the very holiness of God. Romans 1:16 says, "It is God's power, which saves all who believe thereon," and 2 Timothy 4:3, "It is all made holy by the Word of God and prayer"; for the Holy Ghost Himself administers it, and anoints and sanctifies the Church, that is, the Christian, holy people, with it and not with the pope's chrism, with which he anoints, or sanctifies fingers, garb, cloaks, cups, and stones. These things never teach us to love, believe, and praise God, and be godly. They only adorn the bag of worms, but afterwards they fall apart and decay, with the chrism and whatever holiness is in it, and with the bag of worms itself. But this relic is the true relic, the true unction, which anoints to everlasting life, even though you can have no papal tiara or bishop's miter, but have to live and die bare and naked of body, as children, (and all of us), are baptized naked and without adornment.

We speak, however, of the external Word orally preached by men like you and me. For Christ left this behind Him as an outward sign whereby His Church, His Christian, holy people in the world, was to be recognized. We speak, too, of this oral Word as it is earnestly believed and publicly confessed before the world, as He says, "He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father and His angels"; for there are many who know it secretly, but will not confess it. Many have it and do not believe in it or act by it, for those who believe in it and act by it are few, as the parable of the seed, in Matthew 13:4, tells us: three parts of the field get it and have it, but only the fourth part, the fine, good field, "bringeth forth fruit with patience."

Wherever, therefore, you hear or see this Word preached, believed, confessed, and acted on, there do not doubt that there must be a true ecclesia sancta catholica, a Christian, holy people, even though it be small in numbers; for God's Word does not go away empty (Isaiah 55:11), but must have at least a fourth part, or a piece of the field. If there were no other mark than this one alone, it would still be enough to show that there must be a Christian church there; for God's Word cannot be present without God's people, and God's people cannot be without God's Word. Who would preach or listen to preaching, if no people of God were there?

And what could or would God's people believe, if God's Word were not there?

This is the thing that does all miracles, sets everything to rights, upholds everything, accomplishes everything, does everything, drives out all devils, — pilgrimage-devils, indulgence-devils, bull-devils, brotherhood devils, saints' devils, mass-devils, purgatory-devils, monastery-devils, priestdevils, devils of turbulence, devils of sedition, heretic devils, pope devils, even antinomian devils; but this does not happen without outcries and disturbance, as is seen in the poor men of Mark 1:23 and 9:26. No, the devil must leave a cry and an uproar behind him, when he goes out, as is evident in Emser, Eck, Cochlaeus, Schmid, Wetzel, Tolpel, Knebel, Filtz, Rultz, sow, ass and the rest of his cryers and writers. They are all mouths and members of the devil, through which he makes his outcries and uproars; but it does them no good; they must go out and cannot endure the power of the Word. They themselves admit that it is God's Word and Holy Scripture, but say that we can get it better from the fathers and councils. Let them go! It is enough for us to know that this chief thing, this chief relic produces, upholds, nourishes, strengthens, and guards the Church, as St. Augustine also says, *Ecclesia Verbo dei generatur, alitur, nutritur, roboratur*; but whoever they are that persecute it and condemn it, they give themselves a name by their own fruits.

Second. God's people, or the Christian holy people, is known by the holy Sacrament of Baptism, when it is rightly taught and believed and used according to Christ's ordinance. That, too, is a public sign and precious, holy possession whereby God's people is made holy, for it is a holy bath of regeneration through the Holy Ghost, in which we bathe and are washed by the Holy Ghost from sin and death, as in the innocent, holy blood of the Lamb of God. Where you see this mark, know that the holy Christian people must be there, even though the pope does not baptize you or even if you know nothing about his holiness and power. The little children know nothing about that, though when they grow up they are, sad to say! led astray from their baptism, as St. Peter complains, in 2 Peter 2:18, "They entice through lasciviousness those who had escaped and who now walk in error." No, do not be confused by the question of who does the baptizing; for baptism does not belong to the baptizer and is not given to him, but it belongs to him who is baptized, for whom it was established by God and to whom it is given; just as the Word of God does not belong to the preacher (except in so far as he hears and believes it) but to him who hears and believes, and to him it is given.

Third. God's people, or a Christian, holy Church is known by the holy Sacrament of the Altar, when it is rightly administered according to Christ's institution and is believed and received. That, too, is a public mark and precious, holy possession, bequeathed by Christ, whereby His people is made holy. By means of this sacrament it exercises itself in faith, and openly confesses that it is a Christian people, as it does also by means of the Word of God and baptism. Here again you need not ask whether the pope says mass for you or not, consecrates you, confirms or anoints you, or puts a chasuble on you. You can receive the mass with no clothing at all, as one may who is sick in bed, except that outward decency compels the wearing of decent and honorable clothing. Nor do you need to ask whether you have a tonsure or have been anointed; nor need you argue about whether you are man or woman, young or old, anymore than you would ask about all these things in connection with baptism or preaching. It is enough that you are consecrated and anointed with the high and holy oil of God, of the Word of God, of baptism, and of this sacrament; then you are anointed highly and gloriously enough and dressed in a sufficient priestly garb. Do not be led astray by the question whether the man who gives you the sacrament is holy, or whether he has two wives or not. For the sacrament does not belong to him who administers it, but to him to whom it is administered, unless he also takes it. In that case he is one of those who receive it, and it is given to him also.

Where you see this sacrament administered with a right usage, be sure that God's people is there. It was said above about the Word, where God's Word is, there must the Church be; so, also, where Baptism and the Sacrament are, there must God's people be, and vice versa. For these holy things no one has, gives, practices, uses, or confesses, except God's people only, even though some false and unbelieving Christians are secretly among them. These people do not deprive the people of God of its holiness, especially so long as they are present secretly, for open sinners the Church, or people of God, does not tolerate in its midst, but punishes them and makes them holy; or, if they will not suffer that, it casts them out of the holy place by means of the ban and holds them as heathen (Matthew 18:17).

Fourth. The people of God, or holy Christians, are known by the keys, which they publicly use. Christ decrees, in Matthew 18:15 that if a Christian sins, he shall be rebuked, and if he does not amend his ways, he shall be bound and cast out; but if he amends, he shall be set free. This is the power of the keys. Now the use of the keys is two-fold, — public, and private. There are some whose consciences are so weak and timid, that even if they have received no public condemnation, they cannot be comforted unless they get a special absolution from the pastor. On the other hand, there are some who are so hard they will not have their sins individually forgiven and remitted even in their hearts and by the pastor. Therefore the use of the keys must be of both kinds, public and private. Now wherever you see the sins of some persons forgiven or rebuked, publicly or privately, know that God's people is there; for if God's people is not there, the keys are not there; and if the keys are not there, God's people is not there. Christ has bequeathed them as a public mark and holy possession, whereby the Holy Ghost, won through Christ's death, imparts holiness anew to fallen sinners and by them Christians confess that they are a holy people, under Christ, in this world; and those who will not be converted and made holy again are to be cast out of this holy people; that is, they are to be bound and excluded by means of the keys, as will happen to the Antinomians if they do not repent.

You must not think of these keys, however, as the pope's two keys which he has turned into tools with which he picks the locks to the treasure chests and crowns of all kings. If he will not "bind" or rebuke sin either publicly or privately (and he will not!), then do you rebuke and "bind" it in your

parish; and if he will not “loose,” or forgive it, then do you “loose” and forgive it in your parish. His “reserving” and “binding,” and his “relaxing” and dispensation make you neither holy nor unholy, since he cannot have the keys, but only lock-picking tools. The keys belong, not to the pope, as he lyingly says, but to the Church, that is, to Christ’s people, God’s people, the holy Christian people throughout the world, or wherever there are Christians. They cannot all be at Rome, unless the whole world were at Rome, and that has not happened yet. As Baptism, the Sacrament, and God’s Word do not belong to the pope but to the Church, so with the keys, they are *claves ecclesiae*, not *claves papae*. f470

Fifth. The Church is known outwardly by the fact that it consecrates or calls ministers, or has offices which they occupy. For we must have bishops, pastors, or preachers, to give, administer and use, publicly and privately, the four things, or precious possessions, that have been mentioned, for the sake of and in the name of the Church, or rather because of their institution by Christ, as St. Paul says, in Ephesians 4:11, *Accipit dona in hominibus*, “and gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and governors, etc.” The whole group cannot do these things, but must commit them, or allow them to be committed, to someone. What would happen if everyone wanted to speak or administer the sacraments and no one would yield to another? This duty must be committed to one person, and he alone must be allowed to preach, baptize, absolve, and administer the sacraments; all the rest must be content with this and agree to it. Wherever you see this, be assured that God’s people, the Christian, holy people, is present.

It is true, indeed, that the Holy Ghost has made exception, in this matter, of women, children, and incompetent folk, and, except in cases of necessity, chooses only qualified males. Thus we read here and there in St. Paul’s epistles that a bishop must be apt to teach, pious, and the husband of one wife, and in 1 Corinthians 14:34, that a woman shall not teach in the assembly. In a word, it shall be a well-prepared, selected man, and children, women, and other persons are not qualified for it, though they are qualified to hear God’s Word and to receive baptism, the Sacrament, and absolution, and are true, holy fellow-Christians, as St. Peter says. This distinction is made in Nature and in God’s creation also, where no woman (still less children and fools!) can or ought have rulership, as experience tells us, and Moses says, in Genesis 3:16, “Thou shalt be in subjection to thy husband.” The Gospel does not abolish this natural law, but confirms it as the ordinance and creation of God.

Here the pope, with his loud-mouthed uproar-makers for the devil will interrupt me, and say: “St Paul speaks not only of pastors and preachers, but also of apostles, evangelists, prophets, and other high spiritual classes; therefore there must be in the Church higher classes than the pastors and preachers. Where now, Sir Luther?” Where? This is where! If they will become apostles, evangelists, prophets, or will show me one such; oh, what folly I am talking — if they will show me one person among them who is worth as much as a school-boy, or who can do as much with Holy Scripture as a seven-year-old girl, I will give up. Now I know for certain that an apostle, evangelist, prophet can do more than a seven-year-old girl.

I speak in respect of the Holy Scriptures and of faith; for that they can do more in doctrines of men and in rascality, that I thoroughly believe, even more strongly than I believe in God, because they are proving it before my eyes by the things that they are doing. Therefore, as they are the Church, so they are also apostles, evangelists, and prophets; for true apostles, evangelists, and prophets preach God’s Word, not against God’s Word.

Now, if the apostles, evangelists, and prophets have ceased, others must have arisen in their stead, and must continue to arise until the end of the world; for the Church shall not cease until the end of the world, and therefore apostles, evangelists, prophets must continue, by whatever names they may be called who are occupied with God's Word and work. The pope and his followers, who persecute God's Word and yet admit that it is true, must be very bad apostles, evangelists, and prophets, like the devil and his angels. But how I do come back to the pope's shameful, filthy people! Let them go again, and tell them not to come back!

It was said above about the other four points of the great, divine, holy possession whereby the holy Church is made holy, that you ought not to be concerned about who they are from whom it is received. So here, too, you ought not to ask who he is that gives it to you, or who has the official position. It is all given, not to him who has the office, but to him who, through his office, is to give it, except, of course, that he can get it with you, if he will. If he is in office and is tolerated by the assembly, let that be enough for you; his person makes God's Word and sacraments neither worse nor better for you. For what he says or does is not his own, but it is Christ, his Lord, and the Holy Ghost who speak and act through him, in so far as he stays within the right way of teaching and acting, though the Church cannot and ought not endure open vices; but as for yourself, be content and let it go; you alone cannot be the whole group, or the Christian, holy people. But you must not consider the pope, who forbids any married man to be called to this office, but declares, with Nestorian logic, that they must all be pure virgins. That is as much as to say that all the clergy must be pure, but that they themselves may be impure. But look at that! You are coming at me again with the pope, and I did not want you anymore! Ah, well; unwelcome guest though you are, I will give you a Lutheran reception.

The pope condemns the marriage of the bishops or pastors; that is plain enough. Not satisfied with that, he condemns bigamy far more strongly, and, to speak out clearly, he distinguishes four kinds of bigamists, if not five. I will call a bigamist one who has two wives, one who marries twice, or takes another's widow. The first kind of bigamist is one who marries two maids in succession; the second kind, one who takes a widow to wife; the third kind, one who takes a bride whose deceased husband has left her a virgin. The fourth kind of bigamist gets the name shamefully; if he marries a virgin and afterwards finds that she was not pure, not a virgin; in the pope's eyes he must be a bigamist, and a far worse one than he who took another's bride who was a virgin. All these stink and have an evil smell in the Canon Law. They dare not preach, baptize, administer the sacraments or hold any office in the Church, even though they were holier than St. John and their wives holier than the Mother of God. So marvelously holy is the pope in his decrees!

If a man have ravished a hundred virgins, violated a hundred widows, and still have a hundred harlots behind his back, he may become bishop or pope, and even though he were to continue this kind of doings, he would, nevertheless, be tolerated in these offices; but if he gets a bride who is a virgin, or a pretended virgin, he cannot be God's servant. It makes no difference that he is a true Christian, learned, pious, useful; he is a bigamist, and must get out of his office and never come back to it again. What think you? Is that not a higher holiness than that of Christ Himself, with the Holy Ghost and His Church? Christ does not spurn men with one wife or two wives and women with one husband or two, if they believe in Him. He lets them remain members of His holy Christian people; uses them, also, in those things for which they are, or can be, useful. The Holy Scriptures give the name of bigamist to one who, like Lamech, has two wives living at the same time; but the pope is more learned, and gives the name of bigamist to one who has two wives in succession, and so with

the women. He is far more learned than God Himself. Finer still, the pope himself admits that the marriage of a bigamist is a true marriage and is no sin against God, world, or Church, and that such a marriage is a sacrament of the Church; and yet the man must be rejected from office-holding in the Church, even though he belongs to the third or fourth class and ought rather be called a man with one wife, or the husband of a virgin. Why so? Ei, the fault lies here! Such a marriage cannot be a sacrament or figure of Christ and the Church; for Christ has only one bride, the Church, and the Church only one husband, Christ, and both remain virgin. On this point there is so much sheer nonsense talked that no one can tell it all, and the canonists ought really be called lawyers for asses. In the first place, if marriage is to be a sacrament of Christ and the Church, then no marriage can be a sacrament unless both bridegroom and bride remain virgin; for Christ and the Church remain virgin. Whence, then, shall we get children and heirs? What will become of the estate of marriage that God has instituted? In a word, there will be no marriages but that of Mary and Joseph and others like it; none of the rest of the marriages can be a sacrament; perhaps they may even be harlotry.

In the second place, who has ever taught this or appointed it, that we must keep it? "St. Paul," say they, "says in Ephesians 4:1, that man and wife are a great sacrament." Yes, say I, "in Christ and the Church." Dear fellow, can you get it out of these words of Paul that marriage is the kind of a sacrament that they speak of? He says, "Man and wife are one body; this is a great sacrament." Then he interprets this himself: "I speak of Christ and the Church, not of man and wife." They say that he is speaking of man and wife. Paul will have Christ and the Church to be a great sacrament, or "mystery"; they say that man and wife are a great sacrament. Why, then, do they hold it for almost the least of the sacraments, nay, for impurity and sin, in which one cannot serve God? Moreover, can you find it in St. Paul's words that men and women who are married a second time are not man and wife, or one flesh? If they are one flesh, why are they not also a sacrament of Christ in the Church? St. Paul speaks in general, of all married men and women who become one flesh, whether they have never been married before or are widowed, and calls them a sacrament, as you understand the word "sacrament." Whence, then, are you so deaver as to make a difference in marriage and take only the single marriage as a sacrament of Christ and the Church, — the marriage, namely, in which a man marries a virgin, — and exclude all other marriages? Who has commissioned you thus to torture and force St. Paul's words?

Besides, you do not hold even such a marriage as a sacrament. For bridegrooms do not let their brides remain virgins, and they do not take husbands in order that they may stay virgins, which they could do much better without husbands; but they desire and ought to bear children; God has made them for that. Where now is the sacrament of Christ and the Church, both of whom remained virgin? Is it a fine argument a figura ad historiam, vel e contra, ab historia ad figuram? Where did you learn such logic? Christ and the Church are married, but remain virgin in the body; therefore man and wife shall remain virgin in the body also. Again: Christ is married only to a virgin, therefore a Christian or priest shall be married only to a virgin, otherwise there is no sacrament. Why, then, do you yield the point and say that the marriage of a widow is a sacrament, because it is a marriage, and yet is not a sacrament, because the wife was not a virgin? Are you not mad and foolish, and gross Nestorians, not knowing when you say yes or no, saying one thing in the premise and another in the conclusion? Away with such asses and fools!

Another error has come out of this one (unless indeed, this one has come out of the other). They have called the bishops and popes bridegrooms of the Church. They cite for this the word of St. Paul, "A bishop shall be the husband of one wife," that is, the bishop of one church, as Christ is the

bridegroom of one Church; therefore they shall not be bigamists. Verily, popes and bishops are fine fellows to be bridegrooms of the Church, nay, of brothel-keepers and devil's daughters in hell! True bishops are servants of this bride and she is lady and mistress over them. St. Paul calls himself diaconus, "a servant of the Church," and will not be bridegroom or lord of this bride, but the true bridegroom of this bride is called Jesus Christ, Son of God. St. John says not, "I am the bridegroom," but, "I am the friend of the bridegroom and rejoice to hear his speech." "For he that hath the bride," saith he, "is the bridegroom." His speech one should hear with joy, and thereafter think of himself as a servant.

How finely they themselves observe even this tomfoolery! A bishop has three bishoprics; yet he must be called "husband of one wife." Even though he has only one bishopric, he still has a hundred, two hundred, five hundred, or more parishes, or churches; yet he is bridegroom of one Church. The pope would be bridegroom of all churches, large and small; yet he is called husband of one Church. These men are not digami, "bigamists," though they have all these brides at one time; but a man who marries a virgin who has been betrothed to another is a digamus. Such gross and monstrous folly will God inflict upon us, if we despise His Word and want to improve on His commands. Nay, they have an Acutus in their Decretum in which St. Augustine holds, against St. Jerome, that he who had a wife before he was baptized and has one afterwards is a bigamist. Dear jack-asses, does it follow from this that St. Augustine, even though he holds such a man a bigamist (which the Scriptures do not!), will have him condemned, as you do, so that he may not serve God? And even though this should follow, have you not to the contrary, in dist. 9, a strong noli meis? How is it that you hold so fast to the Acutus, though it is contrary to Scripture, and pass over so lightly the Noli meis and other chapters? This is your idea: you would be lords of the Church; what you say shall be right; marriage shall be right and a sacrament, if you will it so; marriage shall be an impurity, that is, a defiled sacrament that cannot serve God, if you will it so; marriage shall bear children and the wife yet remain a virgin or it is no sacrament of Christ and the Church, if you will it so; bigamists are without guilt and have a true marriage and sacrament, if you will it so; or they are condemned and cannot do God service and have no sacrament of Christ and the Church, if you will it so. See how the devil, who teaches you this nonsense, makes you reel around and wobble back and forth. How comes it that I must hold Augustine's saying an article of faith, if he himself will not have his sayings held as articles of faith and will not suffer the sayings of his predecessors as articles of faith? Suppose that the dear fathers did hold and teach that digamus was the name for the sort of man we have been speaking of; what has that to do with us? We need not so hold and teach for that reason. We must not found our salvation on the words and works of men, or our houses on hay and straw. But the canonists are such gross fools, with their idols at Rome, that they take the words and deeds of the dear fathers and, against their will and without their consent, make them articles of faith. It should be proved by Scripture that such men are to be called bigamists and trigamists, and then it would be right that they should not be servants of the church according to St. Paul's teaching, "A bishop shall be the husband of one wife." But it has happened often enough that the fathers have sewed old patches on new doth. Here is a case. It is right that no digamus shall be a servant of the Church, — that is the new doth; but that this or that man is a digamus, that is an old rag of their own opinion, because the Scriptures do not say it. In the Scriptures, a bigamist is one who has two wives living at the same time, and St. Paul was thought to have had a wife (Philippians 4) and that she had died. Accordingly, he, too, must have been a bigamist and have been compelled to give up his office of apostle; for in 1 Corinthians 7 he counts himself among the widowed, and yet, in 1 Corinthians 9, he wants to have the right, along with Barnabas, to take another wife. Who will assure us that the poor fishermen,

Peter, Andrew, and James, were married to virgins, and not to widows, and had not two wives in succession?

The blockheads have not the same idea of purity that the fathers had, but would lead poor souls astray and endanger them, only in order that their nasty, stinking book may be right, and that their science may not be able to err and may not have erred; otherwise they would see what is considered purity. In other opinions (and what is this but a matter of mere opinions?) they can say finely: *Non tenetur, hoc tene*; why can they not do it here, especially since in *causis decidendis* they have to throw away not one father only, but all of them together, as their idol sputters and bellows? But they want to rule the Church, not with assured wisdom, but with arbitrary opinions, while on the other hand, they lead all the souls in the world astray and throw them into uncertainty, as they have done before. But just as they reject all the fathers and theologians from their canons, so we reject them from the Church and the Scriptures. They shall neither teach us Scripture nor rule in the Church, but shall look after their canons and their quarrels over pretends; that is their holiness. They have put us poor theologians and all the fathers out of their books; and we thank them for it. Now they want to put us out of the Church and the Scriptures, and they cannot get in themselves. That is too much! It rips the bag wide open! Moreover we shall not put up with it!

I hold, in truth, that according to their wisdom no man would be able to take a maid to wife and, after her death, become a priest among them; for who can give him any guarantee that he is getting a maid? "The road runs past the door," as they say. Now if he find her not a maid, a chance that he has to take, then he is a stinking bigamist, without any fault of his own. If he would be certain that he can become a priest, he must take no maid to wife; for who will assure him of it? He may, however, ravish maids, widows, and wives, have many mistresses, and practice all kinds of silent sins; and yet be worthy of the priestly state. The sum of it all is that pope, devil, and his church hate the estate of matrimony, as Daniel says; therefore he wants to bring it into such disgrace that a married man cannot fill a priest's office. That is as much as to say that marriage is harlotry, sin, impure, and rejected by God; and although they say, at the same time, that it is holy and a sacrament, that is a lie of their false hearts, for if they seriously considered it holy, and a sacrament, they would not forbid the priests to marry. Because they do forbid them, they must consider it unclean, and a sin, as they plainly say, *Mundamini qui fertis*; or else they must be gross Nestorians and Eutychians, who affirm a premise and deny the conclusion.

Let this suffice this time for the papal ass with his asinine jurists. We return to our own people.

Pay no heed, as I have said, to the papists concerning who it is that occupies Church offices, for the asses do not understand St. Paul and do not know what St. Paul's language calls a sacrament. "Sacrament," he says, "is Christ and His Church," that is, Christ and His Church are one body, as are man and wife; but this is a great mystery and must be laid hold upon by faith; it is not visible or tangible, therefore it is a sacrament, i.e., a secret thing, *mysterium*, invisible, hidden. Since, however, not those only who have entered matrimony as virgins, but also those who marry out of widowhood, are one body, therefore every marriage is a figure or symbol of this great sacrament, or mystery, in Christ and the Church. St. Paul speaks neither of virgins nor widows; he speaks of marriage, in which man and wife are one body. Wherever, then, you find these offices and officers, there be sure that the holy, Christian people must be. The Church cannot be without bishops, pastors, preachers, priests; on the other hand, they cannot be without the Church; both must be together.

Sixth. The holy, Christian people is known by prayer and public thanksgiving and praise to God. Where you see and hear that the Lord's Prayer is prayed and the use of it is taught; where Psalms, or spiritual songs, are sung, in accordance with the Word of God and the right faith; when the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Catechism are openly used; — there be sure that a holy Christian people is; for prayer, too, is one of the precious holy possessions, whereby everything is made holy, as St. Paul says. Thus the Psalms also are nothing but prayers, in which praise, thanks and honor are rendered to God, and the Creed and Ten Commandments, and God's Word, too, are all holy possessions, whereby the Holy Ghost makes holy the holy people of Christ. We speak, however, of prayers and songs that can be understood, from which it is possible to learn and whereby men may amend their lives; for the noises made by monks and nuns and priests are not prayers or praises to God. They do not understand it and learn nothing from it; they do it like hard labor, for the belly's sake, and seek thereby no improvement of life, no progress in holiness, no doing of God's will.

Seventh. The holy, Christian Church is outwardly known by the holy possession of the Holy Cross. It must endure all hardship and persecution, all kinds of temptation and evil (as the Lord's Prayer says) from devil, world, and flesh; it must be inwardly sad, timid, terrified; outwardly poor, despised, sick, weak; thus it becomes like its head, Christ. The reason must be only this, — that it holds fast to Christ and God's Word and thus suffers for Christ's sake, according to Matthew 5:10, "Blessed are they that endure persecution for my sake."

They must be righteous, quiet, obedient, ready to serve their rulers and everyone else with body and wealth, doing no one any harm. But no people on earth must endure such bitter hatred. They must be worse than Jews, heathen, Turks; they must be called heretics, knaves, devils, accursed, and the worst people in the world, to the point where they are "doing God service" who hang them, drown them, slay them, torture them, hunt them down, plague them to death, and where no one has pity on them, but gives them myrrh and gall to drink, when they thirst, — not because they are adulterers, murderers, thieves or scoundrels, but because they will to have Christ alone, and no other God. Where you see or hear this, there know that the holy Christian Church is, as He says, in Matthew 5:11, "Blessed are ye, when men curse you and reject your name as an evil, wicked thing for my sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward in heaven is great." With this holy possession the Holy Ghost makes this people, not only holy, but blessed.

And be not concerned with the holy things of the papists, with dead saints and wood of the Holy Cross; for they are as often bones from the slaughter-house as bones of saints and as often wood from some gallows as wood of the Holy Cross. It is all a cheat, by which the pope tricks people out of their money and leads them away from Christ, and even though they were genuine relics, they would make no one holy. But when you are condemned for Christ's sake, cursed, accused, slandered, plagued, — that makes you holy, for it slays the old Adam, and makes him learn patience, humility, gentleness, teaching him to praise and thank God and to be joyful in suffering. That is what it means to be made holy by the Holy Ghost and renewed to the new life in Christ and thus we learn to believe God, trust Him, hope in Him, love Him; as Romans 5:4 says, Tribulationem, etc. These are the true seven chief parts of the high and holy possession whereby the Holy Ghost works in us a daily sanctification and vivification in Christ according to the First Table of Moses. By their help we fulfill it, though not so fully as Christ has done; but we constantly seek to do so, under redemption, or forgiveness of sin, until at last we become quite holy and need no more forgiveness. To that end it is all directed. I would even call these seven things the seven sacraments, but this word, "sacrament,"

has been misused by the papists and is used in another sense in Scripture, therefore I let them remain simply seven chief means of Christian sanctification, or seven holy possessions. f508

Beside these seven chief things, there are other outward signs whereby the holy Christian Church is known, viz., those whereby the Holy Ghost makes us holy according to the Second Table of Moses, — as when he helps us to honor father and mother from the heart, and helps them to raise their children in a Christian way and to lead honorable lives; when we serve our princes and lords faithfully and obediently and are subject to them, and they, in turn, love their subjects and protect and guard them; when we are angry with no one, bear no wrath, hatred, envy, or vengefulness toward our neighbor, but gladly forgive him, gladly lend to him, help and counsel him; when we are not unchaste, immoderate in drinking, proud, haughty, boastful, but pure, self-controlled, sober, kindly, gentle, and humble; do not steal, rob, take usury, indulge in greed, cheat, but are mild, kind, satisfied, generous; are not false, lying and perjuring, but truthful, reliable, and whatever else is taught in these commandments, all of which St. Paul teaches abundantly in more than one place. For we need the Decalog not only because it tells us in legal fashion what we are bound to do, but also in order that we may see in it how far the Holy Ghost has brought us in His sanctifying work, and how much we still fall short, so that we may not become careless and think that we have now done all that is required. Thus we are constantly to grow in sanctification and ever to become more and more “a new creature” in Christ. The word is *Crescite et Abundetis magis*. f510

These marks cannot, however, be considered to be as certain as the others, because the heathen have practiced these works and sometimes appear holier than the Christians. Nevertheless their actions do not come so purely and simply from the heart for God’s sake, but they seek some other end thereby, since they have no real faith and no true knowledge of God. But the Holy Ghost is here, and He sanctifies men’s hearts, and brings these fruits out of good, fine hearts, as Christ says in the parable, in Matthew 13:23; and yet because the First Table is higher and must be a greater holy possession, I have tried to gather all this up in the Second Table; otherwise I should have divided this, too, into seven holy possessions, or main points, according to the seven Commandments. f514

We now know for certain what, where, and who the holy Christian Church is, viz., the holy Christian people of God, and these marks cannot fail, — of that we are sure. All else beside them may fail, and does assuredly fail, as we shall hear in part. From out of this people men should be taken to form a council and that might be a council which was ruled by the Holy Ghost. Thus Lyra, too, says that the Church is not to be counted by the high, or spiritual, classes in it, but by the people who truly believe. It is a wonder to me that he was not burned for this statement, since he will not allow that popes, cardinals, bishops and prelates are the Church, and this results in horrible heresy which the holy Roman Church cannot endure and which touches it far too closely. Of this more in another place!

Now when the devil saw God building this holy Christian Church, he took no holiday, but built his own chapel alongside it, greater than God’s temple, and this is how he did it. He saw that God took outward things, — baptism, Word, Sacrament, keys, — and used them to make His church holy; and because he is always aping God and trying to imitate God and improve on Him in everything, he, too, took outward things that were to become means to holiness (acting just as he does with the rain-makers, conjurers, drivers-out of devils, etc.) and he even has the Lord’s Prayer prayed over them and the Gospels read over them. Thus through the popes and the papists he has caused the consecration, or hallowing, of water, salt, herbs, candles, bells, images, agnus dei, palia, chasubles,

tonsures, fingers, hands, — who will count all these things? At last he made the monks' cowls so holy that people died in them and were buried in them, as though by so doing they were saved.

It would have been a fine thing, to be sure, if God's Word, or a blessing, or a prayer, had been said over these created things, as children say them over their food, or over themselves, when they go to bed or arise. Of this St. Paul says "Every creature is good and is sanctified by the Word and prayer," for from such a practice "the creature" gets no new power, but is confirmed and strengthened in its former power. But the devil is after something else! He wants "the creature" to get new power and might from his mummery. By means of God's Word, water becomes baptism, that is, a bath unto everlasting life, which washes away sins and saves men, though this is not the natural power of water; bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ; by the laying-on of hands, sins are forgiven according to God's institution. In just the same way the devil would have his jugglery and mummery endued with power and do something supernatural. Holy water is to blot out sin, drive out devils, keep off evil spirits, and protect women in child-bed, as the pope teaches in the canon *Aquama sale, de pe*; consecrated salt is to have the same effect. An *agnus dei* consecrated by the pope is to do more than God Himself can do, as this is described in verses that I shall some day publish with notes. Bells are to drive away the devils in thunder-storms; St. Anthony's knives stab the devil; the blessing of herbs drives away poisonous worms; certain blessings heal sick cows, keep off milk-thieves, quench fires; certain writings give security, in war and at other times, against iron, fire, water, wild beasts, etc.; monastic vows, masses, and the like confer a salvation that is beyond the ordinary. Who can tell it all? There is no need so small that the devil has not instituted a sacrament, or holy possession, for it, whereby one may find aid and counsel against it. Besides, he has also had prophets, seers, and wise men, who have been able to reveal hidden things and restore stolen goods.

Oh, he, far more than God, is fitted out with sacraments, prophets, apostles, evangelists; his chapels are far larger than God's Church; and he has far more people in his kind of holiness than God has in His. Moreover, people believe more easily and more gladly in his promises, his sacraments, his prophets, than in Christ's. He is the great god of the world; Christ calls him "Prince of the world," and Paul "God of this world." With this apery he draws people away from faith in Christ and causes Christ's Word and sacraments to be despised. He does this quite without their knowledge, because it is easier to perceive such things as the blotting out of sin, aid in time of need, and the conferring of salvation, through the devil's sacraments than through Christ's sacraments. It is Christ's will to make people holy and good in body and soul by His Holy Spirit, and not let them stay in unbelief and sin. This is too hard for those who do not want to be good or to have their sins forgiven, and they can readily dispense with this work of the Holy Ghost, after they have learned that they can be saved more easily, without this work of the Holy Ghost, by such means as holy water, *agnus dei*, bulls and breves, masses and monks' cowls, and that it is not necessary to seek or to revere anything else.

Not only so, but the devil has so fitted himself out with these things that he has wanted to use them for the abolition of God's Word and sacraments. He has thought thus: "If anyone shall arise who shall attack my church, sacraments, and bishops, saying that external things do not save men, then God's Word and sacraments shall be destroyed along with them. For these, too, are outward signs, and His bishops and His Church are also men. If mine are to be of no account, His must be of far less account. First of all, because my church, bishops, and sacraments work instanter and help men in this present life, so that they cannot help seeing it, for I am there and help men quickly to what they desire; but Christ's sacraments work for a future and invisible spiritual state, so that His Church and bishops can scarcely be perceived a very little, afar off, and the Holy Ghost acts as though He were not there, lets

people suffer all misfortune and makes them appear, in the eyes of my church, as heretics. Meanwhile, not only is my church so close that a man can actually grasp it, but my works follow quickly; and so everyone thinks that it is the true Church of God. This is the advantage that I have.”

That is how things have gone. When we began to teach, by the Gospel, that these outward things could not save men, because they were mere natural, created things and the devil often used them as spells, then people, — even great and learned people — came to the conclusion that baptism because it was external water, the Word because it was outward, human speech, the Scriptures because they were outward letters, made with ink, bread and wine because baked by the baker, — that all these things were nothing at all, because they were external, perishable things. Thus they devised the slogan, “Spirit! Spirit! The Spirit must do it! The letter killeth.” Thus Munzer called us Wittenberg theologians men learned in the Scriptures and himself the man taught of the Spirit; and many others followed his example. There you see how the devil had armed himself and built up his barricades! If his external doctrine and sacraments (which bring quick, visible, mighty aid) were attacked, then Christ’s external sacraments and words (which are slow with their aid, or bring aid that is invisible and weak) must go to far worse destruction along with them.

Therefore the Ecclesia, the holy Christian people, has mere outward words, sacraments, and offices, such as God’s imitator, Satan, has and has in far greater number; but it has these things commanded, instituted, and ordained by God, so that He Himself, and not any angel, will work through them with the Holy Ghost. They are called the Word, baptism, Sacrament, and forgiving-office not of angels, or of men, or of creatures, but of God Himself; only it is His will to act for the comfort and good of us poor, weak, feeble men through them, and not through His unveiled, evident, bright majesty. For who could bear that for an instant in this sinful, poor flesh, as Moses says, *Non videbit me homo et vivet?* Thus the Jews could not endure even the shoes of His feet on Mount Sinai, that is, in the thunder and the clouds, and how would they have endured, with such feeble eyes, the sun of His divine majesty and the clear light of His countenance? But He wills to do these things by tolerable, sober, pleasant means, which could not be better chosen by ourselves; as, for example, by a good, kindly man, who talks with us, preaches to us, lays his hands upon us, forgives our sins, baptizes us, gives us bread and wine to eat and drink. Who can be terrified at such tender ways of acting and not rather rejoice in them with all his heart?

Well, then, that is just what is done for us feeble men, and in it we see how God treats us like dear children, and is not willing — though He has the right, — to deal with us in majesty; and yet, beneath it all, He is using His majestic divine works, might and power, forgiving sin, cleansing from sin, taking away death, bestowing grace and everlasting life. These things are not found in the devil’s sacraments and church. There no one can say, “God commanded it, ordered it, instituted it, founded it, and He will Himself be there and do everything.” On the contrary, one must then say, “God did not command it, but forbade it; men have invented it, or rather the imitator of God has invented it and leads the people astray with it.” He produces no effects that are not temporal, or if they are spiritual, they are sheer deception. He cannot forgive men’s sins eternally and save them, as he lyingly says, by means of holy water, masses, and the monastic life; though, to be sure, he can restore to a cow the milk that he has first stolen from her by means of his prophetesses and priestesses, whom Christians call “devil’s harlots,” and who, when they are discovered, are burned to death with fire, as is right, not for milk-stealing, but for blasphemy, because they strengthen the devil, with his sacraments and churches, against Christ.

In a word, if God were to bid you pick up a straw or pull out a feather, with the command, order, and promise that thereby you should have forgiveness of all your sins, grace, and everlasting life, ought you not accept that, and love and praise it, with all joy and thankfulness, and consider that straw and feather as a higher and holier possession than heaven and earth, and love it more than them? For however small the straw or feather is, you get by it such a possession as neither heaven nor earth, — nay, not all the angels, — give you. Why are we such shameful folk that we do not consider the water of baptism, the bread and wine, — that is, Christ's body and blood, — the spoken Word, and the laying-on of a man's hands for the forgiveness of sins to be as holy a possession as we would think such a straw or feather to be? And yet, in these things, as we see and hear, God Himself wills to work and they are to be His water, word, hand, bread, and wine, whereby it is His will to make us holy and give us life in Christ, who has obtained these things for us and for this work has given us, from the Father, the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, even though you were to go to Compostella to St. James or let yourself be killed by the severe life of the Carthusians, Franciscans, or Dominicans in order to be saved, and God had not bidden this or instituted it; what good would it do you? He knows nothing about these things, but you and the devil have thought them up, like the special sacraments and the classes of priests. Even though you were able to carry heaven and earth on your shoulders in order to be saved, it would be labor lost, and he who picked up the straw (if it were commanded) would do more than you, though you could carry ten worlds. Why so? It is God's will that we shall obey His Word, use His sacraments, honor His Church; then He will act graciously and tenderly enough, even more graciously and tenderly than we could desire; for it is said, "I am thy God; thou shalt have no other gods"; and it is said again, "Him shalt thou hear, and no other."

That is enough to say about the Church. Nothing more can be said about it, except that each section could be developed further. The rest must deal with another subject, of which we shall also speak. Beside these external marks and holy possessions the Church has still other external customs. It is not made holy by them or through them, either in body or soul; they are not instituted or commanded by God; and yet, as has been said of them at length above, they are of great necessity and usefulness, and are fine and proper. Such customs are the keeping of certain holidays and of certain hours, before or after noon, as times for preaching and prayer, and the use of church buildings, or houses, altars, pulpits, fonts, lights, candles, bells, vestments and the like. These things have no other effect and do nothing else than lies in their nature, just as foods do nothing more because of the benedicite and the gratias of the children; for the godless and the rude folk, who say no benedicite or gratias, that is, who neither pray to God nor thank Him, get as fat and strong from their eating and drinking as do Christians. Christians can become and remain holy without these things, if the preaching is done on the street, without a pulpit, if sins are forgiven, if the Sacrament is administered without an altar, baptism without a font; and indeed it is of daily occurrence that, because of peculiar circumstances, sermons are preached and baptism and the Sacrament administered in homes. But for the sake of the children and the simple folk, it is a fine thing and promotes good order to have a definite time, place, and hour for these things, so that people can adapt themselves and meet together, as St. Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 14:40, "Let all be done in fine order." This order no one ought, and no Christian does, despise without cause, out of mere pride, and only for the sake of creating disorder; but for the sake of the multitude everyone ought to join in observing it, or at least not disturb or hinder it. That would be to act against love and kindness.

Nevertheless, these things ought to remain free. If from necessity, or for some other good reason, we cannot preach at six or seven or twelve or one o'clock, on Sunday or Monday, in the choir or at St.

Peter's, then let the preaching be done at other hours, on other days, in other places, so long as the common people are not disturbed by such a change, but are carried along in it. For these things are entirely external and, so far as times and places and persons are concerned, they can be regulated altogether by reason and are completely subject to it. God, Christ, and the Holy Ghost ask no questions about these things, anymore than they ask about what or where we eat, drink, dress, live, marry, go, or stay; except as has been said, that no one ought, without good reason, to take these matters into his own hands and disturb or hinder the common people. At a wedding or other social gathering no one ought to annoy the bride or the rest of the guests by peculiar or disturbing conduct, but rather behave as the rest do, and sit and walk and stand and dance and eat and drink with them. It is not possible to place a special table, kitchen, cellar, and servant at every individual's disposal. If one needs anything, let him get up from the table and leave the others to sit there in peace. So in these matters, too, everything should be done peacefully and in order and yet it should all be free and subject to change, if times and persons or other circumstances demand; then the crowd follows along harmoniously. For, as has been said, these things make no Christian either more holy or more unholy.

To be sure, the pope has scrawled the world full of books about these things and has made of them bonds, laws, rights, articles of faith, sin, and holiness, and it would be right to burn his decrees again in the fire. For this book, which has done great harm, could well be spared. It has pushed the Holy Scriptures under the bench and severely suppressed Christian doctrine; it has brought the jurists also into subjection with their imperial law; thus it has trodden both Church and emperor under foot, and has given us in their place the stupid asses of canonists, the will-o'-the-wisps, who have ruled the Church by it, and what is more lamentable, have left the best that is in it and taken out the worst, and forced that upon the Church. What good there is in it could be had much better in Holy Scripture, nay, in St. Augustine alone, so far as the doctrine of the Church is concerned, and in the jurists, so far as temporal government is concerned. The jurists themselves once had the intention to throw this book out of jurisprudence and leave it to the theologians, but it would be better to throw it in the fire and reduce it to ashes, though there is some good in it; for how could pure evil exist, unless there were some good among it? But there is so much of the evil that it takes the place which the good ought to have, and (as has been said) the good is found more richly in the Scriptures, and even in the fathers and the jurists. Unless, of course, one were to keep it in the libraries as an evidence of the folly and the mistakes of popes and some of the councils and other teachers! That is what I keep it for.

These outward, free things we should regard as the baptismal shirt or cloth in which a child is wrapped for baptism. The child is not baptized or made holy by the shirt or cloth, but by the baptism, and yet reason tells us to wrap it in the cloth. If the cloth is soiled or torn, we take something else, and wash the child without the aid of cloth or shirt; only we must observe moderation and not take too many shirts or cloths, so that the child is smothered. Thus in ceremonies also there should be moderation, so that they do not become a burden and a task, but remain so light that they are not felt, just as at a wedding no one thinks it a burden or a task to act and conduct himself like other people. Of the special fasts I shall write again when I write about that plague of the Germans, gluttony and drunkenness; for this belongs properly to temporal government.

Of the schools I have written much above and elsewhere, urging firmness and diligence in caring for them. Although they may be regarded as a heathen, external thing, because the boys learn in them the languages and arts, nevertheless they are highly necessary. If we do not train pupils, we shall not

long have pastors and preachers, as we are finding out. The school must give the Church persons who can be made apostles, evangelists, and prophets, that is, preachers, pastors, rulers, beside the other kinds of people that are needed throughout the world, who are to become chancellors, councilors, secretaries, and the like, and who help with worldly government. Moreover, if the school-master is a god-fearing man and teaches the boys to understand, to sing and to practice God's Word and the true faith, and holds them to Christian discipline, then (as was said above) the schools are young and everlasting councils, which do more good than many great councils. Therefore the former emperors, kings and princes did well when, with such diligence, they built so many schools, high and low, cloisters and endowed houses, because they wanted to provide the Church with a rich and great supply of persons; but their descendants have shamefully perverted and misused them. Therefore princes and lords ought now to do as their predecessors did, and turn the possessions of the cloisters over to the schools and endow many persons with means to study. Even though our descendants abuse them, we have done our part in our time.

In a word, the school must be the next thing to the Church, for it is the place where young pastors and preachers are trained and out of which they are drawn to put in the places of those who die. Next to the school comes the burgher's house, out of which pupils are got. After them come the town-hall and the castle, which must protect the burghers, so that they produce children for the schools, and the schools, so that they train children to be pastors, and then the pastors can, in turn, make churches and children of God, whether the people be burghers, princes, or emperors. God, however, must be over all and nearest of all, to preserve this ring, or circle, against the devil, and to do all, in all classes, nay, in all creatures. Psalm 127:1 says that there are on earth only two bodily governments, the city and the house. It says, "Except the Lord build the house," and again, "Except the Lord keep the city." The first government is that of the house, out of which come people. The second is the ruling of the city, that is, lands, people, princes, and lords, which we call worldly government. There everything is given, — children, property, money, beasts, etc. The house must build this; the city must guard, protect, and defend it. Then comes the third thing, God's own house and city, that is, the Church, which must have people from the house and protection and defense from the city.

These are the three hierarchies ordained by God, and we need no more; indeed we have enough and more than enough to do in living aright and resisting the devil in these three. Look only at the house and see what is to do there. There are parents and house-rulers to obey; there are children and servants to support, train, govern, and care for in a godly way. We would have enough to do to keep the law of the home, even if there were nothing else to do. Then the city, that is, the worldly government, also gives us enough to do, if we are, on the one hand, to be faithful in our obedience and, on the other, to judge, protect, and further the good of our subjects, lands and people. The devil keeps us busy enough, and with him God has given us the sweat of our brows and plenty of thorns and thistles, so that in these two kinds of law we have a rich abundance of things to learn, to live, to do, and to endure. Then there is, after these, the third kind of law and government. If the Holy Ghost rules, Christ calls it a comfortable, sweet, easy burden; if not, it is not only heavy, sour, and terrible, but it is also impossible, as Paul calls it in Romans 8:3, Impossible legis, and says in another place, "The letter killeth."

Now why should we have, over and above these three divine governments, these three divine, natural, temporal laws, the blasphemous, pretended law or government of the pope? It would be

everything, yet it is nothing. On the contrary, it leads us astray and tears us away from these blessed, divine estates and laws. Instead it puts a mask or cowl upon us and makes us the devil's fools and puppets, who live in idleness and no longer know these three divine hierarchies or laws. Therefore we will endure it no longer, but act according to the teaching of Sts. Peter and Paul and Augustine, and turn against them the second Psalm, (Psalm 2:2) "Let us tear their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us."

Nay, we will sing with St. Paul, "He that teacheth otherwise, even though he were an angel from heaven, let him be accursed!" We will say with St. Peter, "Why do ye tempt God by the imposing of such a burden?" Thus we will again be lords of the pope and tread him under foot, as Psalm 91:13 says, "Thou shalt tread upon the adder and basilisk, and the lion and dragon shalt thou trample under foot."

This we will do by the power and help of the woman's Seed, Who hath trodden and still treads upon the serpent's head, even though we must take the risk that he will bite us in the heel. To that blessed Seed of the woman be praise and honor, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one true God, forever. Amen.