

# The Smalcald Articles

## Lesson Seven

### *Sin and the Law*

#### *Part III, Articles I and II*

#### **The Third Part of the Articles.**

We may be able to discuss the following articles with learned and reasonable men, or among ourselves. The Pope and his government are not very concerned about these things. For among them conscience is nothing, but money, honors, and power are everything. [Q1]

#### **I. Of Sin.**

**1]** Here we must confess, as Paul says in Romans 5:11 that *sin entered the world through one man [Adam]* by whose disobedience all men were made sinners, subject to death and the devil. This is called original or the chief sin.

**2]** The fruits of this sin are the evil deeds which are forbidden in the Ten Commandments, such as unbelief, false faith, idolatry, being without the fear of God, arrogance, despair, blindness, and, in short, not knowing or regarding God. To those we add lying, swearing by God's name, not praying, not calling on God, not paying attention to God's Word, being disobedient to parents, murder, sexual immorality, stealing, deceiving, etc. [Q2]

**3]** This hereditary sin is such a deep and evil corruption of nature that no reason can understand it. It has to be believed from the revelation of the Scriptures (Psalm 51:5; Romans 6:12ff; Exodus 33:3; and Genesis 3:7ff). [Q3] For that reason, what the scholastic doctors have taught in regard to this article is pure error and blindness. They say:

**4]** That since Adam's fall into sin, the natural powers of man have remained complete and uncorrupted, and that man by nature has a spiritually sound reason and a good will. This is just as the philosophers teach these things. [Q4]

**5]** That man has a free will to do good and to avoid evil, and, conversely, to avoid good and to do evil. [Q5]

**6]** That man by his natural powers can observe and keep all the commands of God. [Q6]

**7]** That man by his natural powers can love God above all things and his neighbor as himself. [Q7]

**8]** That if a man does as much as is in him, God certainly grants him His grace. [Q8]

**9]** That if he wishes to go to the Sacrament, there is no need of a sincere intention to do good. It is enough if he does not have a wicked intention to sin, since his nature is so completely good and the Sacrament is so powerful. [Q9]

**10]** That it is Scriptural to say that we can do a good work without the Holy Spirit with His grace. [Q10]

**11]** These and many similar things have risen from a lack of understanding and ignorance regarding both sin and Christ, our Savior. They are truly heathen teachings, which we cannot endure. For if this teaching were right, then Christ died in vain, since there is in man no damage nor sin for which

he should have died. Or he would have died only for the body, not for the soul, because the soul is healthy, and only the body is subject to death.

## **II. Of the Law.**

**1]** Here we hold that the Law was given by God, first of all, to restrain sin by threats and the fear of punishment, and by the promise and offer of grace and blessing. But all this miscarried because of the wickedness which sin has worked in man. **2]** Some, who are the enemies of the Law, even became worse from this, because the Law forbids what they like to do and commands what they don't like to do. Therefore, whenever they can escape punishment, they do more that is against the Law than before. These rude and wicked men do evil wherever they have the opportunity. **[Q11]**

**3]** The rest become blind and arrogant, and conceive the opinion that they observe and can observe the Law by their own powers, as has been said above concerning the scholastic theologians. That's where hypocrites and false saints come from. **[Q12]**

**4]** But the chief office or force of the Law is that it reveals original sin with all its fruits, and shows man how far his nature has fallen, and how utterly corrupt it has become. **[Q13]** The law must tell man that he has no God nor does he pay attention to God. He even worships false gods, which he would not have believed without knowing the Law. In this way he becomes terrified, is humbled, gives up hope, despairs, and anxiously desires aid, but sees no escape. He begins to become an enemy of God, and to murmur, and so forth. **5]** This is what Paul says in Romans 4:15: *The law brings wrath.* And in Romans 5:20: *The law was added so that the trespass might increase.*

### ***Discuss***

1. How do you understand Luther's suggestion that we may be able to discuss these things? With whom did he hold out this hope? [Preface]

2. Go to the source. [I: Para 2]

Read Ephesians 2:1-3.

- What were we like before we became Christians?
- Where did our sins come from?

3. You make the call. [I: Para 3]

A pastor once asked a man he met on the street why God should let him into heaven. The man replied: "When I was growing up, my father owned a restaurant. He never turned away a homeless person or anyone who needed help. He fed them from the kitchen. I've tried to live like that too. I never turn someone away who needs help." What didn't this man understand? What did he need to learn in order to believe in Christ?

4. Go to the source. [I: Para 4]

Read Matthew 15:19.

- What is the human heart like?

5. Go to the source. [I: Para 5]

Read Romans 6:20-22.

- What two states of man does this passage describe?

- Is a slave ever free?

6. Go to the source. [I: Para 6]

Read 1 John 1:8.

- What does God say about the person who thinks he doesn't sin?

7. God does command that we love him above everything and also love our neighbors. But does that imply that we can obey his commands? [I: Para 7]

8. You make the call. [I: Para 8]

A young woman was dying from cancer after living a promiscuous and sinful life. She began to be afraid of what would happen when she died because of the way she had lived. One of her brothers comforted her by saying, "You did the best you could." Why is there no comfort in those words?

9. What is wrong with a person who comes to Holy Communion without sincere intentions? [I: Para 9]

10. Go to the source. [I: Para 10]

Read Romans 8:13,14.

How do we avoid sin and live the way God wants us to live?

11. Go to the source. [II: Para 2]

Read Romans 1:28-32.

What happens when people throw away God's law?

12. What reaction to the law is more dangerous for a Christian? [II: Para 3]

13. You make the call. [II: Para 4]

After listening to a sermon that dealt with love in a very direct and forceful way and then promised Jesus' forgiveness for us since our love is insufficient, a member said to the pastor: "I was so disappointed today. While you were preaching, I thought to myself, 'Finally! A call to the Christian life!' But then you let them off the hook at the end." What do think this person wanted? What didn't she understand?

***During the week***

1. Reread Part III, Articles I and II.
2. Read Part III, Article III, paragraphs 1-23.
3. In today's world, it is almost universally accepted that there's a little bit of good in everyone. How does that undermine God's law? More important, how does it destroy the gospel? During the week, take the time to listen to or read what churches say about God's law, and note or even underline how many times this doctrine is reduced or minimized or openly denied. Then look and see if those churches clearly preach the gospel, that Jesus Christ took our place in hell and paid for our sins so that we are declared to be righteous before God.