

CONCERNING THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY

AFFIRMATIONS AND DENIALS (TOPIC NO. 6)

I. **We affirm** that, in its original state, all of God's creation was intrinsically good and therefore without reproach.¹

We deny that any part of God's creation was made immutably and indestructibly good.²

1. Gen. 1:31; Ecc. 7:29;
2. Gen. 2:17; Matt. 19:8; Rom. 5:12; 8:20-21

II. **We affirm** that man was created good, in the image of God, with a free will that was inclined to the good by virtue of his nature, but with the possibility of sinning (*posse peccare*).¹

We deny that the chief excellencies of fallen man are his reason and free will, and that the will is an absolute and indefectible freedom of choice which, from moment to moment, determines itself² and is unimpaired by previous choices.³ We deny that sin is merely the choice of what is contrary to reason,⁴ and that fallen, unredeemed man can at any time avoid choosing sin.⁵ We further deny that man's will, though truly an endowment from God, is at any time independent from God.⁶

1. Gen. 1:31; 2:16-17; Ecc. 7:29; Hosea 6:7
2. Gen. 8:21; Psa. 58:3; Jer. 13:23; 2 Tim. 2:26
3. Prov. 5:21-23; Jer. 13:23; Matt. 7:17-18; Eph. 4:18-19
4. Hosea 6:7; 1 Jn. 3:4
5. (See #2 & 3 above.); Jer. 17:9
6. Gen. 2:7; Acts 17:25, 28

III. **We affirm** that since man in his totality was originally good, his created emotions, impulses, and interests, in their original state, were also good.¹

We deny that the desires of the flesh, following the fall, are still without reproach and intrinsically good.² We deny the proposition that desires toward evil are sinful only when they are excessive or implemented.³

1. Gen. 1:31; Ecc. 7:29
2. Rom. 7:18, 27; 8:3
3. Ex. 20:17; Matt. 5:27-28; Rom. 7:7-11

IV. **We affirm** that Adam sinned in total freedom¹ and that his descendents continue to do likewise without any alien/intrusive external or internal compulsion or constraint.² We affirm that in both cases, both physical death and spiritual death are consequences of sin.³ We further affirm that both physical death and spiritual death are acquired through original sin and mankind's solidaric relationship with it.⁴ **We deny** that only physical death, and not spiritual death, is a consequence of sin.⁵ We further deny the proposition that spiritual death is acquired by each man through his own actual sins.⁶

1. Gen. 2:16-17; Hosea 6:7
2. Rom. 1:18-32; 2:1; 3:19; Eph. 5:19
3. Gen. 2:16-17; Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:21
4. (See # 3 above.)
5. Rom. 5:12-19; Rev. 2:11; 21:18
6. Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:22

V. **We affirm** that every man at his conception is spiritually dead, that is, rebellious, guilty and polluted before God by virtue of his participation in and co-responsibility for Adam's sin¹ and that the three components of man's spiritual death explain the need for regeneration, justification, and sanctification.² We affirm that natural man continues to have a will of his own, but since it is determined by his rebellious, guilty, and polluted nature, it is now inclined to all evil and unable to do what is good (*non posse non peccare*).³ Because it is thus utterly unwilling and unable to choose what is good, man's will should be considered both freely surrendered to sin (and thus captive) and fully responsible for sin (and thus accountable).⁴

We deny that every man at his conception is morally "sound," that is, in the same condition as Adam was before he sinned, endowed inalienably by divine grace with natural holiness consisting of reason and free will, and that these are sufficient to enable man to lead a sinless life.⁵ We equally deny that every man at his conception is merely morally "sick," involuntarily polluted by Adam's guilt, and therefore with a lowered responsibility for sin.⁶

1. Psa. 58:3; Rom. 5:12-19
2. John 3:3; Rom. 3:21-26; 1 Cor. 6:9-11
3. Gen. 8:21; Psa. 58:3; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:26
4. Jer. 14:10; 2:25; 44:21-23; Hosea 6:7 (Also see # 3 above.)

VI. **We affirm** that the notions of participation in and co-responsibility for original sin are neither unthinkable nor blasphemous. We affirm that the idea of all men sinning in Adam makes perfect sense whether all men were actually "in" Adam at the time of his sin or Adam was the federal representative of all men when he sinned.¹ We further affirm that original sin consisting of rebellion, guilt, and pollution is transmitted through natural generation.²

We deny that the idea of man's solidaric relationship with Adam's sin is unthinkable and blasphemous.³ We deny that the universal presence of rebellion, guilt, and pollution at conception is inconsistent with the idea of sin as an exercise of free will and implies that God's creation was radically evil.⁴ We deny that God either unjustly regards men before they committed actual sins as sinners⁵ or that God is responsible for creating evil natures.⁶ We further deny that the difference between Adam and his descendants is merely a matter of environment; namely that sin in the latter may be explained solely in the fact they are born into a society where evil customs and bad habits prevail.⁷

1. Rom. 5:12
2. Gen. 5:3; Psa. 51:5; 58:3; Jn. 3:6
3. Rom. 5:12
4. Psa. 51:5; 58:3; Ecc. 7:29; Hosea 6:7
5. Gen. 18:25; Deu. 32:4
6. Ecc. 7:29
7. Gen. 8:21; Psa. 51:5; 58:3

VII. **We affirm** that Divine Grace is an inner transforming and enabling power that regenerates the nature of man and transforms him from man-centered and corrupt to God-centered and holiness-centered.¹ We affirm that the redeemed human will reflect this transformation and therefore desires not only forgiveness but also obedience and, encouraged by justifying grace and strengthened by sanctifying grace, is now able not to sin (*posse non peccare*).² Yet we deny the perfectibility of man in this world due to the continuing presence of indwelling sin until the moment of death.³

We deny that the term Divine Grace refers to man's natural constitution by virtue of which even some heathen have been perfect men, or that Divine Grace refers only to the law of God by which, to aid man's reason darkened by sin, He reveals what man ought to do, or that the grace of Christ is essentially enlightenment and teaching working through Christ's example through the assurance of forgiveness and the doctrines of the church.⁴ We deny that grace is merely an external facility that the will may utilize if it chooses to do so, solely a "potential" for leading men into the Kingdom of God, and (sinless) perfection rather than an inward power that exerts an enabling influence upon the will, a principle that inspires righteousness.⁵

1. Jer. 31:33; Eze. 36:26; Eph. 4:17-24
2. Psa. 119:24; Eze. 26:25-29; Rom. 6:12-22; 1 John 2:29
3. Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2

4. John 3:5-12; 8:42-25; 10:24-27; Rom. 3:10-18; 7:18-25; 2 Tim. 3:5; 1 John 1:8
5. Eph. 2:4-10; 1 Pet. 1:3; 1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18

VIII. **We affirm** that in the state of glory, both human nature and the human will attain perfection, meaning that sin is forever out of bounds and that man will not and cannot sin (*non posse peccare*).¹

We deny that before the state of glory either human nature, human will, or human action can attain a state of perfection. We thus, again, deny the perfectibility of man in this world.²

1. Psa. 130:8; Matt. 25:46; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:51-57; Gal. 5:5; 1 John 3:2
2. Phillip. 3:20-21; Gal. 5:5; 1 John 1:8