

The Smalcald Articles

Session 9 - Part III, Article 5-7

Article 5:

Having briefly outlined the means of grace God has established, Luther now moves into a discussion of each of the three sacraments. Concerning Baptism Luther is interested in defining just what makes Baptism efficacious. According to Luther it is the Word of God. What specific “word” that Luther is referring to? Is this an important issue, why or why not?



Luther quotes Augustine against Thomas Aquinas (and the Dominicans) and John Duns Scotus (the Franciscans). What did Thomas actually teach concerning the power of the sacrament? How is the argument lacking? What did Scotus teach? How is this argument flawed? Note here how Luther makes a point both about the location of the Word in baptism and the power of the Word in baptism, refuting both faulty arguments. Luther writes: “Do not look at the water and consider that it is wet, but that it has the Word of God” (WA XXXI, III, 3).

Luther maintains that the church should baptize infants. On what basis does he make this argument? What Scriptures prove this?

Article 6:

The Lutherans maintain that the bread and wine of Holy Communion are the true body and blood of Christ. This indicates a physical presence and not just a spiritual one. The temptation to theologians and philosophers is to try to explain how this can be. The teaching of transubstantiation is an attempt to do so. On what basis does Luther say that he has “absolutely no regard for [this] subtle sophistry”?



How do we know that all who take the sacrament actually receive Christ's body and blood? Why is it important to maintain this position? What does this say about the efficacy of the sacrament?

Luther argues that no one should distribute only one kind in the sacrament. How did the Romanists "set themselves against and above Christ" by doing so and by forbidding others from distributing both the body and blood of Christ to the laity? Why is the Roman argument concerning the whole Christ in each element not worth considering here?

Article 7:

Luther maintains that the keys are given to the Church by Christ? If this is so does this mean each individual Christian possesses the keys? If not, then in what way does the Church possess the keys?

Where in the Church is the authority of the keys invested? Note how Luther speaks of both office and authority. See AC XXVIII.5-6 & SC V.



Why does Luther make the point that it is not only notorious sins, but also secret sins that are to be forgiven?

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