

The Smalcald Articles

Lesson Five

The Dragon's Tale

Part II, Article II, 11-29.

Part II, Article III

11] In addition to all this, that dragon's tail, the Mass, has begotten a brood of vermin and multiple idolatries.

12] First: purgatory. **[Q1]** They have dealt so much with masses for souls, with vigils, with weekly, monthly, and yearly commemorations of funerals, and finally with the Common Week and All Soul's Day and soul-baths for those in purgatory, that the Mass is used almost alone for the dead, although Christ has instituted the Sacrament alone for the living. Therefore purgatory—and every solemnity, rite, and commerce connected with it—is to be regarded as nothing but a phantom of the devil. For it conflicts with the chief article that only Christ, and not the works of men, are to help souls **[Q2]**. Not to mention the fact that nothing has been commanded or demanded from us concerning the dead. Therefore all this may be safely omitted, even if it weren't error and idolatry.

13] The Papists quote here Augustine and some of the fathers who are said to have written concerning purgatory. They think that we don't understand for what purpose and to what end they spoke as they did. St. Augustine does not write that there is a purgatory, nor does he offer any testimony of Scripture that compels him to accept it. Instead, he leaves it in doubt whether it exists. He only says that his mother asked to be remembered at the altar or Sacrament. Now, all this is nothing but human acts of devotion, and that of individuals. It does not establish an article of faith, which belongs to God alone. **[Q3]**

14] Our Papists, however, cite such statements of men in order that people should believe in their horrible, blasphemous, and damnable traffic in masses for souls in purgatory, and so on. But they will never prove these things from Augustine. When they have abolished the traffic in masses for purgatory, which Augustine never dreamed of, we will discuss with them whether the expressions of Augustine are to be admitted as evidence without scriptural proof, and whether the dead should be remembered at the Eucharist. **15]** For it is not allowed to formulate articles of faith from the works or words of the holy fathers. If it were, then their kind of food, clothing, houses, etc., would have to become an article of faith, too, as happened with relics. The rule is: The Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel.

16] Second: From this it has followed that evil spirits have done a great deal of harm by appearing as the souls of the departed. With unspeakable lies and tricks they demanded masses, vigils, pilgrimages, and other alms. **[Q4]** **17]** We had to accept all this as articles of faith, and to live accordingly. The Pope confirmed these things, as he did the Mass and all the other outrages. Here, too, there is no yielding or surrendering.

18] Third: pilgrimages. **[Q5]** Masses, the remission of sins and the grace of God were sought in this too, for the Mass controlled everything. Now it is certain that such pilgrimages, without the Word of God, have not been commanded of us. They are not necessary, since we can have forgiveness in a better way. We can omit these pilgrimages without any sin or danger. Why do they leave at home their own parish, the Word of God, wives, children, etc., which are necessary and commanded, and run after these unnecessary, uncertain, destructive fireflies of the devil? **[Q6]** **19]** Only because the devil was riding the Pope, causing him to praise and establish these practices, so that the people

again and again revolted against Christ and turned to their own works. They became idolaters, which is the worst of all. Moreover, pilgrimages are neither necessary nor commanded. Instead, they are senseless and doubtful, and even harmful. [Q7] Because of all this here, too, there can be no yielding or surrendering. 20] And let this be preached, that such pilgrimages are not necessary, but dangerous. Then we will see what becomes of them.

21] Fourth: Fraternities, to which cloisters, chapters, and vicars have pledged and communicated (by a legal contract and sale) all masses and good works, and so forth, both for the living and the dead. This is not only altogether an entirely unnecessary human bauble, without the command of the Word of God, but it also contrary to the chief article, Of Redemption. Therefore it is in no way to be tolerated.

22] Fifth: The relics, in which so many lies and swindles concerning the bones of dogs and horses are found that even the devil has laughed at such deceptions. These ought to have been condemned long ago, even if there were some good in them, even more so, because they are without the Word of God. Since they are neither commanded nor counseled, they are entirely unnecessary and useless. 23] But the worst is that these relics had to work indulgence and the forgiveness of sins as a good work and service of God, like the Mass, and so forth. [Q8]

24] Sixth: Here belong the “precious” indulgences [Q9] granted (but only for money) both to the living and the dead. By these, that miserable Judas, the Pope, has sold the merit of Christ, together with the superfluous merits of all saints and of the entire Church. All these things are not to be borne. Not only are they without the Word of God, without necessity or command, but are opposed to the chief article. For the merit of Christ is obtained not by our works or pennies, but from grace through faith, without money and merit. It is not offered through the power of the Pope, but through the preaching of God’s Word. [Q10]

Of the Invocation of Saints.

25] The invocation of saints [Q11] is also one of the abuses of the Antichrist. It conflicts with the chief article, and destroys the knowledge of Christ. It is not commanded nor counseled, nor is there any example of it in Scripture. Even if it were a precious thing (which it isn’t), in Christ we have everything a thousand times better (so we don’t need to call on the saints).

26] Although the angels in heaven pray for us [Q12] (as Christ Himself also does), as do the saints on earth, and perhaps also in heaven, [Q13] still it does not follow from this that we should invoke and adore the angels and saints. Nor that we should fast, hold festivals, celebrate Mass in their honor, make offerings, and establish churches, altars, divine worship, and in still other ways serve them, and regard them as helpers in need, and divide up among them all kinds of assistance, ascribing to each one his particular form, as the Papists teach and do. This is idolatry. That honor belongs to God alone. 27] As a Christian and saint on earth you can pray for me, not once, but in every need. But I am not obligated to adore and invoke you, and celebrate festivals, fast, make offerings, hold masses for your honor, and put my faith in you for my salvation because of that. I can indeed honor, love, and thank you in Christ in other ways. 28] If now such idolatrous honor were withdrawn from angels and departed saints, the remaining honor would be without harm and would quickly be forgotten. [Q14] For if the benefit and assistance, both bodily and spiritual, are not expected any more, the saints will be left in peace, both in their graves and in heaven. For without a reward or simply out of love no one will much remember, or esteem, or honor them.

29] In short, we cannot tolerate the Mass itself or anything that proceeds from it, or anything that is attached to it. [Q15] But we must condemn them, in order that we may retain the holy Sacrament pure and certain, according to the institution of Christ, employed and received through faith.

Article III: Of Chapters and Cloisters.

1] *Chapters* and *cloisters* were founded in the past with the good intention of our forefathers to educate learned men and chaste women. They ought again to be turned to that use in order that pastors, preachers, and other ministers of the churches may be had. In the same way, other necessary persons can be trained for secular government in cities and countries, as well as well-educated maidens as mothers and housekeepers, etc. [Q16]

2] If they will not serve this purpose, rather than being continued with their blasphemous services invented by men and be regarded as something better than the ordinary Christian life and the offices and callings ordained by God, it is better that they be abandoned or destroyed. For all this also is contrary to the first chief article concerning the redemption made through Jesus Christ. [Q17] In addition (like all other human inventions) these have not been commanded either. They are needless and useless, and, besides, afford occasion for dangerous and futile works. Such services the prophets call in Hebrew *Aven*, that is, pain and labor.

Discuss

1. What is purgatory? Why is it connected to the Mass? [Para 12]

2. Why does purgatory conflict with justification? [Para 12]

3. Go to the source. [Para 13]

Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

- These verses are sometimes used to “prove” that the Scriptures teach the existence of purgatory. What do you think?

Read Ecclesiastes 12:7.

- What happens when we die?

4. What is Luther talking about with his second point? [Para 16]

5. What is a pilgrimage? How is it different from sight-seeing? [Para 18]

6. According to Luther, what problems were pilgrimages causing? [Para 18]

7. What was Luther's primary concern with pilgrimages? [Para 19]

8. How do you think the interest in relics got started? What benefit did people come to see in them? [Para 23]

9. How do you understand indulgences? What did most people think they were buying? [Para 24]

10. What comfort did Luther want us to have in the middle of all these arguments? [Para 24]

11. How does one "invoke" the saints? [Para 25]

12. Go to the source. [Para 26]
Read Matthew 18:10 and Luke 15:10.
 - What does Jesus say?

 - Do angels pray for us?

13. Go to the source. [Para 26]
Read Revelation 14:13; 6:9-11.
 - What promise does God give to us concerning when we die?

 - What concern will we still have?

 - Do the saints in heaven pray for us?

14. Is there a legitimate way to honor believers who have died? [Para 28]

15. What is the primary reason for rejecting the Catholic concept of the Mass? [Para 29]

16. Are monasteries wrong in themselves? [Para 1]

17. What is Luther's main concern about monasticism? [Para 2]

During the week

1. Reread Part II, Articles II and III.
2. Read Part II, Article IV.
3. What a church believes determines what a church does. All of our practices should reflect what God has taught us in his Word. Do you think that it ever goes the other way? That is, can what we do affect what we think and change what we believe about God? Think about the practices of our church that you enjoy and the ones that you don't. Think also about practices you have seen in other churches. Why do we do what we do? Why do they?

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Lesson Six

The Antichrist