

THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS SERIES



THE
SMALCALD
ARTICLES
AND THE TREATISE



STUDY GUIDE

Smalcald Articles and the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

The Lutheran Confessions Series

Henry V. Gerike



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3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
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Manufactured in the United States of America

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Introduction

The Story of the Smalcald Articles and The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

The Smalcald Articles were written by Martin Luther in late 1536. Earlier that year (on June 4), Pope Paul III announced that a council would be held in Mantua beginning May 8, 1537, to deal with the concerns of the protesting “Lutherans.” Elector (prince) John Frederick of Saxony requested that Luther prepare some articles for discussion at the council. Luther indicated on which points Lutherans would stand fast and on which points a compromise might be possible. While these articles were never used for their intended purpose, Lutherans at once recognized their value as a statement of pure evangelical doctrine; therefore, they were included in the Book of Concord.

Written at a time when Luther believed the end of his life to be near, the Smalcald Articles are his own declaration of faith, characterized by evangelical fervor and uncompromising conviction. In each article, Luther’s strong voice is heard, especially his bold defiance of all the forces that would seek to destroy the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Along with his Small and Large Catechisms, the Smalcald Articles constitute Luther’s personal contribution to the Book of Concord.

The “Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope” was prepared by Philip Melanchthon at the meeting at Smalcald in 1537. Luther’s Smalcald Articles were to be discussed at the meeting; however, partly because Luther became ill, they were never publicly presented to the assembly. Instead, Melanchthon was requested to prepare this Treatise, which is actually an appendix to the Augsburg Confession.

Note on Contemporary Roman Catholic Doctrine

The Smalcald Articles (by Martin Luther) and the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (by Philip Melanchthon) were written in an academic style of debate common to the sixteenth century. For modern readers, the language of some portions of these Confessions may appear quite harsh. However, readers should keep in mind that how we prefer to debate important ideas today should not keep us from seeing how Luther and Melanchthon demonstrated how the Doctrine of Justification impacts all other doctrines and practices of Christ’s Church.

As Lutherans, we rejoice in the positive improvements in faith and life made by the Roman Catholic Church over the past 500 years. These improvements include the marked decrease in papal power over temporal affairs, an increase of interest in studying the Scriptures, communion in both kinds in some parishes, a renewal in worship life, an increased role for laity, and so on. Nevertheless, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope still point out clearly and consistently the chief doctrinal errors of the Roman Catholic Church.

Lutherans “give thanks to God for justifying us sinners by His grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone” (Resolution 3-10, *Convention Proceedings* of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, p. 140). Because of this, they continue to welcome the opportunity to fraternally discuss doctrinal issues with the Roman Catholic Church on the basis of Scripture, and

prayerfully wait in hope for the day that that church body, in truth, affirms key Bible teachings, particularly the Doctrine of Justification.

For a summary and critique of *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1997), a document cosigned by both the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church (amended) and purporting to show doctrinal agreement on justification, log on to <http://web.archive.org/web/20050910202448/www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=2212>.

To understand more how *The Joint Declaration*, while showing improvements in Roman Catholic teaching since Vatican II, still highlights the continued, substantive, and church-dividing differences between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches on this doctrine, log on to <http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CTCR/justclp.pdf>.

Using This Study Guide

Each Study Guide and Leader Guide (available online at www.cph.org as a download) discussing the Lutheran Confessions has thirteen sessions. Following a Law/Gospel focus and a psalm for worship, sessions are divided into four easy-to-use sections. In the Study Guide, these are noted by their bold, centered titles appearing within the text.

Focus—Section 1 focuses the participants' attention on the key concept that will be discovered in the session.

Inform—Section 2 explores a portion of the Confessions and questions that help the participants study the text.

Connect—Section 3 helps the participants apply the doctrine to their lives.

Vision—Section 4 provides the participants with practical suggestions for taking the theme of the lesson out of the classroom and into the world. This section also concludes with a hymn for worship and a reading assignment for the following week.

May God bless the study of His truth as we celebrate His grace to us through Jesus, our Lord. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we focus again on the rich heritage that is ours as the people of God in Christ.

Hymnal Key

LSB=Lutheran Service Book

ELH=Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary

CW=Christian Worship

LW=Lutheran Worship

LBW=Lutheran Book of Worship

TLH=The Lutheran Hymnal

Session 1

The Smalcald Articles: The Preface

Confessing the Faith

Law/Gospel Focus

As faithful Christians struggle against the sin in their lives and try to confess with boldness the faith they have in Christ, so also the Church struggles daily with false teaching and unbelief. God's Word is the truth and the standard for the Church and the Christian. The truth of God's Word reveals the falsehoods taught by some and the differences between denominations.

Opening Worship

Pray Psalm 89:1–2, 5 and Psalm 119:46.

Leader: I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame.

Participants: **I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known Your faithfulness to all generations.**

Leader: For I said, “Steadfast love will be built up forever; in the heavens You will establish Your faithfulness.

Participants: **Let the heavens praise Your wonders, O LORD, Your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!**

All: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame.**

Introduction

Desiring the opportunity to confess and publicly speak the faith they believed, Luther and his fellow believers looked forward to a general council to be called by the pope. On June 4, 1536, Paul III issued a formal decree for a general council to be held in Mantua, Italy, beginning May 23, 1537. Many Lutherans were uncertain about attending the council, thinking that by attending they would be acknowledging the pope as head of the Church. Luther himself saw the council as an opportunity to speak the truth and perhaps persuade some people. Luther's protector, Elector John Frederick, nephew of Frederick the Wise, commissioned Luther to prepare a statement of faith in the form of confessional articles for the Lutherans to use in their preparation for the council. In preparing these articles of faith for presentation to Lutheran theologians and leaders on February 7, 1537, Luther became seriously ill. Convinced that death was near, Luther saw these articles as the last chance for him to confess his faith. Even though he would live another ten years, the Smalcald Articles can be regarded as Luther's last will and testament. Elector John Frederick presented Luther's document to the meeting of the Smalcaldic

League on February 8, 1537. Some members of the League thought Luther's statement of the faith was too strong. Although Luther's articles were not formally adopted by the Smalcaldic League, forty-four of the Lutherans present did sign them. Even Luther's friend Philip Melancthon signed them with a caveat that if the pope were to allow the Gospel, his authority could be accepted as a human institution for the sake of order in the Church. Even though the Council of Mantua never took place, by the 1577 completion and adoption of the Formula of Concord, Luther's articles were highly regarded and adopted as part of the Lutheran Church's formal confession of faith.

1. What would you consider a legitimate reason for not going to a public forum?
2. What purpose is there in preparing a statement before going to a council or meeting?
3. How does illness, disease, or heart attack change the perspective of an individual?

Inform

Preface of Dr. Martin Luther

Pope Paul III called a council last year that was supposed to assemble at Mantua around Pentecost. Later, he moved it from Mantua. Now, no one knows where he will or can hold it. On our side, we expected either to be summoned to the council or to just be condemned without being summoned. I was told to set forth and pull together the articles of our doctrine. In the deliberations at the council, we could then be clear about what we would be willing and able to concede to the papists, and what points we intended to persist with and stand for to the end.

So I have compiled these articles and presented them to our side, which has unanimously accepted and confessed them. We have resolved to present these publicly to set forth the confession of our faith. (Perhaps the pope with his supporters would be so bold as to hold a truly free Christian council, seriously and in good faith, as is his duty, without lying and cheating.)

The Roman court, though, is terribly afraid of a free Christian council. They are ashamed to be exposed to the light. The Roman court has dashed the hope, even of those who are on their side, that they will ever permit a free council—much less hold one themselves. Many on the pope's side are greatly offended and rightly troubled at this negligence. For they realize that the pope would rather see all Christendom perish and all souls damned than allow either himself or his followers to be reformed even a little or to have their tyranny be limited. Yet I have decided to publish these articles in plain print in case I should die

before there would be a council (as I fully expect and hope). For those scoundrels who run away from the light and avoid the day are taking pains to delay and prevent the council. If I do die, those who are alive and those who come after me will have my testimony and confession (in addition to the one I have issued previously). I have remained in this confession up to now, and by God's grace, I will remain in it.

What should I say? Why should I complain? I am still alive—writing, preaching, and lecturing daily. Yet poisonous people—not only adversaries, but also false brothers who profess to be on our side—dare to cite my writings and doctrine directly against me. They let me look on and listen, even though they know very well that I teach differently from what they say. They want to dress up their poison with my labor. Under my name, they want to mislead the poor people. What will happen, <dear God,> when I am dead? . . .

I often think of the good Gerson, who doubts whether anything good should be <written for the public and> published. If it is not published, many souls are neglected who could be freed. But if it is published, the devil is there with malignant, deceitful tongues without number that poison and pervert everything, so that the usefulness of the writing is prevented. Yet what they gain by doing this is obvious. Even though they have lied so shamefully against us and by their lies tried to get the people on their side, God has constantly advanced His work. He has been making their following ever smaller and ours greater. He has caused them to be shamed with their lies and still causes this. . . .

I really would like to see a truly Christian council, so that many people and issues might be helped. Not that we need help. Our churches are now, through God's grace, enlightened and equipped with the pure Word and right use of the Sacraments, with knowledge of the various callings and right works. So, on our part, we ask for no council. On such points, we have nothing better to hope or expect from a council. But we see throughout the bishops' jurisdictions so many parishes vacant and desolate that it breaks our heart. Still, neither the bishops nor the Church officials care how the poor people live or die. Christ has died for them, and yet they are not allowed to hear Him speak as the true Shepherd with His sheep [John 10:11–18]. This makes me shudder and fear that someday He might send a council of angels upon Germany who will utterly destroy us like Sodom and Gomorrah [Genesis 19:1–25] for wickedly mocking Him with the pretext of a council.

Besides such necessary Church affairs, many important matters in the political realm could also be improved. The princes and the estates disagree. Interest rates and greed have burst in like a flood and are defended under the law. Also, disrespect, lust, extravagance in dress, gluttony, gambling, pomp, and all kinds of bad habits and evil. Subjects, servants, and workers in every trade are insubordinate. The demands on the peasants are unfair. Prices are exorbitant. (Who can list everything?) These things have increased so much that they cannot be corrected by ten councils and twenty commissions. The council would have their hands full if such important issues of the spiritual and earthly realms that are contrary to God would be considered. The childish absurdity of long <official> gowns, large tonsures, broad sashes, bishops' or cardinals' hats, maces, and other vanities would be forgotten. If we had first followed God's command and ordering in the spiritual and secular realms, we could then find enough time to reform food, clothing, tonsures, and surplices. As long as we want to swallow camels and strain at gnats [Matthew 23:24], ignore the logs and judge the specks [Matthew 7:3], we might be satisfied with the council.

That is why I have presented just a few articles. We already have so many commands of God to observe in the Church, the state, and the family that we can never fulfill them. So

12. Ultimately, who is in charge?

Connect

The struggle against sin in our lives and the attempt to confess the Christian faith in our daily living bring us to the realization that we are sinners in need of God's forgiveness and help.

Preface of Dr. Martin Luther

[O]ur sins weigh upon us and cause God not to be gracious to us. For we do not repent and instead want to defend every abomination.

O Lord Jesus Christ, may You Yourself hold a council! Deliver Your servants by Your glorious return [Titus 2:13]! The pope and his followers are done for. They will have none of You. Help us who are poor and needy, who sigh to You, and who pray to You earnestly [Romans 8:23, 26], according to the grace You have given us through Your Holy Spirit [Romans 12:3, 6], who lives and reigns with You and the Father, blessed forever. Amen. (14–15)

13. In what ways has the Preface to the Smalcald Articles helped you realize the necessity of confessing your faith?

14. When is it easy to confess your faith? When is it hard? Who helps you make your confession of faith? See 1 Corinthians 12:3 and Acts 4:19–20.

15. In 1 Peter 3:15–16, God encourages His people to always to be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.” What is your “hope”? How can you be prepared to tell about that hope?

16. Besides disbursement of your belongings, what else can your last will and testament provide?

17. In light of the Scriptures and the Smalcald Articles, how are we to live our lives?

Vision

Personal Reflection

- If you were called to present your faith before an assembly, how would you prepare?
- Is doctrine a matter only for theologians and pastors?
- What do you know about your friend or neighbor's faith? How different is it from yours?

Family Connection

- How can your family prepare for the confession of faith they are to make each day?
- How can your family provide support for Christians in other parts of the world, Christians who are persecuted because of their faith in Christ?
- Prepare a prayer list that includes the names of family and friends who are not Christian.

Closing Worship

Sing or read aloud these stanzas from "Praise the Almighty" (*LSB* 797; *ELH* 497; *CW* 235; *LW* 445; *LBW* 539; *TLH* 26).

Praise the Almighty, my soul, adore Him!
Yes, I will laud Him until death;
With songs and anthems I come before Him
As long as He allows me breath.
From Him my life and all things came;
Bless, O my soul, His holy name.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Trust not in rulers; they are but mortal;
Earthborn they are and soon decay.
Vain are their counsels at life's last portal,
When the dark grave engulfs its prey.
Since mortals can no help afford,
Place all Your trust in Christ, our Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Praise, all you people, the name so holy
Of Him who does such wondrous things!
All that has being, to praise Him solely,
With happy heart its amen sings.
Children of God, with angel host
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!
Alleluia, alleluia!

For Next Week

Read the First Part and Article I of the Second Part for next week.

Session 2

The First Part; The Second Part: Article I

Content and Meaning of Articles of Faith

Law/Gospel Focus

Agreeing on the content of the historic Christian Creed (confessing God the Holy Trinity and the two natures of Christ) is one thing. Agreeing on what it all means is quite another. The heart of the Christian faith is the saving work of Christ on behalf of us sinners.

Opening Worship

Pray these verses from Psalm 29.

Leader: Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity.

Participants: **Let us give glory to Him because He has shown His mercy to us.**

Leader: Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

Participants: **Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.**

Leader: The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

Participants: **The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.**

Leader: May the LORD give strength to His people! May the LORD bless His people with peace!

All: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity.**

Introduction

Luther begins the Smalcald Articles with the historic credal formulas that confess God the Holy Trinity and the two natures in Christ—all of which are part of the historic confession of the Christian Church. Luther's use of the word *catechism* refers to the historic teaching of the faith in the Western Church: the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed. In these confessions of the Christian faith, the two sides of the Reformation find themselves in agreement. The conciseness with which Luther deals with the articles of agreement is no longer used when he deals with the Chief Article—the work of Christ.

Inform

The First Part

1. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons in one divine essence and nature [Matthew 28:19], are one God, who has created heaven and earth [1 Corinthians 8:6].
2. The Father is begotten of no one; the Son is begotten of the Father [John 1:14]; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son [John 15:26].
3. Neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit, but the Son became man [John 1:14].
4. The Son became man in this manner: He was conceived, without the cooperation of man, by the Holy Spirit [Luke 1:34–35], and was born of the pure, holy Virgin Mary. Afterward, He suffered, died, was buried, descended to hell, rose from the dead [1 Corinthians 15:3–4], ascended to heaven [Acts 1:9–11], sits at the right hand of God [Acts 2:33], will come to judge the quick and the dead, and so on, as the Apostles' and Athanasian Creeds and our children's catechism teach.

Concerning these articles, there is no argument or dispute. Both sides confess them. Therefore, it is not necessary now to discuss them further.

Discussing the Text

18. How do Matthew 28:19 and 1 Corinthians 8:6 inform and support the first point of the First Part?

19. On most Sundays, we use the words of the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed to confess our faith. On Trinity Sunday, we often use the Athanasian Creed. Using your hymnal (*LSB* 319), compare the statements made in the first three points with those of the Athanasian Creed.

20. Using the Athanasian, Nicene, and Apostles' Creeds, compare their similarities and differences with the fourth point listed previously.

The Second Part—Article I: The Chief Article

The first and chief article is this:

Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:24–25).

He alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29), and God has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

All have sinned and are justified freely, without their own works or merits, by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood (Romans 3:23–25).

This is necessary to believe. This cannot be otherwise acquired or grasped by any work, law, or merit. Therefore, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us. As St. Paul says:

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Romans 3:28)

That He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. [Romans 3:26]

Nothing of this article can be yielded or surrendered, even though heaven and earth and everything else falls [Mark 13:31].

For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

And with His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

Discussing the Text

21. In addition to Romans 4:24–25, what other passages of Scripture support the statement that “Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins and was raised again for our justification”?

22. Why are the words *our God and Lord* important in describing Jesus?

23. Is there a human role in our justification before God? If so, what is it?

24. Why is it necessary to believe these statements on the work of Christ?

25. Why is this article the chief one?

26. How do the statements concerning Jesus Christ compare with those made in the Athanasian, Nicene, and Apostles' Creeds?

Connect

Article I concludes: "Upon this article everything that we teach and practice depends, in opposition to the pope, the devil, and the whole world. Therefore, we must be certain and not doubt this doctrine. Otherwise, all is lost, and the pope, the devil, and all adversaries win the victory and the right over us."

Christ's saving work—His birth, life, death, and resurrection—is the very heart of the Gospel, because it is God's work alone. Christ's saving work is all done on our behalf, all for our good.

27. If someone asked why Jesus and His death and resurrection are important to you, how would you answer?

28. Do you derive any comfort from the teaching (doctrine) that Jesus is both God and man? If so, what is that comfort?

29. Which of the Bible passages that Luther quoted in Article I are most meaningful to you? Why? How might it affect your family and friends if you share your thoughts about those passages?

30. If Christians experiencing conflict follow Luther's model in the Smalcald Articles, how will we begin?

31. Considering how Luther ended this section, what might you expect the rest of the Smalcald Articles to cover?

32. Why must the chief article of Christ's work alone for our salvation be proclaimed, promoted, and preached?

33. What teachings and/or practices can pollute this teaching?

Vision

Personal Reflection

- How would your life be different living completely under the teaching that Christ's righteousness *alone*—His life, death, and resurrection—saves you?
- To help you in witnessing, write a brief statement of the Gospel in your own words.
- Besides Confession and Absolution received in public, corporate worship, where else do you receive the Gospel of Christ?

Family Connection

- Look at the various crucifixes or crosses in your home or in your church. How does this Christian symbol express the work of Christ on our behalf?
- As part of your personal devotions, confess one of the creeds each day this week.
- Review Luther's Explanation of the Second Article of the Creed as given in his Small Catechism. Use these words in writing a prayer of thanksgiving to Christ for His work for your salvation.

Closing Worship

Sing or confess aloud these stanzas from "We All Believe in One True God" (*LSB* 954; *ELH* 38; *CW* 271; *LW* 213; *LBW* 374; *TLH* 251).

We all believe in one true God,
Who created earth and heaven,
The Father, who to us in love
Has the right of children given.
He in soul and body feeds us;
All we need His hand provides us;
Through all snares and perils leads us,
Watching that no harm betide us.
He cares for us by day and night;
All things are governed by His might.

We all believe in Jesus Christ,
His own Son, our Lord, possessing

An equal Godhead, throne, and might,
Source of ev'ry grace and blessing;
Born of Mary, virgin mother,
By the power of the Spirit,
Word made flesh, our elder brother;
That the lost might life inherit,
Was crucified for all our sin
And raised by God to life again.

We all confess the Holy Ghost,
Who, in highest heaven dwelling
With God the Father and the Son,
Comforts us beyond all telling;
Who the Church, His own creation,
Keeps in unity of spirit.
Here forgiveness and salvation
Daily come through Jesus' merit.
All flesh shall rise, and we shall be
In bliss with God eternally. Amen.

For Next Week

Read the Mass; also read the Invocation of Saints.

Session 3

Article II: The Mass and The Invocation of Saints

Law/Gospel Focus

Through faith, God gives us the forgiveness won for us on the cross by Christ's death and resurrection. These gifts of salvation and eternal life make it possible for us to live with Christ forever. The old Adam that lurks behind the facades of our lives would like us to think that we play a part in earning our salvation. God's Word is clear that our salvation depends on Christ alone. That same Word brings us to repentance for our sin, and the forgiving blood of Christ covers us with His righteousness.

Opening Worship

Pray these verses from Psalms 96, 115, and 117.

Leader: Splendor and majesty are before Him. We will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD!

Participants: **Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol Him, all peoples!**

Leader: For great is His steadfast love toward us,

Participants: **and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the Lord!**

All: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Splendor and majesty are before Him. We will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD!**

Introduction

The Chief Article of the Smalcald Articles deals with the work of Christ on our behalf for our salvation. Luther uses the remaining articles to demonstrate how the various errors and abuses in the Church of his day originate from false teaching about justification by grace through faith in Christ. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the abuses and errors associated with the celebration of the Mass (Lord's Supper). This article contains some of Luther's strongest language of condemnation. Repeatedly, Luther takes a stand against the corruptions of the Mass by showing that God did not command the Church to perform these corrupt ceremonies.

34. What kind of false teaching and error do you think Luther found in the celebration of the Mass?

35. Is there ever a reason to use strong language in condemning a teaching? Why?

Inform

Article II: The Mass

The Mass in the papacy has to be the greatest and most horrible abomination, since it directly and powerfully conflicts with this chief article. Above and before all other popish idolatries the Mass has been the chief and most false. For this sacrifice or work of the Mass is thought to free people from sins, both in this life and also in purgatory. It does so even when offered by a wicked scoundrel. Yet only the Lamb of God can and will do this [John 1:29], as said above. Nothing of this article is to be surrendered or conceded, because the first article does not allow it.

If there were reasonable papists, we might speak moderately and in a friendly way, like this: First, why do they so rigidly uphold the Mass? It is just a purely human invention and has not been commanded by God. Every human invention we may safely discard, as Christ declares, “In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” [Matthew 15:9].

Second, the Mass is unnecessary and can be omitted without sin and danger.

Third, the Sacrament can be received in a better and more blessed way (indeed, the only blessed way): according to Christ’s institution [Matthew 26:26–28]. Why, then, do they drive the world to woe and misery for something fictitious and un-necessary when it can be had in a different, more blessed way?

One should publicly preach the following to the people: (a) the Mass, as a human invention, can be left out without sin; (b) no one will be condemned who does not observe it; (c) they can be saved in a better way without the Mass. I wager that the Mass will then collapse of itself, not only among the crude common people, but also among all pious, Christian, reasonable, God-fearing hearts. This would happen all the more, when people hear that the Mass is dangerous, fabricated, and invented without God’s will and Word.

Fourth, the Mass should be abandoned because so many unspeakable abuses have arisen in the whole world from the buying and selling of Masses. Even if the Mass in itself had something advantageous and good, it should be abolished for no other reason than to prevent abuses. How much more should we abandon it since it is also completely unnecessary, useless, and dangerous; and since we can have everything by a more necessary, profitable, and certain way without the Mass?

Fifth, the Mass is and can be nothing more than a human work (as Church law and all the books declare, even when it is performed by wicked scoundrels). The attempt is to reconcile oneself and others to God [see 2 Corinthians 5:18–20], and to merit and deserve the forgiveness of sins and grace by the Mass. (This is how the Mass is held at its very best. Otherwise, what purpose would it serve?) This is why it must and should be condemned and rejected. For the Mass directly conflicts with the chief article, which says

that it is not someone paid to perform the Mass (whether wicked or godly) who takes away our sins with his work, but the Lamb of God, the Son of God.

If anyone says that he wants to administer the Sacrament to himself as an act of devotion, he cannot be serious. If he sincerely wishes to commune, the surest and best way for him is in the Sacrament administered according to Christ's institution. To administer Communion to oneself is a human notion. It is uncertain, unnecessary, even prohibited. He does not know what he is doing, because without God's Word he follows a false human opinion and invention. It is not right (even if otherwise done properly) to use the Sacrament that belongs to the community of the Church for one's own private devotion. It is wrong to toy with the Sacrament without God's Word and apart from the community of the Church.

This article about the Mass would completely preoccupy the council. Even if they could concede all the other articles, they could not concede this. Cardinal Campegius said at Augsburg that he would rather be torn to pieces than give up the Mass. So, by God's help, I, too, would rather be burned to ashes than allow someone paid to perform a Mass—whether he is good or bad—to be made equal to Christ Jesus, my Lord and Savior, or to be exalted above Him. In this, we remain eternally separated and opposed to one another. They know well that when the Mass falls, the papacy lies in ruins. Before they will let this happen, they will, if they can, put us all to death. (1–10)

Discussing the Text

36. What is the difference between “human invention” and the “command of God”? How does Matthew 15:9 inform this discussion?

37. What was the difference between “the Mass” and “the Sacrament”?

38. Read Matthew 26:26–28. How does this passage identify the core elements of the Sacrament of the Altar?

39. What does it mean that Masses were bought and sold? In what sense was this practice dangerous?

40. Why must the Mass be condemned and rejected?

41. Why is it wrong “to toy with the Sacrament without God’s Word and apart from the community of the Church”?

The Mass (continued)

In addition to all this, this dragon’s tail [Revelation 12:3–4]—that is, the Mass—has begotten many vermin and a multitude of idolatries.

First, purgatory. They carried their trade into purgatory by selling Masses for the souls of the dead. They started vigils; weekly, monthly, and yearly celebrations of funeral anniversaries; special services for the Common Week and All Souls’ Day; and soul baths. So the Mass is used almost solely for the dead, although Christ has instituted the Sacrament solely for the living. Therefore, purgatory, along with every service, rite, and commerce connected with it, should be regarded as nothing more than the devil’s ghost. For it conflicts with the chief article: only Christ, and not human works, are to help souls [Galatians 5:1]. Besides, God has commanded or assigned us nothing about the dead. Therefore, all this may be safely left out, even if it were not error and idolatry.

The papists quote Augustine and some of the Church Fathers who are said to have written about purgatory. They think we do not understand why they spoke as they did. St. Augustine does not write that there is a purgatory. Nor does he have evidence from Scripture as a basis. Rather, he leaves it in doubt whether purgatory exists. He does say that his mother asked to be remembered at the altar or Sacrament. This is nothing but human devotion, indeed of individuals, and does not establish an article of faith, which is God’s privilege alone.

Our papists, though, cite such human opinions so people will believe in their horrible, blasphemous, and cursed traffic in Masses for souls in purgatory. But they will never prove these things from Augustine. Once they have abolished the traffic in Masses for purgatory, which Augustine never dreamed of, then we can discuss whether to accept what Augustine said beyond Scripture and whether the dead should be remembered at the Eucharist. It will not do to frame articles of faith from the works or words of the holy Fathers. Otherwise, their kind of food, clothing, houses, and such, would have to become an article of faith, as was done with relics. The true rule is this: God’s Word shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel can do so [Galatians 1:8].

Second: Following these things, evil spirits have produced many wicked tricks by appearing as the souls of the departed [1 Sam-uel 28], and with unspeakable lies and tricks demanded Masses, vigils, pilgrimages, and other alms. All of this we were expected to

receive as articles of faith and to live accordingly. The pope confirmed these things, as he did the Mass and all other abominations. Here, too, there must be no yielding or surrendering.

Third, pilgrimages. Here, too, the forgiveness of sins and God's grace were sought, for the Mass controlled everything. Pilgrimages, without God's Word, have not been commanded. Nor are they necessary, since <the soul can be cared for> in a better way. These pilgrimages can be abandoned without any sin and danger. So why do they leave behind their own callings, their parishes, <their pastors,> God's Word, their wives, their children, and such? These *are* ordained and commanded. Instead, they run after these unnecessary, uncertain, dangerous illusions of the devil. Perhaps the devil had been riding the pope, causing him to praise and establish these practices. By them, the people again and again revolted from Christ to their own works, and, worst of all, became idolaters. Furthermore, pilgrimages are neither necessary nor commanded, but are senseless, doubtful, and harmful. On this, too, there can be no yielding or surrendering. Let it be preached that pilgrimages are not necessary, but dangerous, and then see what will happen to them.

Fourth, monastic societies. Monasteries, foundations, and representatives have assigned and transferred (by a legal contract and sale) all Masses, good works, and such, both for the living and the dead. This is nothing but a human trick, without God's Word and entirely unnecessary and not commanded. It is also contrary to the chief article on redemption. Therefore, it cannot in any way be tolerated.

Fifth, relics. So many falsehoods and such foolishness are found in the bones of dogs and horses that even the devil has laughed at such swindles. Relics should have been condemned long ago, even if there were some good in them, and all the more because they are without God's Word. Since they are neither commanded nor counseled, relics are entirely unnecessary and useless. Worst of all, these relics have <been imagined to cause> indulgence and the forgiveness of sins. <People have revered them> as a good work and service of God, like the Mass and other such practices.

Sixth: Here belong the precious indulgences granted—but only for money—both to the living and the dead. By indulgences, the miserable Judas, or pope, has sold Christ's merit, along with the extra merits of all saints, of the entire Church, and such things. (11–24a)

Discussing the Text

42. How had the Church of Rome used the Mass almost solely for the dead?

43. How did Luther attack the teaching concerning purgatory?

44. Even though Luther cited some of the Early Church fathers, what alone is finally able to establish articles of faith?

45. What made Masses, vigils, pilgrimages, and other alms wrong? What was missing in all of them?

46. How did the practices condemned by Luther destroy the concept of vocation and promote idolatry?

47. On what basis does Luther condemn monastic societies, relics, and indulgences?

The Invocation of Saints

The invocation of saints is also one of the Antichrist's abuses that conflicts with the chief article and destroys the knowledge of Christ [Philippians 3:8]. It is neither commanded nor counseled, nor has it any warrant in Scripture. Even if it were a precious thing—which it is not—we have everything a thousand times better in Christ.

The angels in heaven pray for us, as does Christ Himself [Romans 8:34]. So do the saints on earth and perhaps also in heaven [Revelation 6:9–10]. It does not follow, though, that we should invoke and adore the angels and saints [Revelation 22:8–9]. Nor should we fast, hold festivals, celebrate Mass, make offerings, and establish churches, altars, and divine worship in their honor. Nor should we serve them in other ways or regard them as helpers in times of need. Nor should we divide different kinds of help among them, ascribing to each one a particular form of assistance, as the papists teach and do. This is idolatry. Such honor belongs to God alone. As a Christian and saint upon earth, you can pray for me in many necessities. But this does not mean that I have to adore and call upon you. I do not need to celebrate festivals, fast, make sacrifices, or hold Masses for your honor. I do not have to put my faith in you for my salvation. I can honor, love, and thank you in Christ in other ways. If such idolatrous honor were withdrawn from angels and departed saints, the remaining honor would be harmless and quickly forgotten. When advantage and assistance (both bodily and spiritual) are no longer expected, the saints will not be troubled, neither in

their graves nor in heaven. No one will much remember or esteem or honor them without a reward or just out of pure love.

In short, we cannot tolerate the Mass or anything that proceeds from it or is attached to it. We have to condemn the Mass in order to keep the holy Sacrament pure and certain, according to Christ's institution, used and received through faith. (25–29)

Discussing the Text

48. How does Philippians 3:8 apply to the opening argument of this section?

49. Who intercedes for us? How do Romans 8:34; Revelation 6:9–10; and 22:8–9 apply to this question?

50. Why did the Mass need to be condemned?

Connect

When we realize all that comes to us through the Gospel—forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation (and all because of Christ and His work on the cross for us)—we have no need to rely on our own works, the works of others, or practices or objects to help us gain salvation. All these benefits come to us through the preaching of God's Word and through His Sacraments. Notice how Luther constantly comes back to this point.

The Mass—Conclusion

All these things are unbearable. They are not only without God's Word, are unnecessary and not commanded, but are against the chief article. For Christ's merit is obtained not by our works or pennies, but from grace through faith, without money and merit [Ephesians 2:8–9]. It is offered not through the pope's power, but through the preaching of God's Word [1 Corinthians 1:21]. (24)

51. In what ways (if any) does Luther's conclusion to this section change your attitude to the preaching of God's Word?

52. How does the grace of God change the way we see our “good works”?

53. Is the preaching of God’s Word limited only to the sermon? If not, where else is the Word of God preached?

54. To be the preaching of God’s Word, what elements of the sermon are essential?

55. What responsibility do I have toward my fellow believers?

56. Following Luther’s model, what must we emphasize when we point out errors of fellow believers?

Vision

Personal Reflection

- Review last Sunday’s service to see where God’s Word of forgiveness came through clearly.
- Identify which parts of the service (liturgy) come from the Scriptures.
- Recall last Sunday’s sermon, listing the topic and text. Especially note how the Law of God’s Word accused and convicted you and how the Gospel brought you Christ’s forgiveness.
- How can I honor, love, and thank my fellow believers in Christ?

Family Connection

- As part of your devotions this week, use a different part of the Sunday Communion liturgy as the basis for your daily meditation.
- Identify those elements of the Communion liturgy where the Gospel of forgiveness comes to you.
- Help the younger ones of your family or church visitors find the pages used in the hymnal for worship. If necessary, obtain large-print worship folders.
- Prepare a prayer list that includes, on a rotating basis, fellow members of your congregation.

Closing Worship

Sing or pray aloud these stanzas from “Who Trusts in God a Strong Abode” (*LSB* 714; *ELH* 261; *CW* 447; *LW* 414; *LBW* 450; *TLH* 437).

Who trusts in God A strong abode
In heav’n and earth possesses;
Who looks in love To Christ above,
No fear that heart oppresses.
In You alone, Dear Lord, we own
Sweet hope and consolation,
Our shield from foes, Our balm for woes,
Our great and sure salvation.

Though Satan’s wrath Beset our path
And worldly scorn assail us,
While You are near, We shall not fear;
Your strength will never fail us.
Your rod and staff Will keep us safe
And guide our steps forever;
Nor shades of death Nor hell beneath
Our lives from You will sever.

In all the strife Of mortal life
Our feet will stand securely;
Temptation’s hour Will lose its pow’r
For You will guard us surely.
O God, renew With heav’nly dew
Our body, soul, and spirit
Until we stand At Your right hand
Through Jesus’ saving merit.

For Next Week

Read Article III: Chapters and Cloisters and Article IV: The Papacy.

Session 4

Article III: Chapters and Cloisters; Article IV: The Papacy

Law/Gospel Focus

What may have started with a very good purpose can, through abuse and error, turn into an enemy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Anything that diminishes the work of Christ and Him alone in our salvation is an enemy of that Gospel. Because of our permeated sinfulness, we can do nothing to help ourselves concerning our salvation. In Christ alone is our hope.

Opening Worship

Pray these verses from Psalms 37 and 92.

Leader: It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to Your name, O Most High.

Participants: **Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.**

Leader: Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Participants: **Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will act.**

Leader: The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their stronghold in the time of trouble.

Participants: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to Your name, O Most High.**

Introduction

Monasteries with their chapters and cloisters originally were founded as institutions of education. Because the Roman Church held monasticism as meritorious for eternal life, Luther rejected the entire Roman system of monastic life. He advocated that the monasteries should either be returned to their original educational purpose or be destroyed.

By the time Luther prepared the Smalcald Articles, he had little or no use for the papacy. In these Articles, Luther most vigorously condemns the papacy and asserts that it is the Antichrist. Luther argues that the pope is nothing more than the bishop of Rome, a pastor of God's people in Rome. For nearly 500 years, the papacy did not exist, and it only developed on the basis of false claims to an authority that Christ had never bestowed. The abuse of the papacy extended not only to spiritual matters, but also to temporal matters of government and society. Much of this topic will be brought up again in the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope.

Inform

Article III: Chapters and Cloisters

Monastic chapters and cloisters were formerly founded with the good intention of educating learned men and virtuous women. They should be used for that again. They could produce pastors, preachers, and other ministers for the churches. They could also produce essential personnel for the secular government in cities and countries, as well as well-educated young women for mothers, housekeepers, and such.

If these institutions will not serve this purpose, it is better to abandon them or tear them down than have their blasphemous, humanly invented services regarded as something better than the ordinary Christian life and the offices and callings ordained by God. This too is contrary to the chief article on the redemption through Jesus Christ. Like all other human inventions, these religious institutions have not been commanded. They are needless and useless. They are also occasions for dangerous <annoyances> and empty works [Isaiah 29:20], what the Hebrew prophets call *Aven* (i.e., pain and labor). (1–2)

Discussing the Text

57. What benefits were listed concerning a monastic-college education?

58. Why was the whole monastic system condemned as “contrary to the chief article on the redemption through Jesus Christ”?

Article IV: The Papacy

The pope is not, according to divine law or God’s Word, the head of all Christendom. This name belongs to One only, whose name is Jesus Christ [Colossians 1:18]. The pope is only the

bishop and pastor of the Church at Rome and of those who have attached themselves to him voluntarily or through a human agency (such as a political ruler). Christians are not under him as a lord. They are with him as brethren and companions, as the ancient councils and the age of St. Cyprian show.

Today, though, none of the bishops dare to address the pope as “brother” as was done in the time <of Cyprian>. Even kings or emperors have to call him “most gracious lord.” We will not, cannot, and must not approve this arrogance with a good conscience. Whoever wants to, can do it without us.

It follows that all the pope has done and undertaken from such false, mischievous, blasphemous, and arrogant power are devilish affairs and transactions. (With the exception of what relates to the secular government, where God often allows much good to be done for a people, even through a tyrant and scoundrel.) The pope does this all for the ruin of the

entire holy Christian Church (so far as it is in his power) and for the destruction of the chief article about the redemption made through Jesus Christ.

For there stand all the pope's bulls and books. He roars like a lion in them (as the angel in Revelation 12 depicts him), crying out that no Christian can be saved without obeying him and being subject to him in all that he wishes, says, and does. All of this amounts to nothing less than this: Although you believe in Christ and have in Him alone everything you need for salvation, yet it is nothing and all in vain unless you regard me as your god, and be subject and obedient to me. It is clear that the holy Church has been without the pope for over five hundred years at least. To this day, the churches of the Greeks and of many other languages neither have been nor are presently under the pope. Besides, as is often remarked, the papacy is a human invention that is not commanded and is not necessary but useless. The holy Christian Church can exist very well without such a head. It would certainly have remained purer if such a head had not been raised up by the devil. The papacy is also of no use in the Church, because it exercises no Christian office. Therefore, it is necessary for the Church to continue and to exist without the pope.

Suppose that the pope would yield this point. He would not be supreme by divine right or from God's command, but just because we need a head, to whom all the rest cling in order to preserve the unity of Christians against sects and heretics. Suppose that such a head were chosen, and that people had the choice and the power to change or remove this head. (The Council of Constance nearly adopted this course with reference to the popes, deposing three and electing a fourth.) Suppose, I say, that the pope and See at Rome would yield and accept this (though this is impossible, for then he would have to let his entire realm and estate be overthrown and destroyed, with all his rights and books, which, to put it briefly, he cannot do). Nevertheless, even if this were done, Christianity would not be helped, but many more sects would arise than before.

People would have to be subject to this head, not from God's command, but from their personal good pleasure. Such a head would easily and in a short time be despised, and finally not have any members. The head would not have to be forever confined to Rome or any other place. It might be wherever and in whatever church God would grant a man fit for the office. Oh, how complicated and confused that would be!

The Church can never be better governed and preserved than if we all live under one head, Christ. All the bishops should be equal in office (although they may be unequal in gifts). They should be diligently joined in unity of doctrine, faith, sacraments, prayer, works of love, and such. According to St. Jerome, this is how the priests at Alexandria governed the churches,

together and in common. So did the apostles and, afterward, all bishops throughout all Christendom, until the pope raised his head above all.

This teaching shows forcefully that the pope is the true End-christ or Antichrist [1 John 2:18]. He has exalted himself above and opposed himself against Christ. For he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power, which, nevertheless, is nothing, and is neither ordained nor commanded by God. This is, properly speaking, how he "exalts himself against every so-called god" as Paul says (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Even the Turks or the Tartars, great enemies of Christians as they are, do not do this. They take bodily tribute and obedience from Christians, but they allow whoever wishes to believe in Christ.

The pope, however, bans this faith. He says that to be saved a person must obey him. This we are unwilling to do, even though we must die in God's name because of this. This all

proceeds from the pope wishing to be called the supreme head of the Christian Church by divine right. So he had to make himself equal and superior to Christ. He had to have himself proclaimed the head and then the lord of the Church, and finally of the whole world. This makes him simply God on earth, to the point that he has dared to issue commands even to the angels in heaven. When we distinguish the pope's teaching from, or compare it to, Holy Scripture, it is clear that the pope's teaching at its best has been taken from the imperial and heathen law. It deals with political matters and decisions or rights, as the decretals show. His law also teaches ceremonies about churches, garments, food, persons, and childish, theatrical, and comical things without measure. But in all of this, nothing at all is taught about Christ, faith, and God's commandments. Finally, the papacy is nothing else than the devil himself, because above and against God the pope pushes his falsehoods about Masses, purgatory, the monastic life, one's own works, and false worship. (This, in fact, is the papacy.) He also condemns, murders, and tortures all Christians who do not exalt and honor <his> abominations above all things. Therefore, just as we cannot worship the devil himself as Lord and God, so we cannot endure his apostle—the pope or Antichrist—in his rule as head or lord. For what his papal government really consists of (as I have very clearly shown in many books) is to lie and kill and destroy body and soul eternally. (1–14)

Discussing the Text

59. According to the Word of God, who alone is head of all Christendom?

60. To what end had the pope done and undertaken such false, mischievous, blasphemous, and arrogant deeds?

61. If the papacy were merely a human invention, what place could there still be for the pope in the organization of the Church?

62. On what basis was the pope called the Antichrist (1 John 2:18)?

63. How had the pope become “simply God on earth”?

Connect

Abuses in the Church and within its governing and organizing structures can cause uncertainty and doubt in the hearts of believers. When this happens, Christians have only one source for help and comfort—Christ Jesus.

Article IV: The Papacy

They will have enough to condemn in the council in these four articles. For they cannot and will not concede to us even the least point in one of these articles. Of this we can be certain. We must be sure and consider the hope that Christ, our Lord, has attacked His adversary. He will press and attack him both by His Spirit and His coming. Amen.

In the council we will not stand before the emperor or the political ruler, as at Augsburg (where the emperor published a most gracious edict, and caused matters to be heard kindly). Instead, we will appear before the pope and devil himself, who intends to listen to nothing, but will just condemn, murder, and force us to idolatry. Therefore, we should not here kiss his feet, or say, “you are my gracious lord.” Rather, we should say as the angel [of the LORD] in Zechariah 3:2 said to the devil, “The LORD rebuke you, O Satan!” (15–16)

64. What comfort is there in the fact that Christ has attacked His adversary, the devil?

65. How does Zechariah 3:2 apply to this situation?

66. When is the Christian Church today especially susceptible to the development of errors similar to those of the papacy? How can we respond to such heresies?

Vision

Personal Reflection

- Do you consider those parts of your life Christian only when you work in or for the church? What about the other areas of your life?
- What dangers might exist in having any kind of church organization? What are the dangers when there is no kind of church organization?
- When might it be difficult to separate the person from the office (as in the pastor from his office as pastor)? What dangers are there in focusing too much on the person rather than the office?

Family Connection

- Luther says, “As a Christian and saint upon earth, you can pray for me in many necessities.” Develop a prayer list for each day of the week. Include pastors, teachers, fellow members of your church, missionaries, and so on.
- Look at the constitution of your congregation and of the synod of which your congregation is a member. Note how many items are of human invention and yet are helpful for the work of the congregation.

Closing Worship

Sing or read aloud these stanzas from “Let Me Be Thine Forever” (*LSB* 689; *ELH* 427; *CW* 596; *LW* 257; *LBW* 490; *TLH* 334).

Let me be Thine forever,
My faithful God and Lord;
Let me forsake Thee never
Nor wander from Thy Word.
Lord, do not let me waver,
But give me steadfastness,
And for such grace forever
Thy holy name I'll bless.

Lord Jesus, my salvation,
My light, my life divine,
My only consolation,
O make me wholly Thine!
For Thou has dearly bought me
With blood and bitter pain.
Let me, since Thou hast sought me,
Eternal life obtain.

And Thou, O Holy Spirit,
My comforter and guide,
Grant that in Jesus' merit
I always may confide,
Him to the end confessing
Whom I have known by faith.
Give me Thy constant blessing
And grant a Christian death.

For Next Week

Read The Third Part—Article I: Sin; Article II: The Law; and Article III: Repentance.

Session 5

The Third Part—Article I: Sin; Article II: The Law; Article III: Repentance

Law/Gospel Focus

Since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, every human being has been polluted by the poison of sin. The Law of God reveals that we have failed to fulfill His command and that we deserve eternal death. God's Spirit, working through His Word, brings us to repentance, a turning away from our sin, and gives and nurtures faith in Christ, our Savior from sin.

Opening Worship

Pray aloud these verses from Psalm 51.

Leader: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

Participants: **Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.**

Leader: Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity; and cleanse me from my sin!

Participants: **For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.**

Leader: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Participants: **Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.**

Leader: Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Participants: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.**

Introduction

It is part of fallen human nature to rename things or to find loop-holes in rules so we don't have to be so harsh on ourselves. This was true of the Church of Rome, when its doctrine denied that even the very inclination to sin (which they called *concupiscence*) is itself sin. By teaching that within a person there remains an ability to grasp and respond to grace, Rome effectively denied the absolute necessity and total sufficiency of Christ's sacrificial death to merit our salvation.

Inform

The Third Part—Article I: Sin

Here we must confess, as Paul says in Romans 5:12, that sin originated from one man, Adam. By his disobedience, all people were made sinners and became subject to death and the devil. This is called original or the chief sin.

The fruit of this sin are the evil deeds that are forbidden in the Ten Commandments [Galatians 5:19–21]. These include unbelief, false faith, idolatry, being without the fear of God, pride, despair, utter blindness, and, in short, not knowing or regarding God. Also lying, abusing God's name, not praying, not calling on God, not regarding God's Word, being disobedient to parents, murdering, being unchaste, stealing, deceiving, and such.

This hereditary sin is such a deep corruption of nature that no reason can understand it. Rather, it must be believed from the revelation of Scripture. (See Psalm 51:5; Romans 6:12–13; Exodus 33:3; Genesis 3:7–19.) Therefore, it is nothing but error and blindness that the scholastic doctors have taught in regard to this article:

Since Adam's fall the natural powers of human beings have remained whole and uncorrupted, and by nature people have a right reason and a good will, as the philosophers teach.

A person has a free will to do good and not to do evil, and, on the other hand, to not do good and do evil.

By natural human powers a person can observe and keep all God's commands.

By natural human powers, a person can love God above all things and love his neighbors as himself.

If a person does as much as is in him, God certainly grants him His grace.

If a person wishes to go to the Sacrament, there is no need of a good intention to do good. It is enough if a person does not have a wicked purpose to commit sin, so entirely good is human nature and so effective is the Sacrament.

Scripture does not teach that the Holy Spirit with His grace is necessary for a good work.

These and many similar ideas have arisen from lack of understanding and ignorance, both about sin and about Christ, our Savior. They are truly heathen teachings that we cannot endure. For if such teaching were true, then Christ has died in vain. A human being would have no defect or sin for which He would have died. Or He would have died only for the body, not for the soul, since the soul is sound, and only the body is subject to death. (1–11)

Discussing the Text

67. Define *original sin* as given in this Article. What are the fruit of this original sin?

68. How do the Scripture passages in paragraph 3 help reveal the deep corruption of this sin?

69. How do the Scripture passages refute the Roman teaching that “by natural human powers, a person can observe and keep all God’s commands”?

The Third Part—Article II: The Law

Here we hold that the Law was given by God, first, to restrain sin by threats and the dread of punishment and by the promise and offer of grace and benefit. All this failed because of the evil that sin has worked in humanity. For by the Law some people were made worse sinners, those who are hostile to the Law because it forbids what they like to do and commands what they do not like to do [Romans 3:20; 7:7–9]. Wherever they can escape punishment, they do more against the Law than they did before. Those are the unrestrained and wicked, who do evil wherever they have the opportunity.

The rest become blind and arrogant. As has been said above about the scholastic theologians, they conceive the opinion that they are able to keep the Law by their own powers. From this come the hypocrites and false saints.

But the chief office or force of the Law is to reveal original sin with all its fruit. It shows us how very low our nature has fallen, how we have become utterly corrupted. The Law must tell us that we have no God, that we do not care for God, and that we worship other gods [Romans 3:10–18]—something we would not have believed before and without the Law. In this way, we become terrified, humbled, depressed. We despair and anxiously want help, but see no escape [Romans 7:21–24]. We begin to be an enemy of God and to complain, and so on [Romans 5:10]. This is what Paul says, “The law brings wrath” (Romans 4:15). Sin is increased by the Law, “The law came in to increase the trespass” (Romans 5:20). (1–5)

Discussing the Text

70. How are some people made worse sinners by the Law?

71. What is the chief purpose or force of the Law?

72. How do the Scripture references (Romans 4:15; 5:10, 20; 7:21–24) support the statements that sin is increased by the Law?

The Third Part—Article III: Repentance

The New Testament keeps and urges this office <of the Law>, as St. Paul does when he says, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Romans 1:18). Also, “the whole world may be accountable to God. . . . No human being will be justified in His sight” (Romans 3:19–20). And, Christ says, the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin (John 16:8).

This is God’s thunderbolt. By the Law He strikes down both obvious sinners and false saints. He declares no one to be in the right, but drives them all together to terror and despair. This is the hammer. As Jeremiah says, “Is not My word like . . . a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?” (23:29). This is not active contrition or manufactured repentance. It is passive contrition, true sorrow of heart, suffering, and the sensation of death.

This is what true repentance means. Here a person needs to hear something like this, “You are all of no account, whether you are obvious sinners or saints <in your own opinions>. You have to become different from what you are now. You have to act differently than you are now acting, whether you are as great, wise, powerful, and holy as you can be. Here no one is godly.”

But to this office of the Law, the New Testament immediately adds the consoling promise of grace through the Gospel. This must be believed. As Christ declares, “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). That is, become different, act differently, and believe My promise. John the Baptist (preceding Christ) is called a preacher of repentance, but this is for the forgiveness of sins. That is, John was to accuse all and convict them of being sinners. This is so they can know what they are before God and acknowledge that they are lost. So they can be prepared for the Lord [Mark 1:3] to receive grace and to expect and accept from Him the forgiveness of sins. This is what Christ Himself says, “Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in [My] name to all nations” (Luke 24:47).

Whenever the Law alone exercises its office, without the Gospel being added, there is nothing but death and hell, and one must despair, as Saul and Judas did [1 Samuel 31; Matthew 27:5]. St. Paul says, through sin the Law kills. [See Romans 7:10.] On the other hand, the Gospel brings consolation and forgiveness. It does so not just in one way, but through the Word and the Sacraments and the like, as we will discuss later. As Psalm 130:7 says against the dreadful captivity of sin, “with the LORD is . . . plentiful redemption.”

However, we now have to contrast the false repentance of the sophists with true repentance, in order that both may be understood better. (1–9)

Discussing the Text

73. How does God’s Law strike down both “obvious sinners and false saints”?

74. What is true repentance?

75. What does the promise of grace through the Gospel of Christ bring to the believer?

76. How do the examples of Saul and Judas support the premise that “whenever the Law alone exercises its office, without the Gospel being added, there is nothing but death and hell”?

The Third Part—Article III: The False Repentance of the Papists

It was impossible for them to teach correctly about repentance, since they did not know what sin really is. As has been shown above, they do not believe correctly about original sin. Rather, they say that the natural powers of human beings have remained unimpaired and uncorrupted. They believe that reason can teach correctly, so that the will can do what is right, and God certainly bestows His grace when a person does as much as he can, according to his free will.

According to that dogma, they need to do penance only for actual sins. Those would include only the evil thoughts that a person yields to. Or evil words and evil deeds that free will could easily have prevented. (According to these people, wicked emotions, lust, and improper attitudes are not sins.)

They divide repentance into three parts: contrition, confession, and satisfaction. They add this consolation and promise: If a person truly confesses, and renders satisfaction, he merits forgiveness. He has paid for his sins before God. So even in repentance, they taught people to put confidence in their own works. This is where the expression comes from that was used in the pulpit when Public Absolution was announced to the people: “Prolong O God, my life, until I can make satisfaction for my sins and amend my life.”

There was here no mention of Christ and faith. People hoped to overcome and blot out sins before God by their own works. With this intention, we became priests and monks, so we could protect ourselves against sin.

As for contrition, this is how it was done. No one could remember all his sins (especially those committed over an entire year), so they inserted this provision: If an unknown sin is remembered later, it too has to be repented of and confessed, and so on. Until then, the person was commended to God’s grace.

Furthermore, since no one could know how great the contrition ought to be in order to be enough before God, they gave this consolation: He who could not have contrition at least ought to have “attrition.” I call that half a contrition, or the beginning of contrition. The fact is, they themselves do not understand either of these terms, anymore than I do. But such attrition was counted as contrition when a person went to Confession.

If anyone said that he could not have contrition or lament his sins (as might be the case with illicit love or the desire for revenge, etc.), they asked whether he wished or desired to have contrition. When one would reply “yes”—for who, save the devil himself, would say

“no”?—they accepted this as contrition. They forgave him his sins on account of this good work of his. Here they cited the example of St. Bernard and others.

Here one sees how blind reason gropes around in matters belonging to God [1 Corinthians 2:14]. According to its own imagination, reason seeks consolation in its own works and cannot remember Christ and faith. Viewed in the light, this contrition is a manufactured and fictitious thought. It comes from our own powers, without faith and without the knowledge of Christ. . . .

As for Confession, the procedure was this: Everyone had to list all his sins (which is impossible). This was a great torment. If anyone had forgotten some sins, he would be absolved on the condition that, if they would occur to him, he must still confess them. So he could never know whether he had made a sufficiently pure confession or if confessing would ever come to an end. Yet he was pointed to his own works. He was comforted like this: The more fully you confess, and the more you humiliate yourself and debase yourself before the priest, the sooner and better you render satisfaction for your sins. Such humility would certainly earn grace before God.

Here, too, there was neither faith nor Christ. The power of the Absolution was not declared to him. Rather, his consolation depended upon his listing of sins and his self-abasement. What torture, fraud, and idolatry this kind of confession has produced is more than can be said.

As for satisfaction, this is by far the most complex part of all. For no one can know how much to render for a single sin, let alone how much for all. They resorted to the device of imposing a small satisfaction, which could indeed be rendered, as five “Our Fathers,” a day’s fast, or such. Then, for the rest of their repentance, they were directed to purgatory.

Here, too, there was nothing but anguish and misery. Some thought they would never get out of purgatory. According to the old Church laws, seven years’ penance in purgatory is required for a single mortal sin. Yet, confidence was placed in our work of satisfaction. If the satisfaction could be perfect, confidence would be placed in it entirely. Neither faith nor Christ would be necessary. But such confidence was impossible. For even though someone had done penance that way for a hundred years, he would still not know whether he had finished his penance. That meant doing penance forever and never coming to repentance.

Then the Holy See at Rome, coming to the aid of the poor Church, invented indulgences. With these, it forgave and remitted satisfaction. First, for a single sin, an indulgence could cancel seven years in purgatory. Or an indulgence could cancel a hundred years. They distributed them among the cardinals and bishops, so that one could grant indulgence for a hundred years and another for a hundred days. But the pope reserved to himself alone the power to cancel the entire satisfaction.

Since indulgences began to yield money and as the traffic in bulls became profitable, the pope devised the golden jubilee year—a truly gold-bearing year—and established it at Rome [compare to Leviticus 25]. He said this would give the cancellation of all punishment and guilt. The people came running, because everyone would gladly be freed from this grievous, unbearable burden. This was meant to find and raise the treasures of the earth. Immediately, the pope pressed still further and multiplied the golden years one after another. The more he devoured money, the bigger his appetite grew.

Later, by his representatives to the countries, the pope issued <his golden years> everywhere, until all churches and houses were full of the golden year. Ultimately, he made an inroad into purgatory, among the dead. First, he founded Masses and vigils, and, afterward, indulgences and the golden year. Finally, souls became so cheap that he released one for a penny.

But all this, too, did nothing. Even though the pope taught people to depend on and trust these indulgences for salvation, he made the matter uncertain again. In his bulls he declares that whoever wants to share in the indulgences or a golden year has to be contrite and have confessed and pay money. . . .

Now one group imagines, “Why, we have repented!” The other says, “We need no repentance.”

John says, “Repent, both of you. You false penitents and false saints, both of you need the forgiveness of sins. Neither of you know what sin really is. Much less your duty to repent of it and shun it. For no one of you is good. You are full of unbelief, stupidity, and ignorance of God and God’s will. But He is present here, of whose ‘fullness we have all received, grace upon grace’” [John 1:16]. Without Him, no one can be righteous before God. Therefore, if you want to repent, repent rightly. Your works of penance will accomplish nothing. As for you hypocrites, who do not need repentance, you serpents’ brood, who has assured you that you will escape the wrath to come and other judgments? [Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:7].

In the same way Paul also preaches, “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one” (Romans 3:10–12). And God now “commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). “All people,” He says. No one is an exception who is a human being. This repentance teaches us to discern sin: We are completely lost; there is nothing good in us from head to foot; and we must become absolutely new and different people.

Such repentance is not partial and beggarly, like that which does penance for actual sins. Nor, like that, is it uncertain. For it does not debate what is or is not sin. Rather, it hurls everything together and says: Everything in us is nothing but sin <there is nothing in us that is not sin and guilt [Romans 7:18]>. What is the use of always investigating, dividing, or distinguishing? This contrition is certain. For we cannot think of any good thing to pay for sin. There is nothing left. There is only a sure despairing about all that we are, think, speak, do, and so on.

Confession, too, cannot be false, uncertain, or fragmentary. A person who confesses that everything in him is nothing but sin includes all sins, excludes none, forgets none. Neither can the satisfaction be uncertain, because it is not our uncertain, sinful work. Rather, it is the suffering and blood of the innocent Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world [John 1:29].

This is the repentance John the Baptist preaches [Matthew 3:1–12]. And afterward, Christ does this in the Gospel [Mark 1:15], and so do we. By this preaching of repentance, we dash to the ground the pope and everything built upon our good works. For all of that is built upon a rotten and vain foundation, which is called a good work or law. And yet, this foundation has no good works but only wicked works. No one keeps the Law (as Christ says) but all transgress it (John 7:19). Therefore, the building <that is raised upon that

rotten foundation is nothing but falsehood and hypocrisy, even where it seems most holy and beautiful.

In Christians, this repentance continues until death. For through one's entire life, repentance contends with the sin remaining in the flesh. Paul testifies that he wars with the law in his members (Romans 7:14–25) not by his own powers, but by the gift of the Holy Spirit that follows the forgiveness of sins [Romans 8:1–17]. This gift daily cleanses and sweeps out the remaining sins and works to make a person truly pure and holy.

The pope, the theologians, the Church lawyers, and the rest know nothing about this. But it is a doctrine from heaven (revealed through the Gospel), and the godless saints must call it heresy. (10–27, 31–41)

Discussing the Text

77. How do Romans 7:7 and Colossians 3:5–6 make clear that wicked emotions, lust, and improper attitudes are sins, and that our natural powers remain corrupted even after baptism and justification?

78. Describe the effect of the three parts of repentance according to the Roman Church—contrition, confession, and satisfaction—according to Luther.

79. What was missing?

80. When contrition, confession, and satisfaction are based on our works, what is the result?

81. On what basis were indulgences invented?

82. How does God use the Law in bringing about true repentance?

83. In what way does true repentance continue until death for each believer?

Connect

On the other hand, certain sects may arise; some may already exist. During the peasant rebellion, I encountered some who held that those who had once received the Spirit or the forgiveness of sins or had become believers—even if they later sin—would still remain in the faith. Such sin, they think, would not harm them. They say, “Do whatever you please. If you believe, it all amounts to nothing. Faith blots out all sins,” and such. They also say that if anyone sins after he has received faith and the Spirit, he never truly had the Spirit and faith. I have seen and heard many such madmen. I fear that such a devil is still in some of them.

So it is necessary to know and to teach this: When holy people—still having and feeling original sin and daily repenting and striving against it—happen to fall into manifest sins (as David did into adultery, murder, and blasphemy [2 Samuel 11]), then faith and the Holy Spirit have left them. The Holy Spirit does not permit sin to have dominion, to gain the upper hand so it can be carried out, but represses and restrains it from doing what it wants [Psalm 51:11; Romans 6:14]. If sin does what it wants, the Holy Spirit and faith are not present. For St. John says, “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning . . . and he cannot keep on sinning” [1 John 3:9]. And yet it is also true when St. John says, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” [1:8]. (42–45)

84. Describe the spiritual crisis that exists when a believer falls into manifest sins.

85. In this state, how does repentance get involved in this person’s heart?

86. Examine 1 John 3:9; Matthew 18:15; and Galatians 6:1–2. What’s the loving way to deal with the sin of fellow Christians?

Vision

Personal Reflection

- Using Luther’s discussion of Baptism in the Small Catechism (fourth section), apply his statements about lifelong repentance to your life.

- What comfort is there for you when you receive the Absolution of sins either in corporate worship or in private Confession?

Family Connection

- Using the hymnal, note the different forms of Confession and Absolution. How do they differ? How are they the same?
- How does Absolution help you live from day to day?

Closing Worship

Sing or read aloud these stanzas from “To Thee, Omniscient Lord of All” (*LSB* 613; *LW* 234; *LBW* 310; *TLH* 318).

To Thee, omniscient Lord of all,
 In grief and shame I humbly call;
 I see my sins against Thee, Lord,
 The sins of thought and deed and word.
 They press me sore; I cry to Thee:
 O God, be merciful to me!

O Jesus, let Thy precious blood
 Be to my soul a cleansing flood.
 Turn not, O Lord, Thy guest away,
 But grant that justified I may
 Go to my house at peace with Thee:
 O God, be merciful to me!

For Next Week

Read The Third Part—Article IV: The Gospel; Article V: Baptism; Article VI: The Sacrament of the Altar; Article VII: The Keys, and Article VIII: Confession.

First

What is Baptism?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s word.

Which is that word of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

Second

What benefits does Baptism give?

It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are these words and promises of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

Third

How can water do such great things?

Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God’s word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three:

“He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying” (Titus 3:5–8).

Fourth

What does such baptizing with water indicate?

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

St. Paul writes in Romans chapter six: “We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:4).

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.

Where is this written?

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and St. Paul write:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.”

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

What is the benefit of this eating and drinking?

These words, “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,” show us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?

Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: “forgiveness of sins.”

Who receives this sacrament worthily?

Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words “for you” require all hearts to believe.

Session 6

Article IV: The Gospel; Article V: Baptism; Article VI: The Sacrament of the Altar; Article VII: The Keys; Article VIII: Confession

Law/Gospel Focus

God's Word has revealed the truth about us, about our lives: We are sinners, incapable of saving ourselves and in need of help from outside ourselves. Christ's birth as a human being; His taking on our flesh and bone; His life, death, resurrection, and ascension were all accomplished for our salvation. That salvation—the forgiveness of our sins—is the Gospel that comes to us through Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, and the Office of the Keys.

Opening Worship

Pray together these verses from Psalm 32.

Leader: Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.

Participants: **Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.**

Leader: Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Participants: **I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

Leader: Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to You at a time when You may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.

Participants: **You are a hiding place for me; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with shouts of deliverance. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.**

Introduction

It's great to know that God forgives my sin on account of Christ and His death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave. The question remains: How does that Gospel get to me? How is it applied to me? In this study's articles, Luther details how the Gospel comes to us.

Inform

Article IV: The Gospel

We will now return to the Gospel, which does not give us counsel and aid against sin in only one way. God is superabundantly generous in His grace: First, through the spoken Word, by which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world [Luke 24:45–47]. This is the particular office of the Gospel. Second, through Baptism. Third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar. Fourth, through the Power of the Keys. Also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, “Where two or three are gathered” (Matthew 18:20) and other such verses [especially Romans 1:12].

Discussing the Text

87. Describe the various avenues by which God gives us His Gospel and grace.

Article V: Baptism

Baptism is nothing other than God’s Word in the water, commanded by His institution. As Paul says, it is a “washing . . . with the word” [Ephesians 5:26]. As Augustine says, “When the Word is joined to the element or natural substance, it becomes a Sacrament.” This is why we do not agree with Thomas Aquinas and the monastic preachers who forget the Word (God’s institution). They say that God has imparted to the water a spiritual power, which through the water washes away sin. Nor do we agree with Scotus and the Barefooted Monks, who teach that Baptism washes away sins by the assistance of the divine will. They believe this washing occurs only through God’s will, and not at all through the Word or water.

Of the Baptism of children, we hold that children should be baptized, for they belong to the promised redemption made through Christ [Acts 2:39]. Therefore, the Church should administer Baptism to them. (1–4)

Discussing the Text

88. Contrast Augustine and Thomas Aquinas on Baptism.

89. How does Acts 2:39 apply to the Baptism of children and infants?

Article VI: The Sacrament of the Altar

Of the Sacrament of the Altar, we hold that the bread and wine in the Supper are Christ's true body and blood. These are given and received not only by the godly but also by wicked Christians [1 Corinthians 11:29–30].

We do not hold that only one kind of the Sacrament is to be given (e.g., the bread alone). We do not need that “high reasoning” that teaches there is as much under the one kind as under both, as the sophists and the Council of Constance teach. Even if that were true, giving the one kind only is not the entire ordinance and institution commanded by Christ [Galatians 1:9]. We especially condemn and in God's name curse those who not only refuse to give both kinds but also quite tyrannically prohibit, condemn, and blaspheme giving both kinds as heresy. In doing so, they exalt themselves against and above Christ, our Lord and God.

As for transubstantiation, we care nothing about the sophistic cunning by which they teach that bread and wine leave or lose their own natural substance so that only the appearance and color of bread remain, and not true bread. For it is in perfect agreement with Holy Scriptures that there is, and remains, bread, as Paul himself calls it, “The bread that we break” [1 Corinthians 10:16] and “Let a person . . . so eat of the bread” [1 Corinthians 11:28]. (1–5)

Discussing the Text

90. Why must it be true that both “godly” and “wicked” Christians receive Christ's true body and blood in the Sacrament? How does 1 Corinthians 11:29–30 inform this discussion?

91. Why is the Sacrament to be given in both kinds (body and blood)?

92. How did Luther refute the teaching of transubstantiation?

Article VII: The Keys and Article VIII: Confession

The Keys are an office and power given by Christ to the Church for binding and loosing sin [Matthew 16:19]. This applies not only to gross and well-known sins, but also the subtle, hidden sins that are known only to God. As it is written, “Who can discern his errors?” (Psalm 19:12). And St. Paul himself complains that “with my flesh I serve the law of sin” (Romans 7:25). It is not in our power to judge which, how great, and how many the sins are. This belongs to God alone. As it is written, “Enter not into judgment with your

servant, for no one living is righteous before you” (Psalm 143:2). Paul says, “I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted” (1 Corinthians 4:4).

Absolution, or the Power of the Keys, is an aid against sin and a consolation for a bad conscience; it is ordained by Christ in the Gospel [Matthew 16:19]. Therefore, Confession and Absolution should by no means be abolished in the Church. This is especially for the sake of timid consciences and untrained young people, so they may be examined and instructed in Christian doctrine.

But the listing of sins should be free to everyone, as to what a person wishes to list or not to list. For as long as we are in the flesh, we will not lie when we say, “I am a poor man, full of sin”; “I see in my members another law”; and such (Romans 7:23). Since private Absolution originates in the Office of the Keys, it should not be despised, but greatly and highly esteemed, along with all other offices of the Christian Church.

In issues relating to the spoken, outward Word, we must firmly hold that God grants His Spirit or grace to no one except through or with the preceding outward Word [Galatians 3:2, 5]. This protects us from the enthusiasts (i.e., souls who boast that they have the Spirit without and before the Word). They judge Scripture or the spoken Word and explain and stretch it at their pleasure, as Münzer did. Many still do this today, wanting to be sharp judges between the Spirit and the letter, and yet they do not know what they are saying [2 Corinthians 3:6]. Actually, the papacy too is nothing but sheer enthusiasm. The pope boasts that all rights exist in the shrine of his heart. Whatever he decides and commands within his church is from the Spirit and is right, even though it is above and contrary to Scripture and the spoken Word.

All this is the old devil and old serpent [Revelation 12:9], who also turned Adam and Eve into enthusiasts. He led them away from God’s outward Word to spiritualizing and self-pride [Genesis 3:2–5]. And yet, he did this through other outward words. In the same way, our enthusiasts today condemn the outward Word. Yet they themselves are not silent. They fill the world with their babbling and writings, as if the Spirit could not come through the apostles’ writings and spoken Word, but has to come through their writings and words. Why don’t they leave out their own sermons and writings and let the Spirit Himself come to people without their writings before them, as they boast that He has come into them without the preaching of the Scriptures? We do not have time now to argue about this in more detail. We have treated this well enough elsewhere.

For even those who believe before being baptized, or become believing in Baptism, believe through the outward Word, which came first. For example, adults who have come to reason must first have heard “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” [Mark 16:16], even though they are at first unbelieving and receive the Spirit and Baptism ten years afterward. Cornelius, living among the Jews, had heard long before about the coming Messiah, through whom he was righteous before God (Acts 10:1–2). In such faith, his prayers and alms were accept-able to God (since Luke calls him devout and God-fearing). Without the Word coming first and without hearing it, he could not have believed or been righteous [Romans 10:17]. St. Peter, though, had to reveal to him that the Messiah (in whom he had previously believed as one who would come in the future) now had come, lest his faith in the coming Messiah hold him captive among the Jewish people, who were hardened and unbelieving. He must now know that he is saved by the present Messiah and must not, with the Jewish people, deny or persecute Him.

In a word, enthusiasm dwells in Adam and his children from the beginning to the end of the world. Its venom has been implanted and infused into them by the old serpent. It is the origin, power, and strength of all heresy, especially of that of the papacy and Muhammad. (Article 7, 1–3; Article 8, 1–9)

Discussing the Text

93. What sins are covered under the Office of the Keys?

94. What is the purpose of Absolution?

95. Why is it impossible to list all sins during Confession?

96. How does Galatians 3:2, 5 support the premise that “God grants His Spirit or grace to no one except through or with the preceding outward Word”?

97. What does Luther mean by the use of the word *enthusiasm*?

98. How is original sin related to enthusiasm?

99. Compare the Baptism of an infant with the Baptism of an adult.

100. Why is enthusiasm such a great venom?

Connect

Therefore, we must constantly maintain this point: God does not want to deal with us in any other way than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. Whatever is praised as from the Spirit—without the Word and Sacraments—is the devil himself. God wanted to appear even to Moses through the burning bush and spoken Word [Exodus 3:2–15]. No prophet, neither Elijah nor Elisha, received the Spirit without the Ten Commandments <or the spoken Word>. John the Baptist was not conceived without the word of Gabriel coming first, nor did he leap in his mother’s womb without Mary’s voice [Luke 1:11–20, 41]. Peter says, “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” [2 Peter 1:21]. Without the outward Word, however, they were not holy. Much less would the Holy Spirit have moved them to speak when they were still unholy. They were holy, says he, since the Holy Spirit spoke through them. (10–13)

101. Why does God deal with us only through external ways—through Word and Sacraments?

102. How did Luther use 2 Peter 1:21 to support his argument against the enthusiasts?

103. What instruction about confession, prayer, and teaching do you find in James 5:16 and Ephesians 6:4?

Vision

Personal Reflection

- Compare the Article on Baptism with the section on Baptism in Luther’s Small Catechism. Are there any differences? What is the same? Does this discussion answer your questions, or does it raise more questions for you?
- How does Luther’s discussion on the Sacrament of the Altar in his Small Catechism strengthen his discussion of that subject in the Smalcald Articles? What hope and comfort does this give you?
- Consider for yourself and your congregation: Is it easy to fall into the dangers of enthusiasm? What safeguards are available to you and your fellow believers to keep from falling into enthusiasm?

Family Connection

- Have all family members locate their baptismal certificates. Discuss the day of each Baptism: Who was there? Who was the pastor? What was said and done? Who are the baptismal sponsors? Perhaps, write a note of thanks to the sponsors for their prayers and support in the life of faith in Christ.
- Review the Divine Service of Holy Communion as given in the hymnal. How do the very parts of the service give and support the forgiveness of sins?
- Does your congregation utilize the practice of individual Confession and Absolution? If not, do you see a need for it? How could it be started?

Closing Worship

Sing or read aloud these stanzas from “All Who Believe and Are Baptized” (*LSB* 601; *CW* 299; *LW* 225; *LBW* 194; *TLH* 301).

All who believe and are baptized
Shall see the Lord’s salvation;
Baptized into the death of Christ,
They are a new creation;
Through Christ’s redemption they shall stand
Among the glorious, heav’nly band
Of ev’ry tribe and nation.

With one accord, O God, we pray:
Grant us Your Holy Spirit.
Help us in our infirmity
Through Jesus’ blood and merit.
Grant us to grow in grace each day
That by this sacrament we may
Eternal life inherit.

For Next Week

For next week, read The Third Part—Article IX: Excommunication; Article X: Ordination and the Call; Article XI: The Marriage of Priests; Article XII: The Church; Article XIII: How One Is Justified; Article XIV: Monastic Vows; and Article XV: Human Traditions.

Session 7

Article IX: Excommunication; Article X: Ordination and the Call; Article XI: The Marriage of Priests; Article XII: The Church; Article XIII: How One Is Justified; Article XIV: Monastic Vows; Article XV: Human Traditions

Law/Gospel Focus

Distinguishing between human traditions and God's commands shouldn't be all that difficult, but it is. When humans try to answer the question, we almost always focus on ourselves, rather than on God. Ever since the Garden of Eden, we have been afflicted with poor and warped eyesight. We are turned in on ourselves and our wants. Through the forgiveness that Christ has given us because of His cross and empty tomb, He corrects our vision by giving us His sight.

Opening Worship

Pray together these verses from Psalm 40.

Leader: I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your steadfast love and Your faithfulness from the great congregation.

Participants: **I waited patiently for the LORD; He inclined to me and heard my cry.**

Leader: He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

Participants: **Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!**

Leader: May all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; may those who love your salvation say continually, "Great is the LORD!"

Participants: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. I have told the glad news of deliverance**

in the great congregation. I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your steadfast love and Your faithfulness from the great congregation.

Introduction

The common thread tying these articles together is the question of what God says about each of the matters. Cluttering each subject were abuses, errors, and human traditions and interpretations. Luther thus discusses the reason for excommunication, for the Office of Public Ministry in the Church, and for marriage of priests. Further, he defines the Church, discusses how one is justified before God, and briefly deals with monastic vows and human traditions. Keep in mind that Luther had been placed under the pope's ban and had lived under it since 1521.

Inform

Article IX: Excommunication

The greater excommunication, as the pope calls it, we regard only as a civil penalty, and it does not concern us ministers of the Church. But the lesser, truly Christian excommunication, is this: Open and hard-hearted sinners are not admitted to the Sacrament and other communion of the Church until they amend their lives and avoid sin [1 Corinthians 5]. Ministers should not mingle secular punishments with this punishment from the Church, or excommunication.

Discussing the Text

104. What was the difference between the “greater” and the “lesser” excommunication?

105. Using 1 Corinthians 5, what is excommunication and its purpose?

106. What is wrong with mingling secular punishments with those from the Church?

Article X: Ordination and the Call

If the bishops would be true bishops and would devote themselves to the Church and the Gospel, we might grant them to ordain and confirm us and our preachers. This would be for the sake of love and unity, but not because it was necessary. However, they would have

to give up all comedies and spectacular display of unchristian parade and pomp. But they do not even want to be true bishops, but worldly lords and princes, who will neither preach, nor teach, nor baptize, nor administer the Lord's Supper, nor perform any work or office of the Church. Furthermore, they persecute and condemn those who do discharge these functions, having been called to do so. So the Church should not be deprived of ministers because of the bishops.

Therefore, as the ancient examples of the Church and the fathers teach us, we ourselves should ordain suitable persons to this office. Even according to their own laws, they do not have the right to forbid or prevent us. For their laws say that those ordained even by heretics are truly ordained and stay ordained. As St. Jerome writes of the Church at Alexandria, at first it was governed in common by priests and preachers, without bishops. (1–3)

Discussing the Text

107. What does it mean to be a true bishop?

108. What was Luther's complaint against the bishops?

109. Why is the office of bishop not needed in the Church?

Article XI: The Marriage of Priests

They have neither the authority nor the right to ban marriage and to burden the divine order of priests with perpetual celibacy. They have acted like anti-Christian, tyrannical, desperate scoundrels, and by this have caused all kinds of horrible, outrageous, innumerable sins of unchastity <depraved lusts>, in which they themselves still wallow. Now, neither we nor they have been given the power to make a woman out of a man or a man out of a woman, or to nullify either sex. So they have had no authority to separate such creatures of God, or to forbid them from living honestly in marriage with one another. Therefore, we are unwilling to agree to their outrageous celibacy, nor will we tolerate it. We want to have marriage free as God has instituted it, and we want neither to repeal nor hinder His work. For Paul says that this ban on marriage is the "teachings of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1–3). (1–3)

Discussing the Text

110. Who was the “they” to whom Luther referred?

111. On what basis do the “Lutherans” refuse to agree to or tolerate the requirement of celibacy for the priesthood?

Article XII: The Church

We do not agree with them that they are the Church. They are not the Church. Nor will we listen to those things that, under the name of Church, they command or forbid. Thank God, <today> a seven-year-old child knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd [John 10:11–16]. For the children pray, “I believe in one holy Christian Church.” This holiness does not come from albs, tonsures, long gowns, and other ceremonies they made up without Holy Scripture, but from God’s Word and true faith. (1–3)

Discussing the Text

112. According to Luther, what does a seven-year-old child know about the Church? How does John 10:11–16 support this?

113. How do children learn this?

114. What is the source of the holiness of the Church?

Article XIII: How One Is Justified before God and Does Good Works

I do not know how to change in the least what I have previously and constantly taught about justification. Namely, that through faith, as St. Peter says, we have a new and clean heart [Acts 15:9–11], and God will and does account us entirely righteous and holy for the sake of Christ, our Mediator [1 Timothy 2:5]. Although sin in the flesh has not yet been

completely removed or become dead [Romans 7:18], yet He will not punish or remember it.

Such faith, renewal, and forgiveness of sins are followed by good works [Ephesians 2:8–9]. What is still sinful or imperfect in them will not be counted as sin or defect, for Christ’s sake [Psalm 32:1–2; Romans 4:7–8]. The entire individual, both his person and his works, is declared to be righteous and holy from pure grace and mercy, shed upon us and spread over us in Christ. Therefore, we cannot boast of many merits and works, if they are viewed apart from grace and mercy. As it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31); namely, that he has a gracious God. For with that, all is well. We say, besides, that if good works do not follow, the faith is false and not true. (1–4)

Discussing the Text

115. How are we justified before God?

116. What still is true about the person whom Luther says “is declared to be righteous and holy”?

117. What does forgiveness cover?

118. In what ways does 1 Corinthians 1:31 support good works flowing from the forgiveness of sins?

Article XIV: Monastic Vows

Since monastic vows directly conflict with the first chief article, they must be absolutely abolished. It is about them that Christ says, “Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray” (Matthew 24:5, 23–24). He who makes a vow to live as a monk believes that he will enter upon a way of life holier than ordinary Christians lead. He wants to earn heaven by his own works, not only for himself, but also for others. This is to deny Christ. They also boast from their St. Thomas Aquinas that a monastic vow is equal to Baptism. This is blasphemy. (1–3)

Article XV: Human Traditions

The declaration of the papists that human traditions serve for the forgiveness of sins or merit salvation is unchristian and condemned. As Christ says, “In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” [Matthew 15:9]. Again, “the commands of people who turn away from the truth” [Titus 1:14]. When they declare that it is a mortal sin if someone breaks these ordinances, this, too, is not right. (1–2)

Discussing the Text

119. How did monastic vows go against the chief article of being saved by grace through faith in Christ alone?

120. How do human traditions turn people away from the truth?

Connect

Luther concludes his confession (as given here in the Smalcald Articles) by asserting that he feels strongly about these articles of faith. For Luther, none of these teachings could be compromised. Thus, in one final condemnation of a whole host of superstitious Roman practices, Luther indicates we should have nothing to do with the Romans.

Conclusion

These are the articles on which I must stand, and, God willing, shall stand, even to my death. I do not know how to change or yield anything in them. If anyone wants to yield anything, let him do it at the peril of his conscience.

Finally, there still remains the pope’s bag of tricks about foolish and childish articles, such as the dedication of churches, the baptism of bells, the baptism of the altar stone, and the inviting of sponsors to these rites who would make donations towards them. Such baptizing is a mockery and scorning of Holy Baptism, and so should not be tolerated. Furthermore, concerning the consecration of wax candles, palm branches, cakes, oats, spices, and such, these cannot be called consecrations, but are sheer mockery and fraud. Such tricks are without number. We commend them for adoration to their god and to themselves, until they weary of it. We will have nothing to do with them. (3–4)

121. Why is it reasonable for Luther to say, “I do not know how to change or yield anything in them”?

122. For both the Pharisees (Matthew 15:1–9) and the Roman Church, traditions led a group into error. Evaluate the traditions of your congregation. How are they helpful? How do you keep them from leading you into error?

123. What were some of your most significant insights during your study of the Smalcald Articles (Sessions 1–7)?

Vision

Personal Reflection

- Consider the last seven articles: Which of these do you see as the greatest danger to the Church today?
- What do you value most about your pastor and about the Office of the Pastor? Is your pastor included in your prayers on a regular basis?
- Does Luther’s definition of the Church still hold true today? Is there anything you would add or subtract from that definition?

Family Connection

- If pastors are needed by the Church to preach, teach, baptize, administer the Lord’s Supper, and perform other work, discuss with your family ways in which you can encourage and recruit candidates for the ministry.
- Utilizing Luther’s description of “how one is justified before God and does good works,” develop for yourself a brief statement or outline that you feel comfortable using to witness concerning Christ to a neighbor, friend, family member, or stranger.

Closing Worship

Sing or read aloud these stanzas from “Lord Jesus Christ, the Church’s Head” (*LSB* 647; *CW* 536; *LW* 293; *TLH* 477).

Lord Jesus Christ, the Church’s head,
You are her one foundation;
In You she trusts, before You bows,
And waits for Your salvation.
Built on this rock secure,
Your Church shall endure
Though all the world decay
And all things pass away.
O hear, o hear us, Jesus!

O Lord, let this Your little flock,
Your name alone confessing,
Continue in Your loving care,
True unity possessing.
Your sacraments, O Lord,
And Your saving Word
To us, Lord, pure retain.
Grant that they may remain
Our only strength and comfort.

And for Your Gospel let us dare
To sacrifice all treasure;
Teach us to bear Your blessed cross,
To find in You all pleasure.
O grant us steadfastness
In joy and distress,
Lest we, Lord, You forsake.
Let us by grace partake
Of endless joy and gladness.

For Next Week

Read the Introduction to the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope.

Session 8

Introduction to the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

Law/Gospel Focus

There is but one head of the Church—Jesus Christ. With His life-blood poured out for our sins on the cross, Christ purchased and won us back from the power of the devil. Christ’s work and teaching are the foundation for the life of the Church. When Christians begin to think that they have done something to merit their salvation, when they take power for themselves that belongs to Christ alone, then there is need of repentance. There is need, also, of the very forgiveness Christ gives.

Opening Worship

Pray these verses from Psalms 119 and 46.

Leader: I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame.

Participants: **God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**

Leader: Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,

Participants: **though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.**

Leader: The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Participants: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame.**

Introduction

How do Christians receive pastors? How is the Church organized, structured, and governed? The Roman Catholic answer is that everything depends on the pope, the “vicar of Christ,” the one who is said to be the immediate successor to the Apostle Peter. Through the pope, so it is thought, flows Christ’s authority to His Church on earth. This is not the Bible’s answer. In this document Philip Melancthon provides the Lutheran view of authority in the Church and the basis on which the Church is founded and continued.

This Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope is often considered an appendix to the Smalcald Articles. In reality, it is not. It was regarded as a follow-up to Augsburg Confession and the Apology. When Lutheran leaders in Smalcald gathered in February 1537 to consider Luther’s articles, most of them signed them, but they were not formally

adopted by the Smalcaldic League. Instead, it was this Treatise that was adopted. The Smalcaldic League wanted some document that would provide their position on the papacy for the general council scheduled for Mantua. And so, at the end of their meeting, they adopted Melanchthon's Treatise.

In the Treatise, Melanchthon presents the position Luther took in the Smalcald Articles on the Papacy (SA II IV). He said to a friend later, "I wrote this Treatise somewhat more sharply than I wanted" (*Corpus Reformatorum*, 3:271, 292). No doubt, Elector John Frederick insisted that Melanchthon write something clear and to the point, something that would not be misunderstood later.

The Treatise has two basic parts. The first (pars. 1–59) analyzes the claims made by the Medieval Church about the papacy down through the years. Rome claimed that the pope is the supreme head of the Church by divine right and, therefore, the pope has final and ultimate authority in both the Church and the world. Rome asserted that it is necessary for salvation to believe these things about papal authority because the pope is the vicar (representative) of Christ on earth. The assertion that the pope is the Antichrist strikes modern ears as radical, perhaps even offensive. The point simply is that the "marks of Antichrist plainly agree with the kingdom of the pope and his followers" (Tr 39). The reasons for this claim are provided in detail by Melanchthon. The second part (pars. 60–82) describes the power and jurisdiction of bishops (see note, pp. 302–3).

The foundation of all Roman Catholic arguments for the authority of the pope rests on the interpretation of Matthew 16:18 and John 21:15–17. Rome claims that Matthew 16:18 is the "proof text" for papal authority. The argument goes like this: The Lord chose St. Peter to be the head of the apostles, and as such, Christ promises to build His Church on Peter, the Rock. A careful study of the actual words of this text reveals that in fact Christ is playing off Peter's name, "Petros," to speak about the "Petra," the rock-solid truth that Peter is expressing, namely, the truth about Christ. On the rock of Peter's confession—not Peter himself—Christ says He is building His Church.

Church Authority Today

The Treatise is also very helpful for the proper understanding of the role of bishops and pastors in the Church today. Lutheranism rejects any suggestion that differences in the way clergy are ordered in the Church is a divine mandate. Orders and ranks in the clergy are a matter of human arrangement, in Christian freedom, for the sake of good order in the Church. However, every pastor is equal in office when it comes to the essence of the ministry: proclaiming the Gospel, administering the Sacraments, and other duties. As the Gospel is one, so the ministry of the Gospel is one.

Placing men into the pastoral office through ordination is something the church can always do through its pastors. The Gospel is what is at stake in these issues. The Gospel does not depend on anything but Christ for its validity and efficacy. So Melanchthon quotes Augustine favorably to explain that Christians can, and even should, administer Baptism to one another when a pastor is not available (e.g., an emergency Baptism).

("Editor's Introduction to the 'Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope,' " *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, second edition, pp. 291–2)

Discussing the Text

124. Why is it understandable that some have considered the Treatise as an appendix to the Smalcald Articles?

125. What part did Philip Melancthon and Elector John Frederick play in the writing of the Treatise?

126. What claims about the papacy had the Medieval Church made through the years leading up to the Treatise?

127. How do the Scripture passages of Matthew 16:18 and John 21:15–17 get involved in the Roman Catholic arguments for the authority of the pope?

128. How does confessional Lutheranism regard the orders and ranks of clergy?

129. In all of this discussion, why is it that the Gospel is at stake?

Connect

Not until the 1870 “Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith,” issued by the First Vatican Council, was the topic of the papacy officially dealt with by the Roman Catholic Church. There it dealt with the institution of the papacy, its power and nature, and its infallibility. What follows is a direct quote from the 1870 “Dogmatic Constitution.”

[Session 4: July 18, 1870]

First dogmatic constitution on the Church of Christ

This doctrine is to be believed and held by all the faithful in accordance with the ancient and unchanging faith of the whole Church.

Furthermore, we shall proscribe and condemn the contrary errors which are so harmful to the Lord's flock.

Chapter 1

On the institution of the apostolic primacy in blessed Peter

1. We teach and declare that, according to the Gospel evidence, a primacy of jurisdiction over the whole Church of God was immediately and directly promised to the blessed apostle Peter and conferred on him by Christ the Lord.

2. It was to Simon alone, to whom He had already said, "You shall be called Cephas," [John 1:42], that the Lord, after his confession "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," [Matthew 16:16], spoke these words:

"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of the underworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" [Matthew 16:17–19].

3. And it was to Peter alone that Jesus, after His resurrection, confided the jurisdiction of Supreme Pastor and ruler of His whole fold, saying: "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep" [John 21:15, 17].

4. To this absolutely manifest teaching of the Sacred Scriptures, as it has always been understood by the Catholic Church, are clearly opposed the distorted opinions of those who misrepresent the form of government which Christ the Lord established in His Church and deny that Peter, in preference to the rest of the apostles, taken singly or collectively, was endowed by Christ with a true and proper primacy of jurisdiction.

5. The same may be said of those who assert that this primacy was not conferred immediately and directly on blessed Peter himself, but rather on the Church, and that it was through the Church that it was transmitted to him in his capacity as her minister.

6. Therefore, if anyone says that blessed Peter the apostle was not appointed by Christ the Lord as prince of all the apostles and visible head of the whole Church militant; or that it was a primacy of honor only and not one of true and proper jurisdiction that he directly and immediately received from our Lord Jesus Christ Himself: let him be anathema.

Discuss the Text

130. According to this document, whom does the Roman Church designate as the giver of its form of government?

131. According to this document, what is the designation given to those who do not follow and believe what the Roman Church teaches concerning the pope?

First dogmatic constitution on the Church of Christ (continued)

[W]hoever succeeds to the chair of Peter obtains by the institution of Christ Himself, the primacy of Peter over the whole Church. So what the truth has ordained stands firm, and blessed Peter perseveres in the rock-like strength he was granted, and does not abandon that guidance of the Church which he once received.¹

For this reason it has always been necessary for every Church—that is to say the faithful throughout the world—to be in agreement with the Roman Church because of its more effective leadership. In consequence of being joined, as members to head, with that see, from which the rights of sacred communion flow to all, they will grow together into the structure of a single body.²

Therefore, if anyone says that it is not by the institution of Christ the Lord Himself (that is to say, by divine law) that blessed Peter should have perpetual successors in the primacy over the whole Church; or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of blessed Peter in this primacy: let him be anathema. . . .

[I]f anyone says that the Roman Pontiff has merely an office of supervision and guidance, and not the full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole Church, and this not only in matters of faith and morals, but also in those which concern the discipline and government of the Church dispersed throughout the whole world; or that he has only the principal part, but not the absolute fullness, of this supreme power; or that this power of his is not ordinary and immediate both over all and each of the Churches and over all and each of the pastors and faithful: let him be anathema. . . .

The first condition of salvation is to maintain the rule of the true faith. And since that saying of our Lord, Jesus Christ, “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church,” [Matthew 16:18] cannot fail of its effect, the words spoken are confirmed by their consequences. For in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion has always been preserved unblemished, and sacred doctrine been held in honor. Since it is our earnest desire to be in no way separated from this faith and doctrine, we hope that we may deserve to remain in that one communion which the Apostolic See preaches, for in it is the whole and true strength of the Christian religion. . . .³

[W]e teach and define as a divinely revealed dogma that when the Roman Pontiff speaks ex cathedra, that is, when, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church, he possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals. Therefore, such

¹ Leo I, sermon 3, chapter 3.

² Irenaeus, Against Heresies, book 3, chapter 3.

³ From Formula of Pope Hormisdas, AD 517.

definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not by the consent of the Church, irreformable.

So then, should anyone, which God forbid, have the temerity to reject this definition of ours: let him be anathema.

Discussing the Text

132. According to this document, what responsibilities and rights does the Roman Church assign to the pope?

133. What does it mean when the pope speaks *ex cathedra*?

134. Compare these teachings of the Roman Church with the attitude of Peter himself in 1 Peter 5:1–4.

135. Rather than power and authority, what does Peter stress as he closes his Epistles? See 1 Peter 5:10–11 and 2 Peter 3:18.

Vision

Personal Reflection

- In comparing the teaching of Rome with that of the Lutherans concerning Matthew 16:18, what differences do you see?
- How does putting your trust in God’s Word differ from trusting the pope when he speaks *ex cathedra*?

Family Connection

- Examine your congregation’s constitution. What is listed as the authority in all matters?
- In your prayers or family devotions, include the president and officers of your congregation, your district, and the Synod.

Closing Worship

Sing or read aloud these stanzas from “Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast” (*LSB* 577; *ELH* 228; *CW* 324; *LW* 342; *LBW* 234; *TLH* 49).

Almighty God, Your Word is cast
Like seed into the ground;
Now let the dew of heav’n descend
And righteous fruits abound.

Let not the sly satanic foe
This holy seed remove,
But give it root in ev’ry heart
To bring forth fruits of love.

Let not the world’s deceitful cares
The rising plant destroy,
But let it yield a hundredfold
The fruits of peace and joy.

So when the precious seed is sown,
Life-giving grace bestow
That all whose souls the truth receive
Its saving pow’r may know.

For Next Week

Read the introduction and the part marked Testimony of Scripture from the Treatise.

Session 9

Testimony of Scripture

Law/Gospel Focus

Whenever Christian leaders take for themselves powers and authority that belong rightfully to God's Word, these leaders are sinning because they are taking the place of God Himself. This happens in the lives of individual Christians, as well, every time we sin. Through His reign of forgiveness won on the cross, Christ forgives us and leads us to follow Him. He is the only true head of the Church.

Opening Worship

Pray these verses from Psalm 135.

Leader: Your name, O LORD, endures forever, Your renown, O LORD, throughout all ages.

Participants: **Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD, give praise, O servants of the LORD,**

Leader: who stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God!

Participants: **Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing His name, for it is pleasant!**

Leader: For the LORD will vindicate His people and have compassion on His servants.

Participants: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Your name, O LORD, endures forever, Your renown, O LORD, throughout all ages.**

Introduction

The beginning of the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope lays out the charges against the papacy. First, the pope claims the right to set himself above all other bishops and pastors in the Church. Second, the pope claims for himself all authority in the realms of both Church and state. Third, the pope demands people acknowledge his authority in the Church as a requirement for salvation. After stating these charges, Melancthon then presents basic biblical text refuting these papal claims.

Inform

Introduction to the Power and Primacy of the Pope

The Roman pontiff claims for himself that he is <supreme above> all bishops and pastors by divine right.

Second, he adds that by divine right he has both swords, that is, the authority also to enthrone and depose kings, regulate secular dominions, and such.

Third, he says that to believe this is necessary for salvation. For these reasons, the Roman bishop calls himself and boasts that he is the vicar of Christ on earth.

These three articles we hold to be false, godless, tyrannical, and destructive to the Church.

So that our proof may be better understood, we will first define what they call being above everyone by “divine right.” They mean that the pope is universal, or, as they say, he is the ecumenical bishop, from whom all bishops and pastors throughout the entire world should seek ordination. He is to have the right of electing, ordaining, confirming, and deposing all bishops. Besides this, he claims for himself the authority to make laws about acts of worship, about changing the Sacraments, and about doctrine. He wants his articles, his decrees, and his laws to be considered equal to the divine laws (to other articles of the Christian Creed and the Holy Scriptures). In other words, he holds that people’s consciences are so bound by the papal laws that those who neglect them, even without public offense, sin mortally. What he adds is even more horrible; namely, that it is necessary to believe all these things in order to be saved. (1–6)

Discussing the Text

136. What articles of the papacy did Melancthon call “false, godless, tyrannical, and destructive to the Church”?

137. How did Melancthon define what the Romans call being above everyone by “divine right”?

138. Over what areas did the pope claim authority to make laws?

139. When the pope equated his articles, decrees, and laws with divine laws, what did this do to the individual Christian?

[Testimony of Scripture]

In the first place, therefore, we will show from the Gospel that the Roman bishop is not above <cannot arrogate to himself any supremacy whatever over> other bishops and pastors by divine right.

I. Luke 22:24–27. Christ clearly bans lordship among the apostles. This was the very question: When Christ spoke of His passion, the apostles were disputing over who should be the head of the others, and, as it were, the vicar of the absent Christ. Christ rebukes this error of the apostles and teaches that there shall not be lordship or superiority among them. Instead, the apostles would be sent forth as equals to the common ministry of the Gospel. So, He says, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves” (22:25–26). The contrast here shows that lordship [among the apostles] is not approved.

II. Matthew 18:2. When Christ, in the same dispute about the Kingdom, places a little child in their midst, He is teaching the same thing by parable. Just as a child neither takes nor seeks

sovereignty for himself, so this shows that there is not to be sovereignty among ministers.

III. John 20:21. Christ sends forth His disciples in equality, without any distinction <so that no one of them was to have more or less power than any other>. He says, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.” He says that He sends them individually in the same way He Himself was sent [John 12:44–50]. Therefore, He grants no one a privilege or lordship above the rest.

IV. Galatians 2:7–10. St. Paul clearly affirms that he was neither ordained nor confirmed by Peter. Nor does he acknowledge Peter to be one from whom confirmation should be sought. He plainly maintains on this point that his call does not depend upon Peter’s authority. If Peter were superior by divine right, he should have acknowledged Peter as a superior. Paul says that he had preached the Gospel without consulting Peter [Galatians 1:10–12]. Also, “from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality).” And, “Those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me” [2:6]. Paul clearly testifies that he did not even wish to seek the confirmation of Peter to preach, even when Paul had come to him. He teaches that the authority of the ministry depends upon God’s Word, and that Peter was not superior to the other apostles. Ordination or confirmation was not to be sought from this one individual, Peter <[Paul teaches] that the office of the ministry proceeds from the general call of the apostles and that it is not necessary for all to have the call or confirmation of this one person, Peter, alone>.

V. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul makes ministers equal. He also teaches that the Church is superior to <or: more than> the ministers. Superiority or lordship over the Church or the rest of the ministers is not attributed to Peter. For he says, “All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas” [3:21–22]. That is, do not let the other ministers or Peter assume for themselves lordship or superiority over the Church. Do not let them burden the Church with traditions. Do not let the authority of anyone prevail more than <God’s> Word. Do not let the authority of Cephas be opposed to the authority of the other apostles, as they reasoned at that time, “Cephas, who is an apostle of higher rank, observes this. Therefore,

both Paul and the rest ought to observe this.” Paul removes this claim from Peter and denies that his authority is to be preferred to the rest or to the Church. (7–11)

Discussing the Text

140. Using Luke 22:24–27, Melanchthon was making what point concerning the papacy?

141. According to Melanchthon’s explanation of Matthew 18:2, why did Jesus place a child in the midst of the disciples?

142. Read John 20:21. What point was Melanchthon making when he used this text?

143. In using Galatians 1:10–12; 2:7–10, what premise was Melanchthon establishing?

144. How does 1 Corinthians 3 teach that ministers are equal?

Connect

The [Testimony of Scripture] concludes: “Do not let the other ministers or Peter assume for themselves lordship or superiority over the Church. Do not let them burden the Church with traditions. Do not let the authority of anyone prevail more than <God’s> Word. Do not let the authority of Cephas be opposed to the authority of the other apostles, as they reasoned at that time, “Cephas, who is an apostle of higher rank, observes this. Therefore, both Paul and the rest ought to observe this. Paul removes this claim from Peter and denies that his authority is to be preferred to the rest or the Church.” (11)

Discussing the Text

145. Ultimately, what is the main authority and guide in the Church?

146. How difficult is it for you not to let anything prevail more than God's Word?

147. What are some traditions or practices of your congregation that you value, even though they are not commanded (nor forbidden) by God?

148. Which of the arguments presented by Melancthon do you consider to be the strongest? the weakest?

Vision

Personal Reflection

- Why do you think Melancthon and his fellow Lutherans stated their arguments so harshly? Is there a place for such arguments today?
- When confronted with such an issue as we have discussed, why should you go to the Scriptures for help?
- How do the arguments presented against the papacy affect your life and work?

Family Connection

- Notice how the news media treat the papacy today. Is it in any way similar to the treatment of the papacy at the time of the Reformation?
- Do you know the names of the pastors at the Lutheran churches in your circuit? If not, find out. Then, include them in your personal or family devotion prayer time.

Closing Worship

Sing or read aloud these stanzas from "Preserve Your Word, O Savior" (*LSB* 658; *ELH* 533; *CW* 289; *LW* 337; *TLH* 264).

Preserve Your Word, O Savior,
To us this latter day,
And let Your kingdom flourish;
Enlarge Your Church, we pray.
Oh, keep our faith from failing;
Keep hope's bright star aglow.
Let nothing from truth turn us
While living here below.

Preserve, O Lord, Your Zion,
Bought dearly with Your blood;
Protect what You have chosen
Against the hellish flood.
Be always our defender
When dangers gather round;
When all the earth is crumbling,
Safe may Your Church be found.

Preserve in wave and tempest
Your storm-tossed little flock;
Assailed by wind and weather,
May it endure each shock.
Stand at the helm, our pilot,
And set the course aright;
Then we will reach the harbor
In Your eternal light.

For Next Week

Read the Testimony of History.

Session 10

Testimony of History

Law/Gospel Focus

History is often ignored at great peril. Either we repeat the same mistakes we have made before, or we act as if we are the very first people who have no historical base on which to stand. Whether speaking of the papacy or our own lives, we daily fall into each of these situations. The Gospel of Christ, rooted in history, focuses on the one event that still affects our lives today—Christ's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of our sins.

Opening Worship

Pray these verses from Psalm 85.

Leader: LORD, You were favorable to Your land; You restored the fortunes of Jacob.

Participants: **You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin.**

Leader: You withdrew all Your wrath; You turned from Your hot anger.

Participants: **Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away Your indignation toward us!**

Leader: Show us Your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.

Participants: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Introduction

The pope claims to set himself above all other bishops and pastors in the Church, to possess authority in the realms of both Church and state, and to demand that all in the Church acknowledge his authority as a requirement for salvation. These claims have been refuted by Melancthon using the testimony of Scripture. Now, Melancthon turns to history to show that the claims of the Roman bishop (pope) lack foundation in the Church's practice through the ages. By making these historical references, the pope's position is shown to be derived from human decisions made at a council for the sake of order in the Church, not out of some special institution by Christ.

Inform

Testimony of History

VI. The Council of Nicaea resolved that the bishop of Alexandria should administer the churches in the East and the Roman bishop the suburban churches, that is, those in the

Roman provinces in the West. From this start by a human law (i.e., the resolution of the council), the authority of the Roman bishop first arose. If the Roman bishop already had the superiority by divine law, it would not have been lawful for the council to take away any right from him and transfer it to the bishop of Alexandria. No, all the bishops of the East should always have sought ordination and confirmation from the bishop of Rome.

VII. The Council of Nicaea also determined that bishops should be elected by their own churches, in the presence of one or more neighboring bishops. This was observed also in the West in the Latin churches, as Cyprian and Augustine testify. For Cyprian says in his fourth letter to Cornelius:

So as for the divine observance and apostolic practice, you must carefully keep and practice what is also observed among us and in almost all the provinces. To celebrate ordination properly, whatever bishops of the same province live nearby should come together with the people for whom a pastor is being appointed. The bishop should be chosen in the presence of the people, who most fully know the life of each candidate. We have seen this done among us at the ordination of our colleague Sabinus. By the vote of the entire brotherhood and by the judgment of the bishops who had assembled in their presence, the bishop's office was conferred and hands were laid on him.

Cyprian calls this custom "a divine tradition and an apostolic observance." He affirms that it is observed in almost all the provinces.

In the greater part of the world, in the Latin and Greek Churches, neither ordination nor confirmation was sought from a bishop of Rome. Therefore, it is clear enough that the churches did not then grant superiority and domination to the bishop of Rome.

Such superiority is impossible. It is just not possible for one bishop to be the overseer of the churches of the whole world. Churches in the most distant lands cannot seek ordination from only one person. It is clear that Christ's kingdom is scattered throughout the whole world. Today there are many churches in the East that do not seek ordination or confirmation from the Roman bishop. Since the superiority the pope claims for himself is impossible and has not been acknowledged by churches in the greater part of the world, it is clear enough that it was not instituted by Christ and does not spring from divine law.

VIII. Many ancient councils have been proclaimed and held in which the bishop of Rome did not preside, such as that of Nicaea and most others. This, too, testifies that the Church did not then acknowledge the primacy or superiority of the bishop of Rome.

IX. Jerome says:

If there is a question about authority, the world is greater than the city. Wherever there has been a bishop, whether at Rome, or Eugubium, or Constantinople, or Rhegium, or Alexandria, he has the same dignity and priesthood.

X. Pope Gregory, writing to the patriarch at Alexandria, forbids that he be called universal bishop. In the records he says that in the Council of Chalcedon the primacy was offered to the bishop of Rome, but it was not accepted.

XI. Last, how can the pope be over the entire Church by divine right when the Church elects him? And what of the custom that gradually prevailed of bishops of Rome being confirmed by the emperors? When for a long time there had been conflicts over the primacy between the bishops of Rome and Constantinople, the Emperor Phocas finally determined that the primacy should be assigned to the bishop of Rome. But if the ancient

Church had acknowledged the primacy of the Roman pontiff, this conflict could not have occurred. Nor would the emperor have needed to make the decree. (12–21)

Discussing the Text

149. According to Melancthon, if the bishop of Rome “already had the superiority by divine law,” what would it not have allowed?

150. How were bishops to be elected according to the Council of Nicaea?

151. What is proved by the fact that “in the Latin and Greek Churches, neither ordination nor confirmation was sought from a bishop in Rome”?

152. What is proved by the fact that many ancient councils were held without the bishop of Rome presiding over the meeting?

153. Read the statement by Jerome. What did he mean when he said, “If there is a question about authority, the world is greater than the city”?

154. What was Pope Gregory’s attitude to the primacy of the bishop of Rome?

155. What was proved by the fact that the pope was elected by the Church?

156. What was implied by the fact that Emperor Phocas finally determined that the primacy should be assigned to the bishop of Rome, even though for a long time there had been conflicts over the primacy between the bishops of Rome and Constantinople?

Connect

The claim that the bishop of Rome by divine right is above all bishops and pastors is disproved by the testimony of Scripture and by Early Church history. The biblical arguments used by Rome to justify the primacy of the pope have a broader significance than simply being related to the papacy. The historical arguments demonstrate that the rise of the papacy is a relatively new practice.

Discuss

157. What is implied when arguments are made from the history of the Early Church?

158. Read John 20:30–31. What was the major problem with the changes that took place in the Roman Church? What can we do to prevent similar errors in our congregations and churches today?

159. Discuss the history of your congregation and the changes that have taken place over the years. How has the central message of the Gospel remained paramount? In your opinion, which of the changes have been most important for your proclamation of the Gospel?

160. What do your Roman Catholic neighbors and friends think about the papacy, especially its connection with the local parish?

Vision

Personal Reflection

- Note the paragraph from Cyprian. His comments describe the practice of ordination in his day. Are those practices similar to ordinations today?
- Have you ever been to a service of ordination or installation of a pastor? What has been impressed on your memory of that service?
- Why is it best to have other pastors in attendance at an ordination or installation of a pastor?

Family Connection

- Pray for your congregation and your church body, perhaps using a prayer from page 305 of *Lutheran Service Book*.
- Check the historical records of your congregation to see if there have been any ordinations there. Currently, where are those who have been ordained? Perhaps it would be good to drop them a note from their “home” congregation and let them know that they are being remembered in your prayers.

Closing Worship

Sing or read aloud these stanzas from “God of the Prophets, Bless the Prophets’ Sons” (*LSB* 682; *ELH* 501; *CW* 543; *LW* 258; *TLH* 483).

God of the prophets, bless the prophets’ sons;
Elijah’s mantle o’er Elisha cast.
Each age its solemn task may claim but once;
Make each one nobler, stronger than the last.

Anoint them prophets, men who are intent
To be Your witnesses in word and deed,
Their hearts aflame, their lips made eloquent,
Their eyes awake to ev’ry human need.

Anoint them priests, strong intercessors they,
For pardon and for love and hope and peace,
That, through their pleading, guilty sinners may
Find Jesus’ mercy and from sin release.

Make them apostles, heralds of Your cross;
Forth let them go to tell the world of grace.
Inspired by You, may they count all but loss
And stand at last with joy before Your face.

For Next Week

Read Refutation of Roman Arguments and A Contrast between Christ and the Pope.

Session 11

Refutation of Roman Arguments; A Contrast between Christ and the Pope

Law/Gospel Focus

Part of the difficulty in interpreting God’s Word is the matter of us trusting that Word and what it says. More often than not, we try to use the Word of God in order to condone what we think or what we are doing. Again, the focus is on us and not on God and what He says in His Word. The Gospel of Jesus Christ clearly states that we are for-given because of what He has done, and what we have done or failed to do.

Opening Worship

Pray responsively these verses from Psalms 25 and 115.

Leader: Remember Your mercy, O LORD, and Your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

Participants: **You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield.**

Leader: The LORD has remembered us; He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron;

Participants: **He will bless those who fear the LORD, both the small and the great.**

Leader: We will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD!

Participants: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Remember Your mercy, O LORD, and Your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.**

Introduction

Because the Roman Church focused its defense of papal superiority on Matthew 16:18, Melancthon deals clearly with the same text as part of his refutation of the Roman arguments.

[Refutation of Roman Arguments]

They cite against us certain passages, namely, [Matthew 16:18–19,] “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church.” Also, “I will give you the keys.” Also, [John 21:15,] “Feed My lambs,” and some others. Since this entire controversy has been fully and accurately treated elsewhere in the books of our theologians and everything cannot be

reviewed here, we refer to those writings and wish them to be considered repeated here. Yet we will briefly reply about the interpretation of the passages above.

In all these passages, Peter is the representative of the entire assembly of apostles, as appears from the text itself. Christ does not ask Peter alone, when He says, “Who do you say that I am?” [Matthew 16:15]. What is said here to Peter alone in the singular number, “I will give you [singular] the keys; and whatever you [singular] bind” [16:19], is elsewhere expressed in the plural [e.g., Matthew 18:18,] “Whatever you [plural] bind”; [John 20:23,] “If you [plural] forgive the sins of anyone”). These words show that the Keys are given to all the apostles alike and that all the apostles are sent forth alike.

In addition, it must be recognized that the Keys belong not to the person of one particular man, but to the Church. Many most clear and firm arguments show this. For Christ, speaking about the Keys, adds, for example, “If two of you agree on earth” (Matthew 18:19). Therefore, He grants the Keys first and directly to the Church. This is why it is first the Church that has the right of calling. <For just as the promise of the Gospel belongs certainly and immediately to the entire Church, so the Keys belong immediately to the entire Church, because the Keys are nothing else than the office whereby this promise is communicated to every one who desires it, just as it is actually manifest that the Church has the power to ordain ministers of the Church. And Christ speaks in these words: *Whatsoever you shall bind*, etc., and indicates to whom He has given the Keys, namely, to the Church: *Where two or three are gathered together in My name*. Likewise, Christ gives supreme and final jurisdiction to the Church when He says: *Tell it unto the Church*.>

Therefore, these passages demonstrate that Peter is the representative of the entire assembly of the apostles. They do not grant Peter any privilege or superiority or lordship.

As for the declaration “on this rock I will build My church” [Matthew 16:18], certainly the Church has not been built upon the authority of a man. Rather, it has been built upon the ministry of the confession Peter made, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God [Matthew 16:16]. Therefore, Christ addresses Peter as a minister, “On this rock,” that is, this ministry. <Therefore, He addresses him as a minister of this office in which this confession, and doctrine is to be in operation and says: “Upon this rock,” i.e., this preaching and preaching office.>

Furthermore, the ministry of the New Testament is not bound to places and persons like the Levitical [Old Testament] ministry was. Rather, it is spread throughout the whole world. That is where God gives His gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers [Ephesians 4:11]. Nor does this ministry work because of the authority of any person, but because of the Word given by Christ [Romans 10:17]. <Nor does the person add anything to this Word and office; it matters not who is preaching and teaching it; if there are hearts who receive and cling to it, to them it is done as they hear and believe.> Most of the holy Church Fathers, such as Origen, Cyprian, Augustine, Hilary, and Bede, interpret the passage “on this rock” in this way, as not referring to the person of Peter. Chrysostom says this:

“Upon this rock,” not upon Peter. For He built His Church not upon man, but upon the faith of Peter. But what was his faith? “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Hilary says:

The Father revealed to Peter that he should say, “You are the Son of the living God” [Matthew 16:17]. Therefore, the building of the Church is upon this rock of confession. This faith is the foundation of the Church.

As for what is said in John 21:15–19, “Feed My lambs,” and “Do you love Me more than these?” it does not follow from this passage that a peculiar superiority was given Peter. Christ tells him “feed” (i.e., teach <preach> the Word <the Gospel>, or rule the Church with the Word <the Gospel>), which task Peter has in common with the other apostles.

The second article is even clearer. Christ gave the apostles only spiritual power (i.e., the command to teach the Gospel, to announce the forgiveness of sins, to administer the Sacraments, to excommunicate the godless without bodily force <by the Word>). He did not give them the power of the sword (the right to establish, occupy, or bestow kingdoms of the world; [Romans 13:4]). For Christ says, “Go . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20). Also, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21).

It is clear that Christ was not sent to bear the sword or possess a worldly kingdom, as He Himself says, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). And Paul says, “Not that we lord it over your faith” (2 Corinthians 1:24); and “The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh” (2 Corinthians 10:4), and so forth. (22–31)

Discussing the Text

161. How did Melancthon argue that “Peter is representative of the entire assembly of apostles”?

162. If the Keys were given to all apostles alike, how do the Keys now belong to the Church and not to a particular person?

163. What is the rock on which the Church is built?

164. What is the difference between the Levitical (Old Testament) ministry and that of the New Testament?

165. How do the quotations from Chrysostom and Hilary support Melancthon's argument?

166. How did Melancthon define spiritual power?

[A Contrast between Christ and the Pope]

Christ in His passion is crowned with thorns and led forth to be ridiculed in royal purple [John 19:2]. This symbolizes that in the future, after His spiritual kingdom was despised (i.e., the Gospel was suppressed), another kingdom of a worldly kind would be set up with the appearance of churchly power. (So the Constitution of Boniface VIII and the chapter Omnes, Distinction 22, and similar opinions are false and godless, for they argue that the pope is by divine right the ruler of the kingdoms of the world.) From this notion, horrible darkness has been brought into the Church and, after that, great commotions have arisen in Europe. The ministry of the Gospel was neglected [Acts 6:1–4; 1 Timothy 4:13–14] and the knowledge of faith and the spiritual kingdom became extinct. Christian righteousness was assumed to be the outward government the pope had established.

Next, the popes began to seize kingdoms for themselves. They transferred kingdoms. They harassed with unjust excommunications and wars the kings of almost all nations in Europe, but especially the German emperors. Sometimes they did this for the purpose of occupying cities of Italy. Other times they wanted to conquer the bishops of Germany and wrest away from the emperors the right to appoint bishops. In fact, it is even written in the Clementines, "When the empire is vacant, the pope is the legitimate successor."

The pope has not only seized dominion, which is contrary to Christ's command. He has also exalted himself above all kings like a tyrant. The following should not be condemned as much as detested: (a) He makes his claim on the authority of Christ. (b) He transfers the Keys to a worldly government. And (c) then he binds salvation to these godless and criminal opinions when he insists that, believing this dominion belongs to him by divine right, is necessary for salvation.

Since these great errors cloud over the doctrine of faith and Christ's kingdom, they are in no way to be ignored. Their consequences show that they have been great plagues to the Church.

In the third place, this must be added: Even if the bishop of Rome did have the primacy and superiority by divine right, nevertheless, obedience would not be due those pontiffs who defend godless services, idolatry, and doctrine conflicting with the Gospel. No, such pontiffs and such a government should be held accursed, as Paul clearly teaches, "If we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed" [Galatians 1:8]. And, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts [5:29]). Likewise, the church laws also clearly teach that "a heretical pope is not to be obeyed."

The Levitical high priest was the chief priest by divine right [Leviticus 8], and yet godless high priests were not to be obeyed. As Jeremiah and other prophets dissented from the high priests [Jeremiah 26:1–11], so the apostles dissented from Caiaphas and did not have to obey him [Acts 4:19–20; 5:29]. (32–38)

Discussing the Text

167. How did Melancthon describe the downfall of the spiritual kingdom within the Roman Church?

168. What other powers claimed by the pope were described?

169. What claims/beliefs did the pope deem necessary for salvation?

170. How do Galatians 1:8 and Acts 5:29 support Melancthon's argument that "a heretical pope is not to be obeyed"?

171. How did Melancthon apply the Old Testament passages (Leviticus 8; Jeremiah 26:1–11) and New Testament references (Acts 4:19–20; 5:29) to his argument?

Connect

According to Melancthon's explanation, Peter is representative of the apostolic band, meaning that what is said to him is spoken to all of them. The Keys—the spiritual rights, duties, and privileges necessary for the welfare of the Church on earth, conveying God's grace through preaching, absolving, administering Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the power to forgive and retain sins—are given to all the apostles, and not just Peter alone. They are given for the benefit of the Church. Thus, the Keys belong to the Church and not just to the ministers of the Church. The ministry of the Word is founded not on a man, Peter, but upon his confession, for "on this rock" refers not to Peter but to the New Testament ministry of confessing Christ. On the rock of what Peter confessed, the Church is built. Nowhere did Christ give His followers

anything but spiritual authority. Even if the bishop of Rome did have divine authority, faithless popes teaching and advancing false doctrines and claims should be rejected and opposed. Otherwise, the Gospel and its ministry are greatly damaged.

The Office of the Keys

What is the Office of the Keys?

The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written?

This is what St. John the Evangelist writes in chapter twenty: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” [John 20:22–23]

What do you believe according to these words?

I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself. (Luther’s Small Catechism, The Office of the Keys)

172. What is the importance of the Office of the Keys? Compare Melancthon’s words with those of the Small Catechism.

173. Why is it necessary that the gift of the Keys not be limited to one individual (such as Peter)?

174. Review Matthew 18:15–18. What responsibility does Jesus give to individual Christians? How might that be connected to actions of the Church?

175. Based on Paul’s words in Acts 26:20, describe the lifestyle of repentant Christians.

Vision

Personal Reflection

- How have the benefits of the Keys come to you during this past week?
- What dangers do you see with the papacy or any church authority claiming civil power and authority?
- Are these dangers of concern for individual Christians? for the Church at large? for the Gospel?

Family Connection

- With family members, review the section from the Small Catechism concerning the Office of the Keys. How are these benefits present in your congregation?
- Write a prayer of thanks to God for giving to the Church the Office of the Keys and for all pastors (including yours) who bring the gifts of the Gospel to you.

Closing Worship

Sing or read aloud these stanzas from “‘As Surely as I Live,’ God Said” (*LSB* 614; *ELH* 417; *CW* 308; *LW* 235; *TLH* 331).

“As surely as I live,” God said,
“I would not see the sinner dead.
I want him turned from error’s ways,
Repentant, living endless days.”

And so our Lord gave this command:
“Go forth and preach in ev’ry land;
Bestow on all My pard’ning grace
Who will repent and mend their ways.

“All those whose sins you thus remit
I truly pardon and acquit,
And those whose sins you will retain
Condemned and guilty shall remain.

“What you will bind, that bound shall be;
What you will loose, that shall be free;
To My dear Church the keys are giv’n
To open, close the gates of heav’n.”

All praise to You, O Christ, shall be
For absolution full and free,
In which You show Your richest grace;
From false indulgence guard our race.

For Next Week

Read The Marks of the Antichrist.

Session 12

The Marks of the Antichrist

Law/Gospel Focus

We have a tendency to view things based only on external actions or appearances. Thus, if a person of leadership does great works of kindness, we seem to be impressed. Then, somehow, we fail to evaluate what that person teaches. That describes a danger with the papacy. One can be tempted to follow the great works of the pope instead of following Christ. We can be thankful to God that He protects and forgives His Church—including us.

Opening Worship

Pray these verses from Psalms 130 and 143.

Leader: With You there is forgiveness, [O LORD,] that You may be feared.

Participants: **Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy! In Your faithfulness answer me, in Your righteousness!**

Leader: I stretch out my hands to You; my soul thirsts for You like a parched land.

Participants: **Answer me quickly, O LORD! My spirit fails! Hide not Your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit.**

Leader: Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD! I have fled to You for refuge!

Participants: **For Your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life! In Your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble! Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. With You there is forgiveness, [O LORD,] that You may be feared.**

Introduction

The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope in this section explains why the pope carries the marks of the Antichrist (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4; 1 John 2:18). Using Scripture, Melancthon identifies three clear signs that the pope is the Antichrist.

Inform

[The Marks of the Antichrist]

It is clear that the Roman pontiffs, with their followers, defend godless doctrines and godless services. And the marks of Antichrist plainly agree with the kingdom of the pope and his followers. For Paul, in describing Antichrist to the Thessalonians, calls him an

enemy of Christ, “Who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). He is not speaking about heathen kings, but about someone ruling in the Church. He calls him the enemy of Christ, because he will invent doctrine conflicting with the Gospel and will claim for himself divine authority.

Furthermore, it is clear, in the first place, that the pope rules in the Church and has established this kingdom for himself by the claim of churchly authority and of the ministry. He gives these words as a basis, “I will give you the keys” [Matthew 16:19]. Second, the doctrine of the pope conflicts in many ways with the Gospel. <Third,> the pope claims for himself divine authority in a threefold manner: (a) He takes for himself the right to change Christ’s doctrine and services instituted by God, and wants his own doctrine and his own services to be observed as divine. (b) He takes to himself the power not only of binding and loosing in this life, but also jurisdiction over souls after this life. (c) He does not want to be judged by the Church or by anyone and puts his own authority ahead of the decision of councils and the entire Church. To be unwilling to be judged by the Church or by anyone else is to make oneself God. Finally, he defends these horrible errors and this impiety with the greatest cruelty and puts to death those who disagree.

This being the case, all Christians should beware of participating in the godless doctrine, blasphemies, and unjust cruelty of the pope. They should desert and condemn the pope with his followers as the kingdom of Antichrist, just as Christ has commanded, “Beware of false prophets” [Matthew 7:15]. Paul commands that godless teachers should be avoided and condemned as cursed [Galatians 1:8; Titus 3:10]. And he says, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. . . . What fellowship has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

To dissent from the agreement of so many nations and to be called schismatics is a serious matter. But divine authority commands everyone not to be allies and defenders of impiety and unjust cruelty.

In this, our consciences are excused well enough, for the errors of the kingdom of the pope are clear. Scripture with its entire voice cries out that these errors are a *teaching of demons* [1 Tim-othy 4:1–3] and of Antichrist. The idolatry in the abuse of the Masses is clear <besides being altogether useless>. The Masses are used for the most shameful moneymaking. The doctrine of repentance has been utterly corrupted by the pope and his followers. They teach that sins are forgiven because of the value of our works. Then they tell us to doubt whether the forgiveness takes place. They nowhere teach that sins are forgiven freely for Christ’s sake, and that by this faith we obtain forgiveness of sins [Ephesians 2:8–9].

So they hide Christ’s glory and rob consciences of firm consolation. They abolish true divine services (i.e., the exercises of faith struggling with <unbelief and> despair <concerning the promise of the Gospel>).

They have clouded over the doctrine about sin. They have invented a tradition about the listing of offenses, producing many errors and despair.

In addition, they have invented satisfactions, with which they have also hidden Christ’s <merit> benefit.

From these, indulgences have been born. These are pure lies, fabricated for the sake of making money.

How many abuses and what horrible idolatry the invocation of saints has produced!

What shameful acts have arisen from the tradition of celibacy!

What darkness the doctrine of vows has spread over the Gospel! They pretend that vows are righteousness before God and merit the forgiveness of sins. So they have transferred the benefit of Christ to human traditions and have completely snuffed out the doctrine about faith. They have pretended that the most silly traditions are services of God and perfection. They have preferred these to the works of the callings that God requires and has ordained. These errors should not be treated lightly. They detract from Christ's glory and bring destruction to souls. They cannot be passed by unnoticed. (39–48)

Discussing the Text

176. How does 2 Thessalonians 2:4 describe the Antichrist?

177. Why is the Antichrist an enemy of Christ?

178. How did the pope support his claim that he ruled in the Church and had established this kingdom for himself by the claim of churchly authority and of the ministry?

179. What was the threefold manner in which the pope claimed for himself divine authority?

180. According to Melancthon, how does a person make himself into "God"?

181. What is the responsibility of individual Christians in this matter?

182. Review these Scripture passages: Matthew 7:15; Galatians 1:8; Titus 3:10; and 2 Corinthians 6:14. How do they apply to individual Christians?

183. According to the Treatise, on the teaching of forgiveness, how do the Lutherans differ from the papacy?

184. What did the Roman papacy teach concerning sin, satisfactions, and indulgences?

185. How have vows of celibacy and of convents and monasteries spread darkness over the Gospel?

[The Marks of the Antichrist] (continued)

To these errors, two great sins are added: (a) The pope defends these errors by unjust cruelty and the death penalty. (b) He grabs the decision away from the Church and does not permit religious controversies to be judged in the right way. Indeed, he argues that he is above the council and can rescind the decrees of councils. Church law sometimes shamelessly says this. But the evidence shows that the popes act even more shamelessly:

Question 9, canon 3, [of Gratian's Second Decretal] says:

No one shall judge the main [the pope's] throne. For the judge is judged neither by the emperor, nor by all the clergy, nor by the kings, nor by the people.

The pope exercises a twofold tyranny: (a) He defends his errors by force and by murders, and (b) he forbids judicial examination. The latter does even more harm than any executions. When the true judgment of the Church is removed, godless dogmas and godless services cannot be removed. They destroy countless souls for many ages.

Therefore, let the godly consider the great errors of the kingdom of the pope and his tyranny. Let them ponder, (a) that the errors must be rejected and the true doctrine embraced, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Then (b) let them ponder also how great a crime it is to aid unjust cruelty in killing saints, whose blood God will undoubtedly avenge (Revelation 6:10).

The chief members of the Church, the kings and princes, should especially guard the interests of the Church. They should see to it that errors are removed and consciences are healed <rightly instructed>. God specifically warns kings, "Now therefore, O kings, be

wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth” [Psalm 2:10]. It should be the first care of kings to advance God’s glory. It would be very shameful for them to use their influence and power to confirm idolatry [e.g., 1 Kings 14:14–16] and endless other crimes and to slaughter saints.

Even if the pope holds councils, how can the Church be healed if he allows nothing to be decreed against his will? Or if he allows no one to express an opinion except his followers, whom he has bound by dreadful oaths and curses to defend his tyranny and impiety without leaving any place for God’s Word?

The decisions of councils are the decisions of the Church, and not of the popes. So it is especially dependent upon kings to restrain the excesses of the popes. Kings must act so that the power of judging and decreeing from God’s Word is not snatched away from the Church. As the rest of the Christians must condemn all other errors of the pope, so they must also rebuke the pope when he avoids and hinders the true investigation and true decision of the Church.

Therefore, even if the bishop of Rome did have the primacy by divine right, since he defends godless services and doctrine conflicting with the Gospel, obedience is not due him. Indeed, it is necessary to resist him as Antichrist. The pope’s errors are clear, and they are not small.

The cruelty he exercises <against godly Christians> is also clear. God clearly commands us to flee idolatry [1 Corinthians 10:14], godless doctrine [1 Timothy 6:3–4], and unjust cruelty [Proverbs 11:17]. On this account, all the godly have great, compelling, and clear reasons for not obeying the pope. These compelling reasons comfort the godly against all of the reproaches usually cast against them about causing offenses, schism, and discord. (49–58)

Discussing the Text

186. According to the Treatise, what were the two great sins that had been added to the errors of the papacy?

187. What was the twofold tyranny that the pope exercised?

188. How do Psalm 2:10 and 1 Kings 14:14–16 speak to the responsibilities of kings and princes and other leaders concerning false teaching?

189. What was implied with the statement that the decisions of councils were the decisions of the Church?

190. In addition to condemning all errors of the pope, what else must Christians be ready to do?

191. Even if the pope did possess primacy by divine right, why would obedience not be necessary?

192. What is the comfort for the godly when they refuse to obey the pope?

193. How do 1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:3–4; and Proverbs 11:17 encourage the godly?

Connect

Those who agree with the pope and defend his doctrine and <false> worship [*Gottesdienst*] defile themselves with idolatry and blasphemous opinions. They become guilty of the blood of the godly, whom the pope persecutes [see Acts 9:1, 4–5; 1 Corinthians 11:27]. They detract from God’s glory and hinder the Church’s welfare because they confirm errors and crimes through all generations. (59)

194. Why were those who agreed with the pope and defended his doctrine and practices defiled with idolatry and blasphemous opinions?

195. How did those who agreed with the pope detract from God’s glory and hinder the Church’s welfare?

196. Give an example of an influential leader during your lifetime who, in your opinion, led (or is currently leading) people away from the saving Gospel? How does the account of Peter's confession of Christ in Matthew 16:13–18 encourage you as you fight against evil influences such as these?

197. How do James 5:19–20 and Galatians 6:1 encourage you to get involved when you notice a fellow Christian wandering from God's Word?

Vision

Personal Reflection

- How is your view of the papacy influenced by this article of The Marks of the Antichrist?
- What can you do to help your congregation understand the papacy and the marks of the Antichrist?
- How does the Lutheran teaching regarding the Antichrist differ from the teaching of other church bodies?

Family Connection

- Confer with an encyclopedia, a history book, or the Internet concerning the history of the papacy, as well as its perceived strengths and weaknesses. Have there been abuses of power?
- Consider your response to a Roman Catholic neighbor or relative when you are asked, "What do you think about the pope?"

Closing Worship

Sing or read aloud these stanzas from "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word" (*LSB* 655; *ELH* 589; *CW* 203; *LW* 334; *LBW* 230; *TLH* 261).

Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word;
Curb those who by deceit or sword
Would wrest the kingdom from Your Son
And bring to nought all He has done.

Lord Jesus Christ, Your pow'r make known,
For You are Lord of lords alone;
Defend Your holy Church that we
May sing Your praise eternally.

O Comforter of priceless worth,
Send peace and unity on earth;

Support us in our final strife
And lead us out of death to life.

For Next Week

Read *The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops*; also read *Doctors and Preachers Who Subscribed to the Augsburg Confession and Apology*.

Session 13

The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops; Doctors and Preachers Who Subscribed to the Augsburg Confession and Apology

Law/Gospel Focus

All too frequently we equate *authority* with a right and power that we think we deserve. When it comes to the office of the ministry, there have been abuses on the side of pastors, as well as on the side of congregations. Most of these problems stem from a misinterpretation or misunderstanding of authority. God's view of authority is certainly different! In His realm, that authority is the Gospel, the forgiveness of sin—all on account of Christ.

Opening Worship

Pray together these verses from Psalm 34.

Leader: I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Participants: **My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad.**

Leader: Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together!

Participants: **I sought the LORD, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears.**

Leader: Those who look to Him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.

Participants: **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.**

Introduction

Perhaps the most relevant portion of the Treatise on the Power and the Primacy of the Pope is this section on the power and jurisdiction of bishops. This is because it deals with the office and duties of pastors, probably more so than anywhere else in the Book of Concord.

Inform

The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops

The Gospel assigns those who preside over Churches the command to teach the Gospel [Matthew 28:19], to forgive sins [John 20:23], to administer the Sacraments, and also to

exercise jurisdiction (i.e., the command to excommunicate those whose crimes are known and to absolve those who repent).

Everyone confesses, even our adversaries, that this power is common to all who preside over churches by divine right, whether they are called pastors, elders, or bishops. So Jerome explicitly teaches in the apostolic letters that all who preside over churches are both bishops and elders. He cites from Titus 1:5–6, “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might . . . appoint elders in every town.” Then [the Letter to Titus] adds that a bishop must be “the husband of one wife.” Likewise, Peter and John call themselves elders <or priests> [1 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1]. Then Jerome adds:

But afterward, one was chosen to be placed over the rest. This was done as a remedy for schism, lest each one by attracting a congregation to himself might tear apart the Church of Christ. For at Alexandria, from Mark the evangelist to the bishops Heracles and Dionysius, the elders always elected one from among themselves and placed him in a higher station, calling him bishop, just as an army would make a commander for itself. The deacons, more-over, may elect from among themselves one whom they know to be active and name him archdeacon. For with the exception of ordination, what does the bishop have that the elder does not?

Jerome, therefore, teaches that it is by human authority that the grades of bishop and elder or pastor are distinct. The content itself says this, because the power is the same, as he has said above. Later, only one thing made a distinction between bishops and pastors, namely, ordination. For it was arranged that one bishop would ordain ministers in a number of churches.

Since the grades of bishop and pastor are not different by divine authority, it is clear that ordination administered by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine law.

Therefore, when the regular bishops become enemies of the Church or are unwilling to administer ordination, the churches retain their own right <to ordain their own ministers>.

Wherever the Church is, there is the authority to administer the Gospel. Therefore, it is necessary for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers. This authority is a gift that in reality is given to the Church. No human power can take this gift away from the Church. As Paul testifies to the Ephesians, when “He ascended . . . He gave gifts to men” (Ephesians [4:8]). He lists among the gifts specifically belonging to the Church “pastors and teachers” [4:11], and adds that they are given for the ministry, “for building up the body of Christ” [4:12]. So wherever there is a True Church, the right to elect and ordain ministers necessarily exists. In the same way, in a case of necessity even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another. Augustine tells the story of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the catechumen, who after Baptism then absolved the baptizer.

Here belong the statements of Christ that testify that the Keys have been given to the Church, and not merely to certain persons, “Where two or three are gathered in My name . . .” [Matthew 18:20].

Finally, Peter’s statement also confirms this, “You are . . . a royal priesthood” [1 Peter 2:9]. These words apply to the True Church, which certainly has the right to elect and ordain ministers, since it alone has the priesthood.

A most common custom of the Church also testifies to this. Formerly, the people elected pastors and bishops [Acts 14:23]. Then came a bishop, either of that church or a

neighboring one, who confirmed the one elected by the laying on of hands [1 Timothy 4:14]. Ordination was nothing else than such a ratification. Afterward, new ceremonies were added, many of which Dionysius describes. But he is a recent and fictitious author, whoever he may be, just as the writings of Clement also are spurious. Then more modern writers added, “I give you the power to sacrifice for the living and the dead.” This is not even in Dionysius.

From all of this, it is clear that the Church retains the right to elect and ordain ministers. The impiety and tyranny of bishops cause schism and discord. <Therefore, if the bishops are heretics, or will not ordain suitable persons, the churches are in duty bound before God, according to divine law, to ordain for themselves pastors and ministers. Even though this is now called an irregularity or schism, it should be known that the godless doctrine and tyranny of bishops is chargeable with it.> Paul commands that bishops who teach and defend a godless doctrine and godless services should be considered accursed (Galatians 1:7–9). (60–72)

Discussing the Text

198. What tasks or responsibilities does the Gospel assign to pastors (to “those who preside over Churches”)? Compare these with Matthew 28:19 and John 20:23.

199. What is the significance of nomenclature—whether one is called a pastor, elder, or bishop? Note the use of terms in Titus 1:5–6; 1 Peter 5:1; and 2 John 1.

200. What premise does the quotation from Jerome support?

201. On what basis do churches retain the right to ordain their own ministers?

202. Why is it necessary for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers?

203. How do Ephesians 4:8, 11, and 12 support or explain the premise that this authority is a gift given to the Church?

204. What does the story of two Christians in a ship, told by Augustine, illustrate and support?

205. How do Matthew 18:20 and 1 Peter 2:9 strengthen the argument that the Keys have been given to the Church?

206. What are the basic elements in an ordination?

207. What does Paul command in Galatians 1:7–9, as related to the Office of the Ministry?

The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops (continued)

We have spoken of ordination, which alone, as Jerome says, distinguished bishops from other elders. There is no need to discuss the other duties of bishops. It is not necessary to speak about confirmation or the consecration of bells <nor other such delusions>, which are almost the only things they have kept. Something, though, must be said about jurisdiction. Certainly, the common jurisdiction of excommunicating those guilty of clear crimes belongs to all pastors [1 Corinthians 5]. The bishops have tyrannically transferred this to themselves alone and have used it for their own gain. It is certain that the officials, as they are called, used an intolerable license. Either because of greed or because of other immoral desires, they tormented people and excommunicated them without any due process of law. What tyranny it is for the officials in the states to have arbitrary power to do this! In what kinds of issues did they abuse this power? Not in punishing true offenses, but in punishing violations of fasts or festivals, or such silly things! They sometimes did punish adulteries, but in this they often harass <abuse and defame> innocent and honorable people. Besides, since adultery is a most grievous offense, certainly no one should be condemned without due process of law.

Since bishops have tyrannically transferred this jurisdiction to themselves alone and have basely abused it, there is no need to obey bishops. Since there are just reasons why we do not obey, it is also right to restore this jurisdiction to godly pastors and to make sure that it is legitimately exercised for the reformation of morals and the glory of God.

There remains the jurisdiction, according to Church law, in cases that relate to the Church court, as they call it, and especially in cases of marriage. This, too, the bishops have only by human right, which is not a very old one. According to the *Codex* and *Novellae* of Justinian, decisions about marriage at that time belonged to the rulers. By divine right, earthly rulers must make these decisions if the bishops are negligent. Church law also concedes this. So for this jurisdiction also, it is not necessary to obey bishops. Since the bishops have framed unjust laws about marriages and observe them in their courts, there is a need to establish other courts. The traditions <banning the marriage> of those who have a spiritual relationship are unjust. Also unjust is the tradition forbidding an innocent person to marry after divorce [Matthew 5:32]. Also unjust is the law that in general approves all secret and deceitful engagements in violation of parental rights. Also unjust is the law requiring the celibacy of priests. There are also other snares of conscience in their laws. There is no need to recite them all. It is enough to say that there are many unjust laws of the pope regarding marriage. Because of these, the rulers should establish other courts.

So the bishops who are devoted to the pope defend godless doctrine and godless services. They do not ordain godly teachers, and they aid the cruelty of the pope. Besides, they have wrestled away the jurisdiction from pastors and exercise it tyrannically <for their own profit>. Finally, in marriage cases they observe many unjust laws. So there are enough and necessary reasons why the churches should not recognize these men as bishops.

They themselves should remember that riches have been given to bishops as alms for the administration and advantage of the churches. As the rule says, “The benefit is given because of the office.” Therefore, they cannot with a good conscience possess these alms and defraud the Church. The Church has need of this money to support ministers, aid education, care for the poor, and establish courts, especially for marriage. So great is the variety and extent of marriage controversies that there is need for a special court, for which the endowments of the Church are needed. Peter predicted that there would be godless bishops who would abuse the alms of the Church for luxury and neglect the ministry (2 Peter [2:13]). Therefore, let those who defraud the Church know that they will pay God the penalty for this crime. (73–82)

Discussing the Text

208. According to Jerome, what distinguished bishops from other elders?

209. Why was the jurisdiction of excommunication a potentially dangerous power?

210. What seemed to be the main reason for establishing church courts?

211. What items did Melanchthon list under “unjust”? Why did he call them “snares of conscience”?

212. What is the meaning of this rule or saying: “The benefit is given because of the office”?

213. According to Melanchthon, for what purposes did the Church collect alms?

Doctors and Preachers Who Subscribed to the Augsburg Confession and Apology, AD 1537

I, Doctor John Bugenhagen, Pomeranus, subscribe the Articles of the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, and the Article presented to the princes at Smalcald concerning the Papacy.

I also, Doctor Urban Rhegius, Superintendent of the Churches in the Duchy of Lüneburg, subscribe.

Nicholas Amsdorf of Magdeburg subscribed.

George Spalatin of Altenburg subscribed.

I, Andreas Osiander, subscribe.

Magister Veit Dietrich of Nürnberg subscribed.

Stephen Agricola, Minister at Hof, subscribed with his own hand.

John Draconites of Marburg subscribed.

Conrad Figenbotz subscribed to all throughout.

Martin Bucer.

I, Erhard Schnepf, subscribe.

Paul Rhodius, Preacher in Stettin.

Gerhard Öniken, Minister of the Church at Minden.

Brixius Northanus, Minister at Söst.

Simon Schneeweiss, Pastor of Crailsheim.

I, Pomeranus, again subscribe in the name of Schoolmaster John Brentz, as he ordered me.

Philip Melanchthon subscribes with his own hand.

Anthony Corvinus subscribes with his own hand, as well as in the name of Adam [Krafft] of Fulda.

John Schlaginhaufen subscribes with his own hand.
Schoolmaster George Helt of Forchheim.
Michael Cölius, Preacher at Mansfeld.
Peter Geltner, Preacher of the church of Frankfurt.
Dionysius Melander subscribed.
Paul Fagius of Strasbourg.
Wendel Faber, Pastor of Seeburg in Mansfeld.
Conrad Ötinger of Pforzheim, Preacher of Ulrich, Duke of Württemberg.
Boniface Wolfart, Minister of the Word of the Church at Augsburg.
John Aepinus, Superintendent of Hamburg, subscribed with his own hand.
John [Tieman] of Amsterdam of Bremen does the same.
John Fontanus, Superintendent of Lower Hesse, subscribed.
Frederick Myconius subscribed for himself and Justus Menius.
Ambrose Blaurer.

I have read, and again and again reread, the Confession and Apology presented at Augsburg by the Most Illustrious Prince, the Elector of Saxony, and by the other princes and estates of the Roman Empire, to his Imperial Majesty. I have also read the Formula of Concord concerning the Sacrament, made at Wittenberg with Dr. Bucer and others. I have also read the articles written at the Assembly at Smalcald in the German language by Dr. Martin Luther, our most revered teacher, and the tract concerning the Papacy and the Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops. In my humble opinion I judge that all these agree with Holy Scripture and with the belief of the true and genuine catholic Church. But although I am in so great a number of most learned men who have now assembled at Smalcald, I acknowledge that I am the least of all. Yet, as I am not permitted to await the end of the assembly, I ask you, most renowned man, Dr. John Bugenhagen, most revered Father in Christ, that your courtesy may add my name, if it be necessary, to all that I have above mentioned. For I testify in this my own handwriting that I thus hold, confess, and constantly will teach, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

John Brentz, Minister of Hall.

Done at Smalcald,

February 23, 1537. (Introductory paragraph, and 1–32)

Discussing the Text

214. When a signature of a person is attached to a document, what is implied?

215. Discuss the significance of mentioning the Augsburg Confession and the Apology in this introductory paragraph.

216. Why did John Brentz have such a long explanation for his signature?

Connect

The only power or authority of the ministry consists of preaching the Gospel, forgiving sins, administering the Sacraments, and excommunicating persons guilty of public sins. The Early Church understood these powers for bishops and pastors alike. Any distinctions made between bishops and pastors are purely by human ordering, not by divine institution or command. Though ordination was normally performed by bishops, it is nonetheless valid by divine right when a pastor performs an ordination within his own congregation. The right to call and ordain pastors belongs to the entire Church, which has the authority, duty, and right from God to provide ministers for herself. When a bishop aligns himself with false teaching and teachers, he no longer is to be considered a bishop.

217. What is meant by distinctions between bishops and pastors?

218. How do individual congregations get the right or authority to elect and call a pastor?

219. In the Table of Duties in Luther's Small Catechism, Luther lists key Bible passages for pastors and members of the congregations. "To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers": 1 Timothy 3:2–4, 6; and Titus 1:9. "What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors": 1 Corinthians 9:14; Galatians 6:6–7; 1 Timothy 5:17–18; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13; and Hebrews 13:17. How can attention to passages such as these contribute to harmony between pastor and people?

Vision

Personal Reflection

- When you think of excommunication, what thoughts come to mind? How do they compare with the section in the Small Catechism? What is the goal of excommunication?
- How do you and your congregation support the recruitment of candidates for training to be pastors at one of the seminaries of the Church? What more could be done? Contact the seminaries of the Church for further information and suggestions for helping.
- What expectations do you have of your pastor? Do they all fit within the parameters of this article? What expectations can your pastor have of you and the rest of the congregation?

Family Connection

- From your congregation's constitution, find out what calling process is used. What role do individual members of the congregation have in this process?
- Research on the Internet, in an encyclopedia, or at the library some of the signatories. What does signing these confessional documents say about their faith?

Closing Worship

Sing or read aloud these stanzas from "Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide" (*LSB* 585; *ELH* 511; *CW* 541; *LW* 344; *TLH* 292).

Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
For round us falls the eventide.
O let Your Word, that saving light,
Shine forth undimmed into the night.

In these last days of great distress
Grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness
That we keep pure till life is spent
Your holy Word and Sacrament.

Stay with us, Lord, and keep us true;
Preserve our faith our whole life through—
Your Word alone our heart's defense,
The Church's glorious confidence.