

23 Augustinian Theses

I. Saint Augustine derived from the Sacred Scriptures that God created all things simultaneously, against the Manicheans and other detractors of Holy Scripture; and he explained it in a manner that rightly avoids all reproach.

II. God created man upright, that is, with a good will, in which he did not need assistance to make him willing, but without which he could not remain if he so willed.

III. God did not owe grace, immortality, and peace to man, given the very law of his nature; but He owed it to Himself, so that no one under a just, good, and provident God would be miserable unless he deserved it.

IV. By sinning, the first man corrupted all his descendants in himself, as in the root. Lust, by which he generates and is generated, transmits original sin to his progeny; which therefore is proper to each individual. The material of this sin, as theologians say, is concupiscence, but its form is the deprivation of Original Justice.

V. Concupiscence remains in the reborn in act, with the guilt removed; because it is from sin, and inclines to sin, it is indeed evil in itself, as it is a defect of nature, but it is not itself sin unless it conceives and gives birth to sin through the free consent of the human will.

VI. We hold with Saint Augustine that infants dying in original sin without baptism not only lack the vision of God and suffer anguish, but are also tormented in Hell by the fire, albeit the mildest, as derived from Sacred Scriptures.

VII. God distinguishes some fallen men from the mass of perdition by gratuitous mercy; He leaves others in the mass of perdition by just judgment: therefore, the cause of negative reprobation must be derived from original sin, as from the primary root, but the cause of positive reprobation must be derived either from original sin, in which an infant dies, or even from actual sin, in which an adult dies.

VIII. But Predestination is nothing other than the foreknowledge and preparation of the benefits of God, by which those who are liberated are certainly liberated. By His own predestination, God foresaw what He was going to do. And thus, against gratuitous Predestination, which includes perfect liberation from the mass of the damned, namely the beginning of Faith and Salvation, and the special gift of Perseverance, no one could truly dispute except by being preserved, as Saint Augustine faithfully taught.

IX. Since Faith is the beginning, root, and foundation of all justification, we hold that the beginnings of medicinal grace must be traced from the excitement of man to Faith, whether explicit or implicit.

X. Grace is properly the inspiration of love, so that, known by holy love, we act; by which it becomes apparent what was hidden, and what did not delight becomes sweet.

XI. Purely sufficient exciting grace, which does not produce the effect to which it tends due to man's fault, indeed grants proximate power of acting to the will; however, it does not place the will in balance between good and evil, as if it were necessary for proximate power to be established, so that the will is balanced equally by sufficient grace and concupiscence, with neither outweighing or dominating the other: hence proximate power is one thing, equilibrium another.

XII. The Augustinian School rightly explains the power of efficacious grace by holy interior delight, which by relatively superior degrees overcomes concupiscence; for the will of men, ignited by the Holy Spirit, is so strengthened that they are able to do what they wish because they so wish, and they so wish because God works that they so wish: and the more certainly they know the goodness of each thing, the more ardently they delight in it.

XIII. Do we therefore abolish free will by this grace? Far from it. Rather, we affirm it as free not only from coercion but also from all physical and antecedent necessity; for under this grace we freely will, but also because we will with power, as Saint Augustine taught us.

XIV. And it is the very clear doctrine of Saint Augustine that God wills the salvation of all and each individual man: that Christ died for all and each individual man. However, although Christ died for all, not all receive the benefit of His death, but only those to whom the merit of His Passion is communicated.

XV. We hold with Saint Augustine that sinners are sometimes blinded and hardened, so that they lack all medicinal grace as a punishment for previous crimes.

XVI. We acknowledge with Saint Augustine himself that purely negative infidels, who have heard nothing yet about the Gospel, lack the help of medicinal grace as a punishment for previous sin, at least original sin.

XVII. Saint Augustine recognized that some works of infidels are good in substance, office, and proximate end; but he said that these same works are sins due to an entirely extrinsic defect, in so far as they are not referred to God by the intention of the worker; for some good things can be done by those who are not doing well.

XVIII. By the precept of charity, which commands that God be loved for His own sake, and other things for the sake of God, we are bound to refer each of our deliberate actions to Him as our ultimate end, not indeed in act, but in virtue.

XIX. By the same law of charity and even prudence, we are forbidden to follow a less probable or equally probable opinion favoring liberty, leaving aside a more probable or equally probable opinion favoring the precept; for a man would gravely sin, according to Saint Augustine, in matters pertaining to the salvation of the soul, merely by preferring uncertainties to certainties; although it is permitted to follow the most probable opinion among probable ones.

XX. Regarding the love of God, as required for the Sacrament of Baptism in adults, so also for the Sacrament of Penance, which is a laborious Baptism, we defend these two points from the Holy Synod of Trent. First, that no one should think that in either sacrament it is required to have prior contrition that is perfected by charity and which, with the vow of the sacrament, reconciles a man to God before it is actually received. Second, that no one should think himself safe in either sacrament if, besides the acts of Faith and Hope, he does not begin to love God as the source of all justice, and therefore is moved by hatred and detestation against the sins committed with the purpose of not sinning in the future. Nor do we consider it sufficient to fulfill the necessary purpose for both sacraments, to begin a new life and keep God's commandments if the penitent has no concern for the first and greatest commandment, which is to love God with all his heart, nor is he at least prepared in mind to excite and provoke himself, with the help of Divine grace, to execute it.

XXI. The fear of Hell, by which the penitent is beneficially shaken, indeed disposes him to receive grace in the sacrament; but if he lacks initial charity, it does not exclude the will to sin, nor is it sufficient for justification.

XXII. In the justified man, these three remain: Faith, Hope, and Charity; but the greatest of these is Charity: hence, if Charity fails due to sin, Faith and Hope do not fail. Yet Faith is not without a pious affect of belief in the First Truth; and Hope is not without some desire for attaining the ultimate end. Saint Augustine called this affect, this desire, in a broader sense, initiated Charity.

XXIII. But properly, Charity is far different from Faith and Hope: for Faith tends to God as the First Truth; Hope as the ultimate end to be possessed; but Charity, or a benevolent mind, abstracts from future possession and clings to God as the highest good in itself.