



## German History in Documents and Images

Volume 1. From the Reformation to the Thirty Years War, 1500-1648  
The General Mobilization of the Catholic Church – The Council of Trent (1547-63)

In December 1546, Pope Paul III called a General Council to Trent, where it met sporadically between 1547 and 1563. During the following century, Trent's doctrinal definitions and reform decrees served as a general program for the reform of the Catholic Church and its defense against the Protestants. In their doctrinal decisions, the bishops who convened in Trent highlighted Catholic teaching and condemned Protestant teaching on the chief points at issue: Justification, Eucharist, Penance, Scripture and Tradition, Original Sin and Justification, the Mass as a real sacrifice, and the veneration of saints. The reform decrees provided the entire Church with an agenda on points ranging from episcopal residence, the holding of benefices, the founding of seminaries, and matrimony. The following seven excerpts from the canons and decrees illustrate some of the most important parts of the conciliar agenda. They are ordered chronologically according to their date of approval.

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Session VI  
January 13, 1547

### **(A) DECREE CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION**

#### Introduction

Since there is being disseminated at this time, not without the loss of many souls and grievous detriment to the unity of the Church, a certain erroneous doctrine concerning justification, the holy, ecumenical and general Council of Trent [ . . . ] intends, for the praise and glory of Almighty God, for the tranquillity of the Church and the salvation of souls, to expound to all the faithful of Christ the true and salutary doctrine of justification, which the *Sun of justice*,<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ, *the author and finisher of our faith*<sup>2</sup> taught, which the Apostles transmitted and which the Catholic Church under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost has always retained; strictly forbidding that anyone henceforth presume to believe, preach or teach otherwise than is defined and declared in the present decree.

CHAPTER I  
THE IMPOTENCY OF NATURE AND OF THE LAW TO JUSTIFY MAN

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<sup>1</sup> Mal. 4:2.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. 12:2.

The holy council declares first, that for a correct and clear understanding of the doctrine of justification, it is necessary that each one recognize and confess that since all men had lost innocence in the prevarication of Adam,<sup>3</sup> having become unclean,<sup>4</sup> and, as the Apostle says, *by nature children of wrath*,<sup>5</sup> as has been set forth in the decree on original sin, they were so far *the servants of sin*<sup>6</sup> and under the power of the devil and of death, that not only the Gentiles by the force of nature, but not even the Jews by the very letter of the law of Moses, were able to be liberated or to rise therefrom, though free will, weakened as it was in its powers and downward bent, was by no means extinguished in them.

[ . . . ]

### CHAPTER III

#### WHO ARE JUSTIFIED THROUGH CHRIST

But though *He died for all*,<sup>7</sup> yet all do not receive the benefit of His death, but those only to whom the merit of His passion is communicated; because as truly as men would not be born unjust, if they were not born through propagation of the seed of Adam, since by that propagation they contract through him, when they are conceived, injustice as their own, so if they were not born again in Christ, they would never be justified, since in that new birth there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of His passion, the grace by which they are made just. For this benefit the Apostle exhorts us always *to give thanks to the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light, and hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption and remission of sins*.<sup>8</sup>

### CHAPTER IV

#### A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE SINNER AND ITS MODE IN THE STATE OF GRACE

In which words is given a brief description of the justification of the sinner, as being a translation from that state in which man is born a child of the first Adam, to the state of grace and of the adoption of the sons of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, our Savior. This translation however cannot, since the promulgation of the Gospel, be effected except through the laver of regeneration or its desire, as it is written: *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rom. 5:12; I Cor. 15:22.

<sup>4</sup> Is. 64:6.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. 2:3.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. 6:17, 20.

<sup>7</sup> See II Cor. 5:15.

<sup>8</sup> Col. 1:12-14.

<sup>9</sup> John 3:5.

## CHAPTER V

### THE NECESSITY OF PREPARATION FOR JUSTIFICATION IN ADULTS, AND WHENCE IT PROCEEDS

It is furthermore declared that in adults the beginning of that justification must proceed from the predisposing grace of God through Jesus Christ, that is, from His vocation, whereby, without any merits on their part, they are called; that they who by sin had been cut off from God, may be disposed through His quickening and helping grace to convert themselves to their own justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with that grace; so that, while God touches the heart of man through the illumination of the Holy Ghost, man himself neither does absolutely nothing while receiving that inspiration, since he can also reject it, nor yet is he able by his own free will and without the grace of God to move himself to justice in His sight. Hence, when it is said in the sacred writings: *Turn ye to me, and I will turn to you,*<sup>10</sup> we are reminded of our liberty; and when we reply: *Convert us, O Lord, to thee, and we shall be converted,*<sup>11</sup> we confess that we need the grace of God.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MANNER OF PREPARATION

Now, they [the adults] are disposed to that justice when, aroused and aided by divine grace, receiving *faith by hearing,*<sup>12</sup> they are moved freely toward God, believing to be true what has been divinely revealed and promised, especially that the sinner is justified by God *by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*<sup>13</sup> and when, understanding themselves to be sinners, they, by turning themselves from the fear of divine justice, by which they are salutarily aroused, to consider the mercy of God, are raised to hope, trusting that God will be propitious to them for Christ's sake; and they begin to love Him as the fountain of all justice, and on that account are moved against sin by a certain hatred and detestation, that is, by that repentance that must be performed before baptism; finally, when they resolve to receive baptism, to begin a new life and to keep the commandments of God. [ . . . ]

## CHAPTER VII

### IN WHAT THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE SINNER CONSISTS, AND WHAT ARE ITS CAUSES

This disposition or preparation is followed by justification itself, which is not only a remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts whereby an unjust man becomes just and from being an enemy becomes a friend, that he may be *an heir according to hope of life everlasting.*<sup>14</sup> The causes of this justification are: the final cause is the glory of God and of Christ and life everlasting; the efficient

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<sup>10</sup> Zach. 1:3.

<sup>11</sup> Lam. 5:21.

<sup>12</sup> Rom. 10:17.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:24.

<sup>14</sup> Tit. 3:7.

cause is the merciful God who *washes and sanctifies*<sup>15</sup> gratuitously, signing and anointing<sup>16</sup> *with the holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance*;<sup>17</sup> the meritorious cause is His most beloved only begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, *when we were enemies*,<sup>18</sup> *for the exceeding charity wherewith he loved us*,<sup>19</sup> merited for us justification by His most holy passion on the wood of the cross and made satisfaction for us to God the Father; the instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which no man was ever justified finally, the single formal cause is the justice of God, not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He makes us just, that, namely, with which we being endowed by Him, are *renewed in the spirit of our mind*,<sup>20</sup> and not only are we reputed but we are truly called and are just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost distributes to everyone as He wills,<sup>21</sup> and according to each one's disposition and cooperation. For though no one can be just except he to whom the merits of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are communicated, yet this takes place in that justification of the sinner, when by the merit of the most holy passion, *the charity of God is poured forth by the Holy Ghost in the hearts*<sup>22</sup> of those who are justified and inheres in them; whence man through Jesus Christ, in whom he is ingrafted, receives in that justification, together with the remission of sins, all these infused at the same time, namely, faith, hope and charity. For faith, unless hope and charity be added to it, neither unites man perfectly with Christ nor makes him a living member of His body. For which reason it is most truly said that *faith without works is dead*<sup>23</sup> and of no profit, and *in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by charity*.<sup>24</sup> This faith, conformably to Apostolic tradition, catechumens ask of the Church before the sacrament of baptism, when they ask for the faith that gives eternal life, which without hope and charity faith cannot give. Whence also they hear immediately the word of Christ: *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*.<sup>25</sup> Wherefore, when receiving true and Christian justice, they are commanded, immediately on being born again, to preserve it pure and spotless, as *the first robe*<sup>26</sup> given them through Christ Jesus in place of that which Adam by his disobedience lost for himself and for us, so that they may bear it before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ and may have life eternal.

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<sup>15</sup> See I Cor. 6:11.

<sup>16</sup> See II Cor. 1:21

<sup>17</sup> Eph. 1:13 f.

<sup>18</sup> Rom. 5:10.

<sup>19</sup> Eph. 2:4.

<sup>20</sup> Eph. 4:23.

<sup>21</sup> See I Cor. 12:11.

<sup>22</sup> Rom. 5:5.

<sup>23</sup> James 2:17, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Gal. 5:6, 6:15.

<sup>25</sup> Matt. 19:17.

<sup>26</sup> Luke 15:22.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HOW THE GRATUITOUS JUSTIFICATION OF THE SINNER BY FAITH IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD

But when the Apostle says that man is justified by faith and freely,<sup>27</sup> these words are to be understood in that sense in which the uninterrupted unanimity of the Catholic Church has held and expressed them, namely, that we are therefore said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, *without which it is impossible to please God*<sup>28</sup> and to come to the fellowship of His sons; and we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification. For, *if by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise, as the Apostle says, grace is no more grace.*<sup>29</sup>

## CHAPTER IX

### AGAINST THE VAIN CONFIDENCE OF HERETICS

But though it is necessary to believe that sins neither are remitted nor ever have been remitted except gratuitously by divine mercy for Christ's sake, yet it must not be said that sins are forgiven or have been forgiven to anyone who boasts of his confidence and certainty of the remission of his sins, resting on that alone, though among heretics and schismatics this vain and ungodly confidence may be and in our troubled times indeed is found and preached with untiring fury against the Catholic Church. Moreover, it must not be maintained, that they who are truly justified must needs, without any doubt whatever, convince themselves that they are justified, and that no one is absolved from sins and justified except he that believes with certainty that he is absolved and justified, and that absolution and justification are effected by this faith alone, as if he who does not believe this, doubts the promises of God and the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Christ. For as no pious person ought to doubt the mercy of God, the merit of Christ and the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments, so each one, when he considers himself and his own weakness and indisposition, may have fear and apprehension concerning his own grace, since no one can know with the certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God.

[ . . . ]

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE FRUITS OF JUSTIFICATION, THAT IS, THE MERIT OF GOOD WORKS, AND THE NATURE OF THAT MERIT

Therefore, to men justified in this manner, whether they have preserved uninterruptedly the grace received or recovered it when lost, are to be pointed out the words of the Apostle: *Abound*

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<sup>27</sup> Rom. 3:24; 5:1.

<sup>28</sup> Heb. 11:6.

<sup>29</sup> Rom. 11:6.

*in every good work, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*<sup>30</sup> *For God is not unjust, that he should forget your work, and the love which you have shown in his name,*<sup>31</sup> *and, Do not lose your confidence, which hath a great reward.*<sup>32</sup> Hence, to those who work well *unto the end*<sup>33</sup> and trust in God, eternal life is to be offered, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Christ Jesus, and as a reward promised by God himself, to be faithfully given to their good works and merits.<sup>34</sup> For this is the crown of justice which after his fight and course the Apostle declared was laid up for him, to be rendered to him by the just judge, and not only to him, but also to all that love his coming.<sup>35</sup> For since Christ Jesus Himself, as the head into the members and the vine into the branches,<sup>36</sup> continually infuses strength into those justified, which strength always precedes, accompanies and follows their good works, and without which they could not in any manner be pleasing and meritorious before God, we must believe that nothing further is wanting to those justified to prevent them from being considered to have, by those very works which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life and to have truly merited eternal life, to be obtained in its [due] time, provided they depart [this life] in grace,<sup>37</sup> since Christ our Savior says: *If anyone shall drink of the water that I will give him, he shall not thirst forever; but it shall become in him a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting.*<sup>38</sup> Thus, neither is our own justice established as our own from ourselves,<sup>39</sup> nor is the justice of God ignored or repudiated, for that justice which is called ours, because we are justified by its inherence in us, that same is [the justice] of God, because it is infused into us by God through the merit of Christ. Nor must this be omitted, that although in the sacred writings so much is attributed to good works, that even *he that shall give a drink of cold water to one of his least ones, Christ promises, shall not lose his reward;*<sup>40</sup> and the Apostle testifies that, *That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory;*<sup>41</sup> nevertheless, far be it that a Christian should either trust or glory in himself and not in the Lord,<sup>42</sup> whose bounty toward all men is so great that He wishes the things that are His gifts to be their merits. And since *in many things we all offend,*<sup>43</sup> each one ought to have before his eyes not only the mercy and goodness but also the severity and judgment [of God]; neither ought anyone to judge himself, even though he be not conscious to himself of anything;<sup>44</sup> because the whole life of man is to be

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<sup>30</sup> See I Cor. 15:58.

<sup>31</sup> Heb. 6:10.

<sup>32</sup> Heb. 10:35.

<sup>33</sup> Matt. 10:22.

<sup>34</sup> Rom. 6:22.

<sup>35</sup> See II Tim. 4:8.

<sup>36</sup> John 15:1 f.

<sup>37</sup> Apoc. 14:13.

<sup>38</sup> John 4:13 f.

<sup>39</sup> Rom. 10:3; II Cor. 3:5.

<sup>40</sup> Matt. 10:42; Mark 9:40.

<sup>41</sup> See II Cor. 4:17.

<sup>42</sup> See I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17.

<sup>43</sup> James 3:2.

<sup>44</sup> See I Cor. 4:3 f.

examined and judged not by the judgment of man but of God, *who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise from God,*<sup>45</sup> who, as it is written, *will render to every man according to his works.*<sup>46</sup>

[ . . . ]

## **(B) DECREE CONCERNING REFORM**

### CHAPTER I

IT IS PROPER THAT PRELATES RESIDE IN THEIR CHURCHES; IF THEY ACT OTHERWISE, THE PENALTIES OF THE EARLIER LAWS ARE RENEWED AGAINST THEM AND NEW ONES ARE PRESCRIBED

The same holy council, the same legates of the Apostolic See presiding, wishing to restore a very much collapsed ecclesiastical discipline and to reform the depraved morals of the clergy and the Christian people, has deemed it proper to begin with those who preside over the major churches, for unblemished character in those who govern is the salvation of those governed. Trusting therefore that by the mercy of our Lord and God and the prudent vigilance of the vicar of that God on earth, it will surely come about that for the government of the churches, a burden formidable even to the shoulders of angels, those who are most worthy, whose previous life in its every stage, from their youth to their riper years, laudably spent in the services of ecclesiastical discipline, bears testimony in their favor, will be chosen in accordance with the venerable ordinances of the holy Fathers, it admonishes all who under whatever name or title are set over patriarchal, primatial, metropolitan and cathedral churches, and hereby wishes that they be considered admonished, that *taking heed to themselves and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed them to rule the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood,*<sup>47</sup> that *they be vigilant, as the Apostle commands, labor in all things and fulfil their ministry.*<sup>48</sup> Let them know, however, that they cannot fulfil this if like hirelings they desert the flocks committed to them<sup>49</sup> and do not attend to the guardianship of their sheep, whose blood will be required at their hands by the supreme judge;<sup>50</sup> since it is most certain that the shepherd's excuse will not be accepted if the wolf devours the sheep and he knows it not. And since there are some at this time, which is greatly to be deplored, who, forgetful even of their own salvation and preferring earthly things to the things of heaven and things human to things divine, wander about at divers courts or keep themselves occupied with the care of temporal affairs, their fold forsaken and their watchfulness over the sheep committed to them neglected, it has seemed good to the holy council to renew, as by virtue of the present decree it does renew, the old canons promulgated against non-residents, which on account of the disorders of the

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:5.

<sup>46</sup> Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; Apoc. 22:12.

<sup>47</sup> Acts 20:28.

<sup>48</sup> See II Tim. 4:5.

<sup>49</sup> John 10:12.

<sup>50</sup> Ezech. 33:6.

times and of men have wellnigh fallen into desuetude; and furthermore, for a more faithful residence of the same and for the reform of morals in the Church, to ordain and decree in the manner following. If anyone, by whatever dignity, rank and pre-eminence distinguished, shall, by remaining outside of his diocese for a continuous period of six months without lawful impediment or just and reasonable causes, be absent from a patriarchal, primatial, metropolitan or cathedral church, under whatever title, cause, name or right committed to him, he shall incur *ipso jure* the forfeiture of a fourth part of one year's revenues, to be applied by the ecclesiastical superior to the church treasury and to the poor of the locality. If he continues to absent himself for another six months, he shall *eo ipso* forfeit another fourth part of the revenues, to be applied in like manner. If the contumacy proceed yet farther, that he may be subject to a severer penalty of the sacred canons, the metropolitan shall be bound to denounce the absent suffragan bishops, and the oldest resident suffragan bishop shall be bound under penalty, to be incurred *ipso facto*, of being forbidden entrance to the church, to denounce the absent metropolitan to the Roman pontiff by letter or messenger within three months, that he, by the authority of his supreme see, may take action against the non-resident prelates, as the degree of contumacy of each may demand, and provide the churches with more useful pastors, as he shall know in the Lord to be salutary and expedient.

[ . . . ]

Session XIII  
October 11, 1551

### **(C) DECREE CONCERNING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST**

The holy, ecumenical and general Council of Trent, lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the same legate and nuncios of the holy Apostolic See presiding, though convened, not without the special guidance and direction of the Holy Ghost, for the purpose of setting forth the true and ancient doctrine concerning faith and the sacraments, and of applying a remedy to all the heresies and the other most grievous troubles by which the Church of God is now miserably disturbed and rent into many and various parts, yet, even from the outset, has especially desired that it might pull up by the roots the cockles<sup>51</sup> of execrable errors and schisms which the enemy has in these our troubled times disseminated regarding the doctrine, use and worship of the Sacred Eucharist, which our Savior left in His Church as a symbol of that unity and charity with which He wished all Christians to be mutually bound and united. Wherefore, this holy council, stating that sound and genuine doctrine of the venerable and divine sacrament of the Eucharist, which the Catholic Church, instructed by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and by His Apostles, and taught by the Holy Ghost who always brings to her mind all truth,<sup>52</sup> has held and will preserve even to the end of the world, forbids all the faithful of Christ to presume henceforth

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<sup>51</sup> Matt. 13:30.

<sup>52</sup> Luke 12:12; John 14:26; 16:13.



to believe, teach or preach with regard to the most Holy Eucharist otherwise than is explained and defined in this present decree.

## CHAPTER I

### THE REAL PRESENCE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

First of all, the holy council teaches and openly and plainly professes that after the consecration of bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is truly, really and substantially contained in the august sacrament of the Holy Eucharist under the appearance of those sensible things. For there is no repugnance in this that our Savior sits always at the right hand of the Father in heaven according to the natural mode of existing, and yet is in many other places sacramentally present to us in His own substance by a manner of existence which, though we can scarcely express in words, yet with our understanding illumined by faith, we can conceive and ought most firmly to believe is possible to God.<sup>53</sup> For thus all our forefathers, as many as were in the true Church of Christ and who treated of this most holy sacrament, have most openly professed that our Redeemer instituted this wonderful sacrament at the last supper, when, after blessing the bread and wine, He testified in clear and definite words that He gives them His own body and His own blood. Since these words, recorded by the holy Evangelists<sup>54</sup> and afterwards repeated by St. Paul,<sup>55</sup> embody that proper and clearest meaning in which they were understood by the Fathers, it is a most contemptible action on the part of some contentious and wicked men to twist them into fictitious and imaginary tropes by which the truth of the flesh and blood of Christ is denied, contrary to the universal sense of the Church, which, as *the pillar and ground of truth*,<sup>56</sup> recognizing with a mind ever grateful and unforgetting this most excellent favor of Christ, has detested as satanical these untruths devised by impious men.

## CHAPTER II

### THE REASON FOR THE INSTITUTION OF THIS MOST HOLY SACRAMENT

Therefore, our Savior, when about to depart from this world to the Father, instituted this sacrament, in which He poured forth, as it were, the riches of His divine love towards men, *making a remembrance of his wonderful works*,<sup>57</sup> and commanded us in the participation of it to reverence His memory and *to show forth his death until he comes*<sup>58</sup> to judge the world. But He wished that this sacrament should be received as the spiritual food of souls,<sup>59</sup> whereby they may be nourished and strengthened, living by the life of Him who said: *He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me*,<sup>60</sup> and as an antidote whereby we may be freed from daily faults and

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<sup>53</sup> Matt. 19:26; Luke 18:27.

<sup>54</sup> Matt. 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19 f.

<sup>55</sup> See I Cor. 11:24 f.

<sup>56</sup> See I Tim. 3:15.

<sup>57</sup> Ps. 110:4.

<sup>58</sup> Luke 22:19; I Cor. 11:24–26.

<sup>59</sup> Matt. 26:26 f.

<sup>60</sup> John 6:58.

be preserved from mortal sins. He wished it furthermore to be a pledge of our future glory and everlasting happiness, and thus be a symbol of that one body of which He is the head<sup>61</sup> and to which He wished us to be united as members by the closest bond of faith, hope and charity, that we might *all speak the same thing and there might be no schisms among us*.<sup>62</sup>

### CHAPTER III

#### THE EXCELLENCE OF THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST OVER THE OTHER SACRAMENTS

The most Holy Eucharist has indeed this in common with the other sacraments, that it is a symbol of a sacred thing and a visible form of an invisible grace; but there is found in it this excellent and peculiar characteristic, that the other sacraments then first have the power of sanctifying when one uses them, while in the Eucharist there is the Author Himself of sanctity before it is used. For the Apostles had not yet received the Eucharist from the hands of the Lord, when He Himself told them that what He was giving them is His own body.<sup>63</sup> This has always been the belief of the Church of God, that immediately after the consecration the true body and the true blood of our Lord, together with His soul and divinity exist under the form of bread and wine, the body under the form of bread and the blood under the form of wine *ex vi verborum*; but the same body also under the form of wine and the same blood under the form of bread and the soul under both, in virtue of that natural connection and concomitance whereby the parts of Christ the Lord, *who hath now risen from the dead, to die no more*,<sup>64</sup> are mutually united; also the divinity on account of its admirable hypostatic union with His body and soul. Wherefore, it is very true that as much is contained under either form as under both. For Christ is whole and entire under the form of bread and under any part of that form; likewise the whole Christ is present under the form of wine and under all its parts.

### CHAPTER IV

#### TRANSUBSTANTIATION

But since Christ our Redeemer declared that to be truly His own body which He offered under the form of bread,<sup>65</sup> it has, therefore, always been a firm belief in the Church of God, and this holy council now declares it anew, that by the consecration of the bread and wine a change is brought about of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood. This change the holy Catholic Church properly and appropriately calls transubstantiation.

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<sup>61</sup> See I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23.

<sup>62</sup> See I Cor. 1:10.

<sup>63</sup> Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22.

<sup>64</sup> Rom. 6:9.

<sup>65</sup> Luke 22:19; John 6:48 ff.; I Cor. 11:24.

Session XIV  
November 25, 1551

**(D) CANONS CONCERNING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF PENANCE**

Canon 1. If anyone says that in the Catholic Church penance is not truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Christ the Lord for reconciling the faithful of God as often as they fall into sin after baptism, let him be anathema.

Can. 2. If anyone, confounding the sacraments, says that baptism is itself the sacrament of penance, as though these two sacraments were not distinct, and that penance therefore is not rightly called a second plank after shipwreck, let him be anathema.

Can. 3. If anyone says that those words of the Lord Savior, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained*,<sup>66</sup> are not to be understood of the power of forgiving and retaining sins in the sacrament of penance, as the Catholic Church has always understood them from the beginning, but distorts them, contrary to the institution of this sacrament, as applying to the authority of preaching the Gospel, let him be anathema.

Can. 4. If anyone denies that for the full and perfect remission of sins three acts are required on the part of the penitent, constituting as it were the matter of the sacrament of penance, namely, contrition, confession and satisfaction, which are called the three parts of penance; or says that there are only two parts of penance, namely, the terrors of a smitten conscience convinced of sin and the faith received from the Gospel or from absolution, by which one believes that his sins are forgiven him through Christ, let him be anathema.

Can. 5. If anyone says that the contrition which is evoked by examination, recollection and hatred of sins, whereby one recounts his years in the bitterness of his soul,<sup>67</sup> by reflecting on the grievousness, the multitude, the baseness of his sins, the loss of eternal happiness and the incurring of eternal damnation, with a purpose of amendment, is not a true and beneficial sorrow, does not prepare for grace, but makes a man a hypocrite and a greater sinner; finally, that this sorrow is forced and not free and voluntary, let him be anathema.

Can. 6. If anyone denies that sacramental confession was instituted by divine law or is necessary to salvation; or says that the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone, which the Catholic Church has always observed from the beginning and still observes, is at variance with the institution and command of Christ and is a human contrivance, let him be anathema.

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<sup>66</sup> Matt. 16:19; John 20:23 f.

<sup>67</sup> Is. 38:15.

Can. 7. If anyone says that in the sacrament of penance it is not required by divine law for the remission of sins to confess each and all mortal sins which are recalled after a due and diligent examination, also secret ones and those that are a violation of the two last commandments of the Decalogue,<sup>68</sup> as also the circumstances that change the nature of a sin, but that this confession is useful only to instruct and console the penitent and in olden times was observed only to impose a canonical satisfaction; or says that they who strive to confess all sins wish to leave nothing to the divine mercy to pardon; or finally, that it is not lawful to confess venial sins, let him be anathema.

Can. 8. If anyone says that the confession of all sins as it is observed in the Church is impossible and is a human tradition to be abolished by pious people; or that each and all of the faithful of Christ of either sex are not bound thereto once a year in accordance with the constitution of the great Lateran Council, and that for this reason the faithful of Christ are to be persuaded not to confess during Lent, let him be anathema.

Can. 9. If anyone says that the sacramental absolution of the priest is not a judicial act but a mere service of pronouncing and declaring to him who confesses that the sins are forgiven, provided only he believes himself to be absolved, even though the priest absolves not in earnest but only in jest; or says that the confession of the penitent is not necessary in order that the priest may be able to absolve him, let him be anathema.

Can. 10. If anyone says that priests who are in mortal sin have not the power of binding and loosing, or that not only priests are the ministers of absolution but that to each and all of the faithful of Christ was it said: *Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed in heaven,*<sup>69</sup> and *whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained;*<sup>70</sup> by virtue of which words everyone can absolve from sins, from public sins by reproof only, provided the one reprovved accept correction, and from secret sins by voluntary confession, let him be anathema.

Can. 11. If anyone says that bishops have not the right to reserve cases to themselves except such as pertain to external administration, and that therefore the reservation of cases does not hinder a priest from absolving from reserved cases, let him be anathema.

Can. 12. If anyone says that God always pardons the whole penalty together with the guilt and that the satisfaction of penitents is nothing else than the faith by which they perceive that Christ has satisfied for them, let him be anathema.

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<sup>68</sup> Deut. 5:21.

<sup>69</sup> Matt. 16:19; 18:18.

<sup>70</sup> John 20:23.

Can. 13. If anyone says that satisfaction for sins, as to their temporal punishment, is in no way made to God through the merits of Christ by the punishments inflicted by Him and patiently borne, or by those imposed by the priest, or even those voluntarily undertaken, as by fasts, prayers, almsgiving or other works of piety, and that therefore the best penance is merely a new life, let him be anathema.

Can. 14. If anyone says that the satisfactions by which penitents atone for their sins through Christ are not a worship of God but traditions of men, which obscure the doctrine of grace and the true worship of God and the beneficence itself of the death of Christ, let him be anathema.

Can. 15. If anyone says that the keys have been given to the Church only to loose and not also to bind, and that therefore priests, when imposing penalties on those who confess, act contrary to the purpose of the keys and to the institution of Christ, and that it is a fiction that there remains often a temporal punishment to be discharged after the eternal punishment has by virtue of the keys been removed, let him be anathema.

[ . . . ]

Session XXI  
July 16, 1562

## **(E) THE DOCTRINE OF COMMUNION UNDER BOTH KINDS AND THE COMMUNION OF LITTLE CHILDREN**

[ . . . ]

### **CHAPTER I**

#### **LAYMEN AND CLERICS WHEN NOT OFFERING THE SACRIFICE ARE NOT BOUND BY DIVINE LAW TO COMMUNION UNDER BOTH SPECIES**

This holy council instructed by the Holy Ghost, who is *the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and godliness*,<sup>71</sup> and following the judgment and custom of the Church, declares and teaches that laymen and clerics when not offering the sacrifice are bound by no divine precept to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist under both forms, and that there can be no doubt at all, *salva fide*, that communion under either form is sufficient for them to salvation. For though Christ the Lord at the last supper instituted and delivered to the Apostles this venerable sacrament under the forms of bread and wine,<sup>72</sup> yet that institution and administration do not signify that all the faithful are by an enactment of the Lord to receive under both forms. Neither is it rightly inferred from that discourse contained in the sixth chapter of John that communion under both forms was enjoined by the Lord, notwithstanding the various interpretations of it by the holy Fathers and Doctors. For He who said: *Except you eat the flesh*

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<sup>71</sup> Is. 11:2.

<sup>72</sup> Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19 f.; I Cor. 11:24 f.

of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you,<sup>73</sup> also said: *He that eateth this bread shall live forever;*<sup>74</sup> and He who said: *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life everlasting;*<sup>75</sup> also said: *The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world;*<sup>76</sup> and lastly, He who said: *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him,*<sup>77</sup> said, nevertheless: *He that eateth this bread shall live forever.*<sup>78</sup>

## CHAPTER II

### THE POWER OF THE CHURCH CONCERNING THE DISPENSATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

It declares furthermore, that in the dispensation of the sacraments, *salva illorum substantia*, the Church may, according to circumstances, times and places, determine or change whatever she may judge most expedient for the benefit of those receiving them or for the veneration of the sacraments; and this power has always been hers. The Apostle seems to have clearly intimated this when he said: *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God;*<sup>79</sup> and that he himself exercised this power, as in many other things so in this sacrament, is sufficiently manifest, for after having given some instructions regarding its use, he says: *The rest I will set in order when I come.*<sup>80</sup> Wherefore, though from the beginning of the Christian religion the use of both forms has not been infrequent, yet since that custom has been already very widely changed, holy mother Church, cognizant of her authority in the administration of the sacraments, has, induced by just and weighty reasons, approved this custom of communicating under either species and has decreed that it be considered the law, which may not be repudiated or changed at pleasure without the authority of the Church.

[ . . . ]

Session XXIII  
July 15, 1563

**(F) DIRECTIONS FOR ESTABLISHING SEMINARIES FOR CLERICS, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNGER ONES; IN THEIR ERECTION MANY THINGS ARE TO BE OBSERVED; THE EDUCATION OF THOSE TO BE PROMOTED TO CATHEDRAL AND MAJOR CHURCHES**

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<sup>73</sup> John 6:54.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:52.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:55.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:52.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:57.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:59.

<sup>79</sup> See I Cor. 4:1.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 11:34.

Since the age of youth, unless rightly trained, is inclined to follow after the pleasure of the world,<sup>81</sup> and unless educated from its tender years in piety and religion before the habits of vice take possession of the whole man, will never perfectly and without the greatest and wellnigh extraordinary help of Almighty God persevere in ecclesiastical discipline, the holy council decrees that all cathedral and metropolitan churches and churches greater than these shall be bound, each according to its means and the extent of its diocese, to provide for, to educate in religion, and to train in ecclesiastical discipline, a certain number of boys of their city and diocese, or, if they are not found there, of their province, in a college located near the said churches or in some other suitable place to be chosen by the bishop. Into this college shall be received such as are at least twelve years of age, are born of lawful wedlock, who know how to read and write competently, and whose character and inclination justify the hope that they will dedicate themselves forever to the ecclesiastical ministry. It wishes, however, that in the selection the sons of the poor be given preference, though it does not exclude those of the wealthy class, provided they be maintained at their own expense and manifest a zeal to serve God and the Church. These youths the bishop shall divide into as many classes as he may deem proper, according to their number, age, and progress in ecclesiastical discipline, and shall, when it appears to him opportune, assign some of them to the ministry of the churches, the others he shall keep in the college to be instructed, and he shall replace by others those who have been withdrawn, so that the college may be a perpetual seminary of ministers of God. And that they may be the better trained in the aforesaid ecclesiastical discipline, they shall forthwith and always wear the tonsure and the clerical garb; they shall study grammar, singing, ecclesiastical computation, and other useful arts; shall be instructed in Sacred Scripture, ecclesiastical books, the homilies of the saints, the manner of administering the sacraments, especially those things that seem adapted to the hearing of confessions, and the rites and ceremonies. The bishop shall see to it that they are present every day at the sacrifice of the mass, confess their sins at least once a month, receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ in accordance with the directions of their confessor, and on festival days serve in the cathedral and other churches of the locality. All these and other things beneficial and needful for this purpose each bishop shall prescribe with the advice of two of the senior and more reputable canons chosen by himself as the Holy Ghost shall suggest, and they shall make it their duty by frequent visitation to see to it that they are always observed. The disobedient and incorrigible, and the disseminators of depraved morals they shall punish severely, even with expulsion if necessary; and removing all obstacles, they shall foster carefully whatever appears to contribute to the advancement and preservation of so pious and holy an institution.

[ . . . ]

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<sup>81</sup> Gen. 8:21.

Session XXIV  
November 11, 1563

### **(G) DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY**

The perpetual and indissoluble bond of matrimony was expressed by the first parent of the human race, when, under the influence of the divine Spirit, he said: "This now is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh" [Gen. 2:23f. (Matt. 19:4ff.; Mark 10:6ff.; Eph. 5:31f.)].

But that by this bond two only are united and joined together, Christ the Lord taught more plainly when referring to those last words as having been spoken by God, He said: "Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh" [Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:8], and immediately ratified the firmness of the bond so long ago proclaimed by Adam with these words: "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder" [Matt., 19:16; Mark 10:9].

But the grace which was to perfect that natural love, and confirm that indissoluble union, and sanctify the persons married, Christ Himself, the institutor and perfecter of the venerable sacraments, merited for us by His passion, which Paul the Apostle intimates when he says: "Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it" [Eph. 5:25]; adding immediately: "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church" [Eph., 5:32].

Since therefore matrimony in the evangelical law surpasses in grace through Christ the ancient marriages, our holy Fathers, the councils, and the tradition of the universal Church have, with good reason, always taught that it is to be numbered among the sacraments of the New Law; and since, with regard to this teaching, ungodly men of this age, raving madly, have not only formed false ideas concerning this venerable sacrament, but, introducing in conformity with their habit under the pretext of the Gospel a carnal liberty, have by word and writing asserted, not without great harm to the faithful of Christ, many things that are foreign to the teaching of the Catholic Church and to the usage approved of since the times of the Apostles, this holy and general council, desiring to restrain their boldness, has thought it proper, lest their pernicious contagion should attract more, that the principal heresies and errors of the aforesaid schismatics be destroyed by directing against those heretics and their errors the following anathemas.

#### Canons on the Sacrament of Matrimony

Canon 1. If anyone says that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical law, instituted by Christ the Lord [Gen. 2:23f. (Matt. 19:4ff.; Mark 10:6ff.; Eph. 5:31f.)], but has been devised by men in the Church and does not confer grace, let him be anathema.



Can. 2. If anyone says that it is lawful for Christians to have several wives at the same time and that this is not forbidden by any divine law [Matt. 19:4-6, 9], let him be anathema.

Can. 3. If anyone says that only those degrees of consanguinity and affinity which are expressed in Leviticus can hinder matrimony from being contracted and dissolve it when contracted [Lev. 18:6ff], and that the Church cannot dispense in some of them or declare that others hinder and dissolve it, let him be anathema.

Can. 4. If anyone says that the Church cannot establish impediments dissolving marriage [Matt. 16: 19; Sess. XXI, chap. 2], or that she has erred in establishing them, let him be anathema.

Can. 5. If anyone says that the bond of matrimony can be dissolved on account of heresy or irksome cohabitation, or by reason of the voluntary absence of one of the parties, let him be anathema.

Can. 6. If anyone says that matrimony contracted but not consummated is not dissolved by the solemn religious profession of one of the parties, let him be anathema.

Can. 7. If anyone says that the Church errs in that she taught and teaches that in accordance with evangelical and apostolic doctrine the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved by reason of adultery on the part of one of the parties, and that both, or even the innocent party who gave no occasion for adultery, cannot contract another marriage during the lifetime of the other, and that he is guilty of adultery who, having put away the adulteress, shall marry another, and she also who, having put away the adulterer, shall marry another [Matt. 5:32 and 19:9; Mark 10:11f.; Luke 16:18; I Cor. 7: 10f.; Canons 5-8, 10], let him be anathema.

Can. 8. If anyone says that the Church errs when she declares that for many reasons a separation may take place between husband and wife with regard to bed and with regard to cohabitation for a determinate or indeterminate period, let him be anathema.

Can. 9. If anyone says that clerics constituted in sacred orders or regulars who have made solemn profession of chastity can contract marriage, and that the one contracted is valid notwithstanding the ecclesiastical law or the vow, and that the contrary is nothing else than a condemnation of marriage, and that all who feel that they have not the gift of chastity, even though they have made such a vow, can contract marriage, let him be anathema, since God does not refuse that gift to those who ask for it rightly, neither does "he suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able" [I Cor. 10:13].

Can. 10. If anyone says that the married state excels the state of virginity or celibacy, and that it is better and happier to be united in matrimony than to remain in virginity or celibacy [Matt. 19:11f.; I Cor. 7:25f., 38, 40; Canons 12, 9, and 16], let him be anathema.

Can. 11. If anyone says that the prohibition of the solemnization of marriages at certain times of the year is a tyrannical superstition derived from the superstition of the heathen, or condemns

the blessings and other ceremonies which the Church makes use of therein, let him be anathema.

Can. 12. If anyone says that matrimonial causes do not belong to ecclesiastical judges, let him be anathema.

### **Decree Concerning the Reform of Matrimony, Chapter I**

[ . . . ]

Although it is not to be doubted that clandestine marriages made with the free consent of the contracting parties are valid and true marriages so long as the Church has not declared them invalid, and consequently that those persons are justly to be condemned, as the holy council does condemn them with anathema, who deny that they are true and valid, and those also who falsely assert that marriages contracted by children [minors] without the consent of the parents are invalid, nevertheless the holy Church of God has for very just reasons at all times detested and forbidden them. But while the holy council recognizes that by reason of man's disobedience those prohibitions are no longer of any avail, and considers the grave sins which arise from clandestine marriages, especially the sins of those who continue in the state of damnation, when having left the first wife with whom they contracted secretly, they publicly marry another and live with her in continual adultery, and since the Church which does not judge what is hidden, cannot correct this evil unless a more efficacious remedy is applied, therefore, following in the footsteps of the holy Lateran Council celebrated under Innocent III, it commands that in the future, before a marriage is contracted, the proper pastor of the contracting parties shall publicly announce three times in the church, during the celebration of the mass on three successive festival days, between whom marriage is to be contracted; after which publications, if no legitimate impediment is revealed, the marriage may be proceeded with in the presence of the people, where the parish priest, after having questioned the man and the woman and heard their mutual consent, shall either say: "I join you together in matrimony, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," or he may use other words, according to the accepted rite of each province. But if at some time there should be a probable suspicion that a marriage might be maliciously hindered if so many publications precede it, then either one publication only may be made or the marriage may be celebrated forthwith in the presence of the parish priest and of two or three witnesses.

Then before its consummation the publications shall be made in the church, so that if any impediments exist they may be the more easily discovered, unless the ordinary shall deem it advisable to dispense with the publications, which the holy council leaves to his prudence and judgment. Those who shall attempt to contract marriage otherwise than in the presence of the parish priest or of another priest authorized by the parish priest or by the ordinary and in the presence of two or three witnesses, the holy council renders absolutely incapable of thus contracting marriage and declares such contracts invalid and null, as by the present decree it invalidates and annuls them. Moreover, it commands that the parish priest or another priest who shall have been present at a contract of this kind with less than the prescribed number of

witnesses, also the witnesses who shall have been present without the parish priest or another priest, and also the contracting parties themselves, shall at the discretion of the ordinary be severely punished. Furthermore, the same holy council exhorts the betrothed parties not to live together in the same house until they have received the sacerdotal blessing in the church; and it decrees that the blessing is to be given by their own parish priest, and permission to impart it cannot be granted to any other priest except by the parish priest himself or by the ordinary, any custom, even though immemorial, which ought rather to be called a corruption, or any privilege notwithstanding. But if any parish priest or any other priest, whether regular or secular, should attempt to unite in marriage or bless the betrothed of another parish without the permission of their parish priest, he shall, even though he may plead that his action was based on a privilege or immemorial custom, remain ipso jure suspended until absolved by the ordinary of that parish priest who ought to have been present at the marriage or from whom the blessing ought to have been received. The parish priest shall have a book in which he shall record the names of the persons united in marriage and of the witnesses, and also the day on which and the place where the marriage was contracted, and this book he shall carefully preserve. Finally, the holy council exhorts the betrothed that before they contract marriage, or at least three days before its consummation, they carefully confess their sins and approach devoutly the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist. If provinces have in this matter other laudable customs and ceremonies in addition to the aforesaid, the holy council wishes earnestly that they be by all means retained. And that these so salutary regulations may not remain unknown to anyone, it commands all ordinaries that they as soon as possible see to it that this decree be published and explain to the people in all the parish churches of their dioceses, and that this be done very often during the first year and after that as often as they shall deem it advisable. It decrees, moreover, that this decree shall begin to take effect in every parish at the expiration of thirty days, to be reckoned from the day of its first publication in that church.

[ . . . ]

Source of the English translation: *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, original text with English translation by Rev. H.J. Schroeder, O.P. St. Louis and London: Herder Book Company, 1950, pp. 29-35, 40-42, 46-48, 72-75, 101-04, 132-34, 175-76, 180-85.

The source of the German text for parts A-F is as follows: *Dekrete der ökumenischen Konzilien*, vol. 3: *Konzilien der Neuzeit*, edited by Josef Wohlmuth. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002, pp. 671-74, 676-78, 681-82, 693-95, 711-13, 726-27, 750-51; part G is from Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum. Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen*. Verlag Herder GmbH, Freiburg i. Br., 43. Edition 2010, pp. 572-77.