

THE FOURTEEN THESES OF THE OLD CATHOLIC UNION CONFERENCE AT BONN

14-16 September 1874

I. We agree that the apocryphal or deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament are not of the same canonicity as the books contained in the Hebrew Canon.

II. We agree that no translation of Holy Scripture can claim an authority superior to that of the original text.

III. We agree that the reading of Holy Scripture in the vulgar tongue can not be lawfully forbidden.

IV. We agree that, in general, it is more fitting, and in accordance with the spirit of the Church, that the Liturgy should be in the tongue understood by the people.

V. We agree that Faith working by Love, not Faith without Love, is the means and condition of Man's justification before God.

VI. Salvation cannot be merited by "merit of condignity," because there is no proportion between the infinite worth of salvation promised by God and the finite worth of man's works.

VII. We agree that the doctrine of *opera supererogationis** and of a *thesaurus meritorum sanctorum*, i.e., that the overflowing merits of the Saints can be transferred to others, either by the rulers of the Church, or by the authors of the good works themselves, is untenable. [**opera supererogationis* and *thesaurus meritorum sanctorum*: these refer to the Roman doctrine that God expects so much merit from each human being, and that some saints lived exemplary lives filled with more merit than was required of God (*opera supererogationis* = "works above those required"). This extra merit was then kept in escrow by the Church (*thesaurus meritorum sanctorum* = "treasury of the merits of the saints"), who has the authority to portion it out to her children.]

VIII. 1. We acknowledge that the number of the sacraments was fixed at seven, first in the twelfth century, and then was received into the general teaching of the Church, not as tradition coming down from the Apostles or from the earliest times, but as the result of theological speculation.

2. Catholic theologians acknowledge, and we acknowledge with them, that Baptism and the Eucharist are *principalia, praecipua, eximia salutis nostrae sacramenta* ["original, distinguished, extraordinary sacraments for our welfare"].

IX. 1. The Holy Scriptures being recognized as the primary rule of Faith, we agree that the genuine tradition, i.e. the unbroken transmission partly oral, partly in writing of the doctrine delivered by Christ and the Apostles is an authoritative source of teaching for all successive generations of Christians. This tradition is partly to be found in the consensus of the great ecclesiastical bodies standing in historical continuity with the primitive Church, partly to be gathered by scientific method from the written documents of all centuries.

2. We acknowledge that the Church of England and the Churches derived from her have maintained unbroken episcopal succession.

X. We reject the new Roman doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as being contrary to the tradition of the first thirteen centuries according to which Christ alone is conceived without sin.

XI. We agree that the practice of confession of sins before the congregation or a Priest, together with the exercise of the power of the keys, has come down to us from the primitive Church, and that, purged from the abuses and free from constraint, it should be preserved in the Church.

XII. We agree that "indulgences" can only refer to penalties actually imposed by the Church herself.

XIII. We acknowledge that the practice of the commemoration of the faithful departed, i.e. the calling down of a richer outpouring of Christ's grace upon them, has come down to us from the primitive Church, and is to be preserved in the Church.

XIV. 1. The Eucharistic celebration in the Church is not a continuous repetition or renewal of the propitiatory sacrifice offered once for ever by Christ upon the cross; but its sacrificial character consists in this, that it is the permanent memorial of it, and a representation and presentation on earth of that one oblation of Christ for the salvation of redeemed mankind, which according to the Epistle to the Hebrews (9:11,12), is continuously presented in heaven by Christ, who now appears in the presence of God for us (9:24).

2. While this is the character of the Eucharist in reference to the sacrifice of Christ, it is also a sacred feast, wherein the faithful, receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord, have communion one with another (I Cor. 10:17).