

The Smalcald Articles

Lesson Four

Sacrifice or Sacrament?

Part II, Article II, 1-10

Article II: Of the Mass.

1] The Mass in the Papacy has to be the greatest and most horrible outrage, since it directly and powerfully conflicts with the chief article. Yet it has been the highest and most precious of all the other popish idolatries, above and before all the rest. **[Q1]** For it has been held that this sacrifice or work of the Mass (even when rendered by a wicked scoundrel) frees men from sins, both in this life and also in purgatory. **[Q2]** Only the Lamb of God can and must do this, as has been said above. Of this article nothing is to be surrendered or conceded, because the first article does not allow it.

2] If we should meet reasonable Papists, we might speak moderately and in a friendly way, like this:

First of all, why do they cling so tightly to the Mass? It is a pure invention of men, and has not been commanded by God. We may discard every invention of man, as Christ declares in Matthew 15:9: *They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.* **[Q3]**

3] Secondly, it is an unnecessary thing. It can be omitted without sin and danger. **[Q4]**

4] Thirdly, the Sacrament can be received in a better and more blessed way (indeed, in the only blessed way), according to the institution of Christ. Why, then, do they drive the world to misery and distress on account of a made-up, unnecessary object when the real object can be obtained in another and more blessed way? **5]** Let it be publicly preached to the people that since the Mass is human drivel, it can be omitted without sin. No one will be condemned who does not observe it, but he can be saved in a better way without the Mass. I wager that the Mass will then collapse of itself, not only among the ignorant masses, but also among all pious, Christian, reasonable, God-fearing hearts; so much the more, if they would hear that the Mass is a dangerous thing, fabricated and invented without the will and Word of God.

6] Fourthly, since such innumerable and unspeakable abuses have arisen in the whole world from the buying and selling of masses, the Mass should by all rights be abandoned, if for no other reason than to prevent abuses, even if it had something advantageous and good in itself. How much more ought we to abandon it to forever prevent such abuses, since it is altogether unnecessary, useless, and dangerous, and we can obtain everything by a more necessary, profitable, and certain way without the Mass.

7] Fifthly (as the Canon and all books declare), the Mass is and can be nothing other than a work of men (even of wicked scoundrels), by which one wishes to reconcile himself and others to God, and to obtain and merit the remission of sins and grace (the Mass is observed in this way when it is observed for the very best; otherwise what purpose would it serve?). For this very reason it must and should be condemned and rejected. For this directly conflicts with the chief article, **[Q5]** which says that it is not a wicked or a pious servant of the Mass with his own work who takes our sins away, but the Lamb of God and the Son of God. **[Q6]**

8] But if anyone wishes to administer the Sacrament, or Communion, to himself under the pretense of an act of devotion, that cannot be taken seriously. For if he seriously wishes to commune, the surest and best way for him is in the Sacrament administered according to Christ's institution. But administering communion to oneself is an uncertain, unnecessary, indeed, even prohibited, human notion. And he does not know what he is doing, because without the Word of God he obeys a false

human opinion and invention. [Q7] 9] So, too, it is not right (even though the matter were otherwise correct) for someone to use the common Sacrament of the Church according to his own private devotion and to trifle with it without God's Word and apart from the communion of the Church.

[Q8]

10] This article concerning the Mass will be the whole business of the Council. For if it were possible for them to concede to us all the other articles, still they could not concede this. Campegius said at Augsburg that he would be torn to pieces before he would relinquish the Mass. So would I, too, with God's help, suffer myself to be reduced to ashes before I would allow a servant of the Mass, good or bad, to be made equal to Christ Jesus, my Lord and Savior, or to be exalted above Him. Thus we are and remain eternally separated and opposed to one another. They sense correctly that when the Mass falls, the Papacy lies in ruins. Before they will permit this to occur, they will kill us all if they can. [Q9]

Discuss

1. What is the difference between the Mass and the Lord's Supper? [Para 1]
2. This may sound very similar to what we say about the Lord's Supper. How is it different? [Para 1]
3. Evaluate the moderate and friendly way in which Luther wants to speak. What points does he make? [Para 2]

4. You make the call. [Para 3]

A young man attended the wedding of his Catholic cousin. At the reception, he was talking with his uncle and aunt about going to church the next day. Immediately, his uncle asked, "But we get credit for the mass at the wedding, don't we?" What does the Catholic Church teach that may have contributed to this man's misunderstanding about attending church?

5. What is the chief article of faith? [Para 7]

6. Go to the source. [Para 7]

Read Matthew 26:26-29.

- What does Jesus say? Who, then, is the one who gives us forgiveness?

7. What is Luther referring to here? [Para 8]

8. Is Luther saying that any form of private communion is wrong? [Para 9]

9. Do you agree with Luther that Roman Catholics and Lutherans will never be able to reach agreement on this point? [Para 10]

During the week

1. Reread Article II, paragraphs 1-10.
2. Read Article II, paragraphs 11-29 and Article III.
3. The Lord's Supper is given to us to comfort us when our consciences bother us. Luther loved that gift. He said: "When I preach his death, it is in a public sermon in the congregation, in which I am addressing myself to no one individually; whoever grasps it, grasps it. But when I distribute the sacrament, I designate it for the individual who is receiving it; I give him Christ's body and blood that he may have forgiveness of sins, obtained through his death and preached in the congregation. In the sermon one does not point out or portray any particular person, but in the sacrament it is given to you and to me in particular, so the sermon comes to be our own." (The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ—Against the Fanatics LW 36:348-9) From this, can you say why Luther was so troubled by the Catholic concept of the Mass?