The Smalcald Articles

[Part III]

The following articles treat matters which we may discuss with learned and sensible men, or even among ourselves. The pope and his court do not care much about these things; they are not concerned about matters of conscience but only about money, honor, and power.

I. Sin

1 Here we must confess what St. Paul says in ﻿Rom. 5:12﻿, namely, that sin had its origin in one man, Adam, through whose disobedience all men were made sinners and became subject to death and the devil. This is called original sin, or the root sin.

2 The fruits of this sin are all the subsequent evil deeds which are forbidden in the Ten Commandments, such as unbelief, false belief, idolatry, being without the fear of God, presumption, despair, blindness — in short, ignorance or disregard of God — and then also lying, swearing by God’s name, failure to pray and call upon God, neglect of God’s Word, disobedience to parents, murder, unchastity, theft, deceit, etc.

3 This hereditary sin﻿﻿ is so deep a corruption of nature that reason cannot understand it. It must be believed because of the revelation in the Scriptures (﻿Ps. 51:5﻿, ﻿Rom. 5:12ff﻿., ﻿Exod. 33:20﻿, ﻿Gen. 3:6ff﻿.). What the scholastic theologians taught concerning this article is therefore nothing but error and stupidity, namely,

4 **1.** That after the fall of Adam the natural powers of man have remained whole and uncorrupted, and that man by nature possesses a right understanding and a good will, as the philosophers teach.﻿﻿

5 **2.** Again, that man has a free will, either to do good and refrain from evil or to refrain from good and do evil.

6 **3.** Again, that man is able by his natural powers to observe and keep all the commandments of God.

7 **4.** Again, that man is able by his natural powers to love God above all things and his neighbor as himself.

8 **5.** Again, if man does what he can, God is certain to grant him his grace.

9 **6.** Again, when a man goes to the sacrament there is no need of a good intention to do what he ought, but it is enough that he does not have an evil intention to commit sin, for such is the goodness of man’s nature and such is the power of the sacrament.

10 **7.** That it cannot be proved from the Scriptures that (tr-479) the Holy Spirit and his gifts are necessary for the performance of a good work.

11 Such and many similar notions have resulted from misunderstanding and ignorance concerning sin and concerning Christ, our Saviour. They are thoroughly pagan doctrines, and we cannot tolerate them. If such teachings were true, Christ would have died in vain, for there would be no defect or sin in man for which he would have had to die, or else he would have died only for the body and not for the soul inasmuch as the soul would be sound and only the body would be subject to death.

II. The Law

1 Here we maintain that the law was given by God first of all to restrain sins by threats and fear of punishment and by the promise and offer of grace and favor. But this purpose failed because of the wickedness which sin has worked in man. 2 Some, who hate the law because it forbids what they desire to do and commands what they are unwilling to do, are made worse thereby. Accordingly, in so far as they are not restrained by punishment, they act against the law even more than before. These are the rude and wicked people who do evil whenever they have opportunity. 3 Others become blind and presumptuous, imagining that they can and do keep the law by their own powers, as was just said above﻿﻿ concerning the scholastic theologians. Hypocrites and false saints are produced in this way.

4 However, the chief function or power of the law is to make original sin manifest and show man to what utter depths his nature has fallen and how corrupt it has become. So the law must tell him that he neither has nor cares for God or that he worships strange gods — something that he would not have believed before without a knowledge of the law. Thus he is terror-stricken and humbled, becomes despondent and despairing, anxiously desires help but does not know where to find it, and begins to be alienated from God, to murmur, etc. 5 This is what is meant by ﻿Rom. 4:15﻿, ﻿﻿ “﻿The law brings wrath,﻿” and ﻿Rom. 5:20﻿, “﻿Law came in to increase the trespass.﻿”

III. Repentance

1 This function of the law is retained and taught by the New Testament. So Paul says in ﻿Rom. 1:18﻿, “﻿The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men.﻿” and in ﻿Rom. 3:19﻿, ﻿20﻿, “﻿The whole world may be held accountable to God, for no human being will be justified in his sight.﻿” Christ also says in ﻿John 16:8﻿, “﻿The Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin.﻿”

2 This, then, is the thunderbolt by means of which God with one blow destroys both open sinners and false saints. He allows no one to justify himself. He drives all together into terror and despair. This is the hammer of which Jeremiah speaks, “﻿Is not my word like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces?﻿” (﻿Jer. 23:29﻿). This is not *activa contritio* (artificial remorse), but *passiva contritio* (true sorrow of the heart, suffering, and pain of death).

(tr-481) 3 This is what the beginning of true repentance is like. Here man must hear such a judgment as this: “﻿You are all of no account. Whether you are manifest sinners or saints,﻿﻿ you must all become other than you now are and do otherwise than you now do, no matter who you are and no matter how great, wise, mighty, and holy you may think yourselves. Here no one is godly,﻿” etc.

4 To this office of the law the New Testament immediately adds the consoling promise of grace in the Gospel. This is to be believed, as Christ says in ﻿Mark 1:15﻿, “﻿Repent and believe in the Gospel,﻿” which is to say, “﻿Become different, do otherwise, and believe my promise.﻿” 5 John, who preceded Christ, is called a preacher of repentance — but for the remission of sins. That is, John was to accuse them all and convince them that they were sinners in order that they might know how they stood before God and recognize themselves as lost men. In this way they were to be prepared to receive grace from the Lord and to expect and accept from him the forgiveness of sins. 6 Christ himself says this in ﻿Luke 24:47﻿, “﻿Repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations.﻿”

7 But where the law exercises its office alone, without the addition of the Gospel, there is only death and hell, and man must despair like Saul and Judas.﻿﻿ 8 As St. Paul says,﻿﻿ the law slays through sin. Moreover, the Gospel offers consolation and forgiveness in more ways than one, for with God there is plenteous redemption (as ﻿Ps. 130:7﻿ puts it) from the dreadful captivity to sin, and this comes to us through the Word, the sacraments, and the like, as we shall hear.﻿﻿

9 Now we must compare the false repentance of the sophists﻿﻿ with true repentance so that both may be better understood.

The False Repentance of the Papists

10 It was impossible for them to teach correctly about repentance because they did not know what sin really is. For, as stated above,﻿﻿ they did not have the right teaching concerning original sin but asserted that the natural powers of man have remained whole and uncorrupted, that reason is capable of right understanding and the will is capable of acting accordingly, and that God will assuredly grant his grace to the man who does as much as he can according to his free will.

11 From this it follows that people did penance only for actual sins, such as wicked thoughts to which they consented (for evil impulses, lust, and inclinations they did not consider sin), wicked words, and wicked works which man with his free will might well have avoided. 12 Such repentance the sophists divided into three parts — contrition, confession, and satisfaction — with the added consolation that a man who properly repents, confesses, and makes satisfaction has merited forgiveness and has paid for his sins before God. (tr-483) In their teaching of penance the sophists thus instructed the people to place their confidence in their own works. 13 Hence the expression in the pulpit when the general confession was recited to the people: “﻿Prolong my life, Lord God, until I make satisfaction for my sins and amend my life.﻿”﻿﻿

14 There was no mention here of Christ or of faith. Rather, men hoped by their own works to overcome and blot out their sins before God. With this intention we, too, became priests and monks, that we might set ourselves against sin.

15 As for contrition, this was the situation: Since nobody could recall all his sins (especially those committed during the course of a whole year),﻿﻿ the following loophole was resorted to, namely, that when a hidden sin was afterwards remembered, it had also to be repented of, confessed, etc., but meanwhile the sinner was commended to the grace of God. 16 Moreover, since nobody knew how much contrition he had to muster in order to avail before God, this consolation was offered: If anybody could not be contrite (that is, really repentant), he should at least be attrite (which I might call half-way or partially repentant). They understood neither of these terms, and to this day they are as far from comprehending their meaning as I am. Nevertheless, such attrition was reckoned as a substitute for contrition when people went to confession. 17 And when somebody said that he was unable to repent or be sorry for his sin (which might have been committed, let us say, in whoredom, revenge, or the like), such a person was asked if he did not wish or desire to be repentant. If he said Yes (for who but the devil himself would want to say No?) it was accounted as contrition and, on the basis of this good work of his, his sin was forgiven. Here the example of St. Bernard, etc. was cited.﻿﻿

18 Here we see how blind reason gropes about in matters which pertain to God, seeking consolation in its own works, according to its own inventions, without being able to consider Christ and faith. If we examine this in the light, we see that such contrition is an artificial and imaginary idea evolved by man’s own powers without faith and without knowledge of Christ. A poor sinner who reflected on his lust or revenge in this fashion would sooner have laughed than wept, unless perchance he was really smitten by the law or vainly vexed with a sorrowful spirit by the devil. Apart from cases like this, such repentance surely was pure hypocrisy. It did not extinguish the lust for sin. The person involved was obliged to grieve, but he would rather have sinned if he had been free to do so.

19 As for confession, the situation was like this: Everybody had to give an account of all his sins — an impossibility and the source of great torture. The sins which had been forgotten were pardoned only when a man remembered them and thereupon confessed them. Accordingly he could never know when he had made a sufficiently complete or a sufficiently pure confession. (tr-485) At the same time his attention was directed to his own works, and he was told that the more completely he confessed, the more he was ashamed, and the more he abased himself before the priest, the sooner and the better he would make satisfaction for his sins, for such humiliation would surely earn grace before God. Here, again, there was neither faith nor Christ. 20 A man did not become aware of the power of absolution, for his consolation was made to rest on his enumeration of sins and on his self-abasement. But this is not the place to recount the torture, rascality, and idolatry which such confession has produced.

21 Satisfaction was even more complicated,﻿﻿ for nobody could know how much he was to do for one single sin, to say nothing of all his sins. Here the expedient was resorted to of imposing small satisfactions which were easy to render, like saying five Our Fathers, fasting for a day, etc. For the penance that was still lacking man was referred to purgatory.

22 Here, too, there was nothing but anguish and misery. Some thought that they would never get out of purgatory because, according to the ancient canons, seven years of penance were required for a single mortal sin.﻿﻿ 23 Nevertheless, confidence was placed in man’s own works of satisfaction. If the satisfaction could have been perfect, full confidence would have been placed in it, and neither faith nor Christ would have been of any value. But such confidence was impossible. Even if one had done penance in this way for a hundred years, one would still not have know whether this was enough. This is a case of always doing penance but never coming to repentance.

24 Here the holy see in Rome came to the aid of the poor church and invented indulgences. But these satisfaction was remitted and canceled, first for seven years in a single case, then for a hundred, etc. The indulgences were distributed among the cardinals and bishops so that one could grant them for a hundred years, another for a hundred days, but the pope reserved for himself alone the right to remit the entire satisfaction.﻿﻿

25 When this began to yield money and the bull market became profitable, the pope invented the jubilee year and attached it to Rome.﻿﻿ This was called remission of all penalty and guilt,﻿﻿ and the people came running, for everyone was eager to be delivered from the heavy, unbearable burden. Here we have the discovery and digging up of the treasures of the earth.﻿﻿ The popes went further and quickly multiplied the jubilee years.﻿﻿ The more money they swallowed, the wider became their maws. So they sent their legates out into all lands until every church and house was reached by jubilee indulgences. 26 Finally the popes forced their way into purgatory, (tr-487) first by instituting Masses and vigils for the dead and afterwards by offering indulgences for the dead through bulls and jubilee years.﻿﻿ In time souls got to be so cheap that they were released at six pence a head.

27 Even this did not help, however, for although the pope taught the people to rely on and trust in such indulgences, he again introduced uncertainty when he declared in his bulls, “﻿Whoever wishes to benefit from the indulgence or jubilee year must be contrite, make confession, and pay money.﻿”﻿﻿ But the contrition and confession practiced by these people, as we have heard above,﻿﻿ are uncertain and hypocritical. Moreover, nobody knew which soul was in purgatory, and nobody knew which of those in purgatory had truly repented and properly confessed. So the pope took the money, consoled the people with his power and indulgences, and once again directed attention to uncertain human works.

28 There were some who did not think they were guilty of actual sins — that is, of sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. I and others like myself who wished to be monks and priests in monasteries and chapters fought against evil thoughts by fasting, vigils, prayers, Masses, coarse clothing, and hard beds and tried earnestly and mightily to be holy, and yet the hereditary evil which is born in us did what is its nature to do, sometimes while we slept (as St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and others confess).﻿﻿ Each one, however, held that some of the others were, as we taught, without sin and full of good works, and so we shared our good works with others and sold them to others in the belief that they were more than we ourselves needed for heaven. This is certainly true, and there are seals, letters, and examples to show it. 29 Such persons did not need to repent, for what were they to repent of when they did not consent to evil thoughts? What should they confess when they refrained from evil words? What satisfaction should they render when they were innocent of evil deeds and could even sell their superfluous righteousness to other poor sinners? The scribes and Pharisees in Christ’s time were just such saints.﻿﻿

30 Here the fiery angel﻿﻿ St. John, the preacher of true repentance, intervenes. With a single thunderbolt he strikes and destroys both. “﻿Repent,﻿” he says.﻿﻿ On the one hand there are some who think, “﻿We have already done penance,﻿” 31 and on the other hand there are others who suppose, “﻿We need no repentance.﻿” 32 But John says: “﻿Repent, both of you. Those of you in the former group are false penitents, and those of you in the latter are false saints. Both of you need the forgiveness of sins, for neither of you knows what sin really is, to say nothing of repenting and shunning sin. None of you is good. All of you are full of unbelief, blindness, and ignorance of God and God’s will. For he is here present, and from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.﻿﻿ No man can be just before God without him. (tr-489) Accordingly, if you would repent, repent rightly. Your repentance accomplishes nothing. And you hypocrites who think you do not need to repent, you brood of vipers,﻿﻿ who has given you any assurance that you will escape the wrath to come?﻿”

33 St. Paul teaches the same thing in ﻿Rom. 3:10-12﻿: “﻿None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong.﻿” 34 And in ﻿Acts 17:30﻿, “﻿Now he commands all men everywhere to repent.﻿” He says “﻿all men,﻿” that is, excepting no one who is a man. 35 Such repentance teaches us to acknowledge sin — that is, to acknowledge that we are all utterly lost, that from head to foot there is no good in us, that we must become altogether new and different men.

36 This repentance is not partial and fragmentary like repentance for actual sins, nor is it uncertain like that. It does not debate what is sin and what is not sin, but lumps everything together and says, “﻿We are wholly and altogether sinful.﻿” We need not spend our time weighing, distinguishing, differentiating. On this account there is no uncertainty in such repentance, for nothing is left that we might imagine to be good enough to pay for our sin. One thing is sure: We cannot pin our hope on anything that we are, think, say, or do. 37 And so our repentance cannot be false, uncertain, or partial, for a person who confesses that he is altogether sinful embraces all sins in his confession without omitting or forgetting a single one. 38 Nor can our satisfaction be uncertain, for it consists not of the dubious, sinful works which we do but of the sufferings and blood of the innocent Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.﻿﻿

39 This is the repentance which John preaches, which Christ subsequently preaches in the Gospel, and which we also preach. With this repentance we overthrow the pope and everything that is built on our good works, for all of this is constructed on an unreal and rotten foundation which is called good works or the law, although no good work but only wicked works are there and although no one keeps the law (as Christ says in ﻿John 7:19﻿) but all transgress it. Accordingly the entire building, even when it is most holy and beautiful, is nothing but deceitful falsehood and hypocrisy.

40 In the case of a Christian such repentance continues until death, for all through life it contends with the sins that remain in the flesh. As St. Paul testifies in ﻿Rom. 7:23﻿, he wars with the law in his members, and he does this not with his own powers but with the gift of the Holy Spirit which follows the forgiveness of sins. This gift daily cleanses and expels the sins that remain and enables man to become truly pure and holy.

(tr-491) 41 This is something about which the pope, the theologians, the jurists, and all men understand nothing. It is a teaching from heaven, revealed in the Gospel, and yet it is called a heresy by godless saints. 42 Some fanatics may appear (and perhaps they are already present, such as I saw with my own eyes at the time of the uprising)﻿﻿ who hold that once they have received the Spirit or the forgiveness of sins, or once they have become believers, they will persevere in faith even if they sin afterwards, and such sin will not harm them. They cry out, “﻿Do what you will, it matters not as long as you believe, for faith blots out all sins,﻿” etc. They add that if anyone sins after he has received faith and the Spirit, he never really had the Spirit and faith. I have encountered many foolish people like this and I fear that such a devil still dwells in some of them.

43 It is therefore necessary to know and to teach that when holy people, aside from the fact that they still possess and feel original sin and daily repent and strive against it, fall into open sin (as David fell into adultery, murder, and blasphemy),﻿﻿ faith and the Spirit have departed from them. 44 This is so because the Holy Spirit does not permit sin to rule and gain the upper hand in such a way that sin is committed, but the Holy Spirit represses and restrains it so that it does not do what it wishes. If the sin does what it wishes, the Holy Spirit and faith are not present, 45 for St. John says, “﻿No one born of God commits sin; he cannot sin.﻿”﻿﻿ Yet it is also true, as the same St. John writes, “﻿If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.﻿”﻿﻿

IV. The Gospel

We shall now return to the Gospel, which offers council and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in his grace: First, through the spoken word, by which the forgiveness of sin (the peculiar function of the Gospel) is preached to the whole world; second,﻿﻿ through Baptism; third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the keys; and finally, through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren. ﻿Matt. 18:20﻿, “﻿Where two or three are gathered,﻿” etc.﻿﻿

V. Baptism

1 Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in water, commanded by the institution of Christ; or as Paul says, “﻿the washing of water with the word﻿”;﻿﻿ or, again, as Augustine puts it, “﻿The Word is added to the element and it becomes a sacrament.﻿”﻿﻿ 2 Therefore we do not agree with Thomas﻿﻿ and the Dominicans who forget the Word (God’s institution) and say that God has joined to the water a spiritual power which, through the water, washes away sin. 3 Nor do we agree with Scotus﻿﻿ and the Franciscans who teach (tr-493) that Baptism washes away sin through the assistance of the divine will, as if the washing takes place only through God’s will and not at all through the Word and the water.

4 As for infant Baptism, we hold that children should be baptized, for they, too, are included in the promise of redemption which Christ made,﻿﻿ and the church should administer Baptism to them.

VI. The Sacrament of the Altar

1 We hold that the bread and the wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ and that these are given and received not only by godly but also by wicked Christians.

2 We also hold that it is not to be administered in one form only.﻿﻿ We need not resort to the specious learning of the sophists﻿﻿ and the Council of Constance﻿﻿ that as much is included under one form as under both. 3 Even if it were true that as much is included under one form as under both, yet administration in one form is not the whole order and institution as it was established and commanded by Christ. 4 Especially do we condemn and curse in God’s name those who not only omit both forms but even go so far as autocratically to prohibit, condemn, and slander the use of both as heresy and thus set themselves against and over Christ, our Lord and God, etc.

5 As for transubstantiation, we have no regard for the subtle sophistry of those who teach that bread and wine surrender or lose their natural substance and retain only the appearance and shape of bread without any longer being real bread, for that bread is and remains there agrees better with the Scriptures, as St. Paul himself states, “﻿The bread which we break﻿” (﻿1 Cor. 10:16﻿), and again, “﻿Let a man so eat of the bread﻿” (﻿1 Cor. 11:28﻿).

VII. The Keys

1 The keys are a function and power given to the church by Christ﻿﻿ to bind and loose sins, not only the gross and manifest sins but also those which are subtle and secret and which God alone perceives. So it is written, “﻿Who can discern his errors?﻿” (﻿Ps. 19:12﻿). And Paul himself complains (﻿Rom. 7:23﻿) that in his flesh he was captive to “﻿the law of sin.﻿” 2 It is not in our power but in God’s alone to judge which, how great, and how many our sins are. As it is written, “﻿Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for no man living is righteous before thee﻿” (﻿Ps. 143:2﻿), 3 and Paul also says in ﻿1 Cor. 4:4﻿, “﻿I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted.﻿”

VIII. Confession

1 Since absolution or the power of the keys, which was instituted by Christ in the Gospel, is a consolation and help against sin and a bad conscience, confession and absolution should by no means be allowed to fall into disuse in the church, especially for the sake of timid consciences and for the sake of untrained young people (tr-495) who need to be examined and instructed in Christian doctrine.

2 However, the enumeration of sins should be left free to everybody to do or not as he will. As long as we are in the flesh we shall not be untruthful if we say, “﻿I am a poor man, full of sin. I see in my members another law,﻿” etc. (﻿Rom. 7:23﻿). Although private absolution is derived from the office of the keys, it should not be neglected; on the contrary, it should be highly esteemed and valued, like all other functions of the Christian church.

3 In these matters, which concern the external, spoken Word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one his Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word which comes before. Thus we shall be protected from the enthusiasts — that is, from the spiritualists who boast that they possess the Spirit without and before the Word and who therefore judge, interpret, and twist the Scriptures or spoken Word according to their pleasure. Münzer﻿﻿ did this, and many still do it in our day who wish to distinguish sharply between the letter and the spirit without knowing what they say or teach. 4 The papacy, too, is nothing but enthusiasm, for the pope boasts that “﻿all laws are in the shrine of his heart,﻿”﻿﻿ and he claims that whatever he decides and commands in his churches is spirit and law, even when it is above and contrary to the Scriptures or spoken Word. 5 All this is the old devil and the old serpent who made enthusiasts of Adam and Eve. He led them from the external Word of God to spiritualizing and to their own imaginations, and he did this through other external words. 6 Even so, the enthusiasts of our day condemn the external Word, yet they do not remain silent but fill the world with their chattering and scribbling, as if the Spirit could not come through the Scriptures or the spoken word of the apostles but must come through their own writings and words. Why do they not stop preaching and writing until the Spirit himself comes to the people without and before their writings since they boast that the Spirit came upon them without the testimony of the Scriptures?﻿﻿ There is no time to dispute further about these matters. After all, we have treated them sufficiently elsewhere.﻿﻿

7 Even those who have come to faith before they were baptized and those who came to faith in Baptism came to their faith through the external Word which preceded. Adults who have attained the age of reason must first have heard, “﻿He who believes and is baptized will be saved﻿” (﻿Mark 16:16﻿), even if they did not at once believe and did not receive the Spirit and Baptism until ten years later. 8 Cornelius (﻿Acts 10:1ff﻿.) had long since heard from the Jews about the coming Messiah through whom he was justified before God, and his prayers and alms were acceptable to God in this faith (Luke calls him “﻿devout﻿” and “﻿God-fearing﻿”),﻿﻿ but he could not have believed and been justified if the Word and his hearing of it had not preceded. However, St. Peter had to reveal to him that the Messiah, in whose coming he had previously believed, had already come, and his faith concerning the coming Messiah did not hold him captive with the hardened, unbelieving Jews, but he knew that he now had to be (tr-497) saved by the present Messiah and not deny or persecute him as the Jews did.

9 In short, enthusiasm clings to Adam and his descendants from the beginning to the end of the world. It is a poison implanted and inoculated in man by the old dragon, and it is the source, strength, and power of all heresy, including that of the papacy and Mohammedanism. 10 Accordingly, we should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through his external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil. 11 For even to Moses God wished to appear first through the burning bush and the spoken word,﻿﻿ and no prophet, whether Elijah or Elisha, received the Spirit without the Ten Commandments. 12 John the Baptist was not conceived without the preceding word of Gabriel, 13 nor did he leap in his mother’s womb until Mary spoke.﻿﻿ St. Peter says that when the prophets spoke, they did not prophesy by the impulse of man but were moved by the Holy Spirit, yet as holy men of God.﻿﻿ But without the external Word they were not holy, and the Holy Spirit would not have moved them to speak while they were still unholy. They were holy, St. Peter says, because the Holy Spirit spoke through them.

IX. Excommunication

We consider the greater excommunication,﻿﻿ as the pope calls it, to be merely a civil penalty which does not concern us ministers of the church. However, the lesser (that is, the truly Christian) excommunication excludes those who are manifest and impenitent sinners from the sacrament and other fellowship in the church until they mend their ways and avoid sin. Preachers should not mingle civil punishments with this spiritual penalty or excommunication.

X. Ordination and Vocation

1 If the bishops were true bishops and were concerned about the church and the Gospel, they might be permitted (for the sake of love and unity, but not of necessity) to ordain and confirm us and our preachers,﻿﻿ provided this could be done without pretense, humbug, and unchristian ostentation. However, they neither are nor wish to be true bishops. 2 They are temporal lords and princes who are unwilling to preach or teach or baptize or administer Communion or discharge any office or work in the church. More than that, they expel, persecute, and condemn those who have been called to do these things. Yet the church must not be deprived of ministers on their account.

3 Accordingly, as we are taught by the examples of the ancient churches and Fathers, we shall and ought ourselves ordain suitable persons to this office. The papists have no right to forbid or prevent us, not even according to their own laws, for their laws state that those who are ordained by heretics shall also be regarded as ordained and remain so.﻿﻿ St. Jerome, too, wrote concerning the church in Alexandria that it was originally governed without bishops by priests and preachers in common.﻿﻿(tr-499)

XI. The Marriage of Priests

1 The papists had neither authority nor right to prohibit marriage and burden the divine estate of priests with perpetual celibacy. On the contrary, they acted like antichristian, tyrannical, and wicked scoundrels, and thereby they gave occasion for all sorts of horrible, abominable, and countless sins, in which they are still involved. 2 As little as the power has been given to us or to them to make a woman out of a man or a man out of a woman or abolish distinctions of sex altogether, so little have they had the power to separate such creatures of God or forbid them to live together honestly in marriage. 3 We are therefore unwilling to consent to their abominable celibacy, nor shall we suffer it. On the contrary, we desire marriage to be free, as God ordained and instituted it, and we shall not disrupt or hinder God’s work, for St. Paul says that to do so is a doctrine of demons.﻿﻿

XII. The Church

1 We do not concede to the papists that they are the church, for they are not. 2 Nor shall we pay any attention to what they command or forbid in the name of the church, for, thank God, a seven-year-old child﻿﻿ knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd.﻿﻿ 3 So children pray, “﻿I believe in one holy Christian church.﻿” Its holiness does not consist of surplices, tonsures, albs, or other ceremonies of theirs which they have invented over and above the Holy Scriptures, but it consists of the Word of God and true faith.

XIII. How Man Is Justified Before God,  
and His Good Works

1 I do not know how I can change what I have heretofore constantly taught on this subject, namely, that by faith (as St. Peter says)﻿﻿ we get a new and clean heart and that God will and does account us altogether righteous and holy for the sake of Christ, our mediator. Although the sin in our flesh has not been completely removed or eradicated, he will not count or consider it.

2 Good works follow such faith, renewal, and forgiveness. Whatever is still sinful or imperfect in these works will not be reckoned as sin or defect for the sake of the same Christ. The whole man, in respect both of his person and of his works, shall be accounted and shall be righteous and holy through the pure grace and mercy which have been poured out upon us so abundantly in Christ. 3 Accordingly we cannot boast of the great merit in our works if they are considered apart from God’s grace and mercy, but, as it is written, “﻿Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord﻿” (﻿1 Cor. 1:31﻿). That is to say, all is well if we boast that we have a gracious God. To this we must add that if good works do not follow, our faith is false and not true. (tr-501)

XIV. Monastic Vows

1 Since monastic vows are in direct conflict with the first chief article, they must be absolutely set aside. It is of these that Christ says in ﻿Matt. 24:5﻿, “﻿I am the Christ,﻿” etc. Whoever takes the vows of monastic life believes that he is entering upon a mode of life that is better than that of the ordinary Christian and proposes by means of his work to help not only himself but also others to get to heaven. This is to deny Christ, etc. And on the authority of their St. Thomas, such people boast that a monastic vow is equal to Baptism.﻿﻿ This is blasphemy.

XV. Human Traditions

1 The assertion of the papists that human traditions effect forgiveness or sins or merit salvation is unchristian and to be condemned. As Christ says, “﻿In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men﻿” (﻿Matt. 15:9﻿), and it is written in ﻿Titus 1:14﻿, “﻿They are men who reject the truth.﻿” 2 When the papists say that it is a mortal sin to break such precepts of men, this, too, is false.

3 These are the articles on which I must stand and on which I will stand, God willing, until my death. I do not know how I can change or concede anything in them. If anybody wishes to make some concessions, let him do so at the peril of his own conscience.

4 Finally, there remains the pope’s bag of magic tricks which contains silly and childish articles, such as the consecration of churches, the baptism of bells, the baptism of altar stones, the invitation to such ceremonies of sponsors who might make gifts, etc. Such baptizing is a ridicule and mockery of holy Baptism which should not be tolerated.﻿﻿ 5 In addition, there are blessings of candles, palms, spices, oats, cakes, etc.﻿﻿ These cannot be called blessings, and they are not, but are mere mockery and fraud. Such frauds, which are without number, we commend for adoration to their god and to themselves until they tire of them. We do not wish to have anything to do with them.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Discussion Questions

1. The Smalcald Articles are teach that the depth of original sin is all encompassing and renders the individual unable to do good and as an enemy of God. If one held to a different view of original sin, how would that affect his view of other doctrines? Can you think any contemporary examples that deny the teaching of original sin? Find one Bible passage that supports the Lutheran view of original sin.
2. According to the Smalcald Articles, what is the purpose of the Law?
3. What is the result when the Law is found without the Gospel? What does the Gospel offer?
4. What problem does Luther cite for their teaching of “contrition, confession and satisfaction?” What contemporary parallel can you think of?
5. According to Article VI, what are the four ways the Gospel is delivered?
6. For what reason does Luther say children should also be baptized?
7. Explain what Luther means when he says, “[the Lord’s Supper should be] given and received and received not only by godly but also by wicked Christians” (Article VI, para 1, p. 6).
8. How did Luther see the church’s use in the church?
9. How is man justified before God? (p. 9)

1. Theodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2000, c1959), 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)