

# **The Smalcald Articles**

## **Introduction to the course**

### **A. The course content**

1. History and Preface  
936/948/36\* – All Glory Be to God Alone
2. The 1<sup>st</sup> Part & The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part Art. I, II & III  
906/823/591– May God Bestow on Us His Grace
3. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Part Art. I, II, IV, V, VI & VIII  
862/655/589 –Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word
4. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part Art. IV &The 3<sup>rd</sup> Part Art. III  
863/656/250 – A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
5. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Part Art. VII & IX- XV  
673/617/327 – O Lord, We Praise You, v. 3

\* Christian Worship – Hymnal / Lutheran Service Book / Evan. Lutheran Hymnary

### **B. What we will try to learn**

1. The historical setting of the confession
2. The reason why the confession was written
3. The Biblical principles on which Luther stood
4. The unscriptural behavior of the Roman Catholic Church
5. The role of tradition in the church

### **C. How to prepare for each session**

1. Read the chapters from the book.
2. Answer the questions on the handouts.
3. Consider the issues that are being raised by the readings.

## **Lesson 1 - History and Preface**

Use any sources available to you to answer these questions, if necessary.

1. In what year and on what date was Martin Luther born?

2. What monastic order did he join?

3. Where did Luther post his 95 theses?

4. What was the name of Luther's prince?

5. What is an indulgence?

6. What was the Diet of Worms?

7. When did the Diet of Augsburg take place?

8. Why did Luther prepare the Smalcald Articles?

## **Lesson 2 - The 1<sup>st</sup> Part & The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part Art. I, II & III**

1. What is the relationship between God the Father and God the Son?
2. What is the relationship of God the Father and God the Son with God the Holy Spirit?
3. Of what does the incarnation consist?
4. What is the teaching on which the church either stands or falls?
5. What is the mass in the Roman Catholic Church?
6. Why is the mass sacrilegious?
7. What was the purpose of pilgrimages?
8. Why was Luther opposed to the invocation of saints?

### **Lesson 3 - The 3<sup>rd</sup> Part Art. I, II, IV, V, VI & VIII**

1. What is the essence of sin?
2. What is the nature of original sin?
3. What is the Moral Law?
4. What are the purposes of the Law?
5. What does Holy Baptism do?
6. Who does not benefit from the Lord's Supper?
7. What is private confession and when should it be used?
8. Who were the *Schwärmer*?

#### **Lesson 4 - The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part Art. IV & The 3<sup>rd</sup> Part Art. III**

1. Who were the “patriarchs” in the Christian church?
2. What did the popes claim to be?
3. Why did Luther call the pope the “Great Antichrist”?
4. What is the nature of repentance?
5. What was the Roman Catholic definition of actual sin?
6. What are the three parts of the Sacrament of Penance?
7. What do Roman Catholics regard as the basis of the forgiveness of sins?
8. How does the teaching of “once saved, always saved” damage repentance?

## **Lesson 5 - The 3<sup>rd</sup> Part Art. VII & IX- XV**

1. What is the Office of the Keys?
2. What is the “greater excommunication”?
3. What is the purpose of ordination?
4. Why did Luther object to requiring priests to be celibate?
5. What is “the church”?
6. What is the basis of the good works of the Christian?
7. Why did Martin Luther object to monastic vows?
8. What is the scriptural basis for rejecting human traditions?

# The Smalcald Articles

## 1. History and Preface

### I. The Catholic Luther

#### A. Young Luther

##### 1. The early years

- a. A son, a first child, was born to Hans and Margarethe Luther in Eisleben, Saxony, on November 10, 1483. He was baptized at St. Peter's church on the next day and named Martin after the saint for that day. The next year his family moved to Mansfeld.
- b. Martin attended elementary school in Mansfeld. Discipline in the school was rigid, and disobedience and poor study habits were severely punished.

##### 2. The student

- a. Martin was sent away to school in Magdeburg because the school was more comprehensive, and his father had high expectations for him.
- b. A year later, Martin was sent to Eisenach which had a school with an even better reputation. In Eisenach he begged as was traditional and made social contacts.
- c. In 1501 Martin entered the University of Erfurt. He studied the liberal arts curriculum required of all students and prepared himself to enter the legal profession in response to his father's wishes.

#### B. The religious life

##### 1. Seeking a holier life

- a. The young Luther was perhaps more troubled about the state of his soul than many of his classmates. He was impressed by the Carthusian monks who starve themselves to get closer to God. Perhaps he was somewhat scandalized by the loose-living character of students of his and all ages.
- b. Finally, terrified by a storm, he vowed to enter a monastery and chose the "Black Cloister" of the Augustinian order in 1505. This was a highly disciplined order in which Luther, now a man, felt he could earn peace with God.

##### 2. Self-punishment to gain God's favor

- a. Luther's father was not pleased by his decision to enter the monastery, but Luther applied himself to the life of a monk with great diligence. He did every form of penance available to purify his soul.
- b. Luther became a priest, in addition to being a monk, in the belief that by being able to perform the sacred acts which only priests could do, he would gain the holiness that he felt he lacked. He even was sent to Rome, the place he regarded as "most holy," on a mission for his order.

#### C. The blooming scholar

##### 1. Training for the academic life

- a. Johann von Staupitz, the vicar of the Augustinians, decided to aid the troubled Luther by sending him to the University of Wittenberg for a change of scenery and activities.
- b. Luther taught classes and gained his doctorate in the biblical studies. His responsibilities had changed greatly, but he still had to follow the canonical practices of the Augustinians.

2. The struggle with the Word
  - a. Although Luther was a doctor of the Scriptures, he did not understand them very well because he studied them under the rigid format of the church's scholastic theologians.
  - b. As he taught the Bible, he was forced to study the Bible, and he found that the message of the text did not agree with the interpretive notes (i.e., "glosses") that had been placed upon it. Finally, he realized that it was through faith and not through following church rules that a person was saved.

## II. The Days of Church Politics

### A. The Reformation becomes public

1. The theses
  - a. Luther became alarmed when the Dominican monk Johann Tetzel began selling indulgences, i.e., papal notes for the forgiveness of sins without repentance, near Wittenberg and drawing his members into this false teaching.
  - b. Luther's 95 theses were propositions for scholarly debate and posted in Latin. However, when people realized what they were and saw them as a call to resist the plundering of the people with phony pardons, they were translated into German and spread like wildfire.
2. The Catholic response
  - a. The Roman Catholic Church officials at all levels were immediately concerned. The theses indirectly attacked the power of the pope and directly attacked the collection of money for the activities of the church. The church had its ways to suppress this type of behavior and planned to use them.
  - b. Fortunately, Duke Frederick the Wise, Luther's prince, was not about to allow one of his theology professors to be humiliated and/or tortured by the church and thereby undermine the faculty of his university. He forced the church and empire to use formal procedures.

### B. The gathering storm

1. The actions of the church.
  - a. The church tried to get Luther's repentance and conformity to its will using a papal ambassador, Cardinal Cajetan. He met with Luther at Augsburg, but Luther escaped the city when it became apparent that he was in danger of imprisonment for not accepting the cardinal's demands.
  - b. Luther was maneuvered into debating a Dominican monk, Johann Eck, at Erfurt in an effort by the church to expose Luther's errors by confronting him with a leading church theologian. Luther held his own and returned to Wittenberg untarnished.
2. The actions of the empire.
  - a. Because Frederick the Wise had blocked Luther from being taken out of Germany for trial, the Catholic church pressured the new emperor, Charles V, to try him at an imperial diet where he would meet the same fate as John Hus if he did not recant.
  - b. After substantial negotiation, it was agreed that in 1521 Luther would go to the Diet of Worms for trial before the members of the diet. Luther was received as a hero by the local population, and when he refused to recant, the emperor feared a revolt if he broke his safe conduct agreement. Luther was allowed to leave town before the diet outlawed him.



### C. Laying the foundation

#### 1. Bible translation

- a. To prevent Luther from being captured and killed by his opponents, Duke Frederick arranged for him to be kidnapped and taken to the Wartburg Castle. There he assumed a false identity.
- b. While in isolation for his safety, Luther translated the Greek New Testament into German in about 12 weeks. He had learned Greek from Phillip Melancthon, the man hired to teach Greek at Wittenberg.
- c. During his days at the Wartburg, he also had time to think through his theology without the constant pressure of other duties and perpetual crises.

#### 2. The situation in Wittenberg

- a. In Luther's absence, more radical reformers began to dominate the scene in Wittenberg. They saw an opportunity to make wholesale changes in the practices of the church, disposing of everything that smacked of liturgy and clergy. This included looting valuable objects from churches and smashing statuary.
- b. Despite being directed by the duke to stay in seclusion, Luther reappeared in Wittenberg and through a series of sermons quelled the rioting and restored a reformation based on a slow but systematic affirming of what was acceptable and rejecting of what was inherently unscriptural.
- c. Three major changes that Luther did make to the worship service were the removal of papal false teachings about the saints and the sacraments and the introduction of solid sermons and congregational singing of doctrinal hymns to help people understand Christian teachings properly.
- d. Unfortunately, numerous people wanted to also use the religious reformation as a cover for a political revolution which would overthrow the rulers and replace them with people's councils or other groups that could be easily dominated by radical elements. These civil rebels tried to draw Luther into sympathy with their cause, which only made the work of the Reformation harder.

### III. The Rebuilding of the Church

#### A. The happenings in Saxony

##### 1. The changing scene

- a. After considerable internal debate, the University of Wittenberg faculty gradually came around to being solidly on Luther's side. The university grew rapidly as his theology became understood and more widely taught in the countryside.
- b. A peasant uprising in 1525 created havoc throughout Germany and led to much bloodshed. The peasants resented that Luther did not side with them, and many lords blamed him for causing the trouble.
- c. In the midst of this continuing turmoil, Luther married Katherine von Bora in 1526. This greatly helped to organize Luther's life and stabilize his routine.
- d. The old Augustinian cloister in Wittenberg had been emptied of its monks, and the duke gave it to Luther and Katie as their home. To help with the upkeep of such a big facility, Katie effectively ran a boarding house for students and longer-term visitors. While Luther was relatively well paid and frequently received monetary gifts from rich admirers, there was never enough money for his growing family and household.
- e. Luther continued with university teaching and his preaching, but he also began to translate the Old Testament Hebrew into German so that the people would have the whole Bible. This was a much harder task than translating the New Testament, and Luther and his group of scholars needed more than a decade to complete it.

## 2. The Saxon visitation

- a. While sound Biblical theology dominated the scene in Wittenberg, the conditions in the rest of electoral Saxony needed to be explored. Many of the village priests had embraced the Reformation by marrying their concubines and adopting a few Lutheran practices. They, however, had been ignorant priests and had subsequently become ignorant Lutheran ministers. A visitation by the Wittenberg scholars identified the magnitude of the problem and corrective action through training and higher standards was implemented.
- b. Luther developed a new liturgy called the Deutsche Messe to try to bring order to the chaos that was caused by various clerics trying to improvise.
- c. Luther wrote his Large Catechism to address the lack of knowledge on the part of the clergy and lay leaders of the church. This book became one of the Lutheran Confessions.
- d. Luther also wrote his Small Catechism in 1529 so that fathers could train their families in the Word of God. He encouraged elementary education for all children so they would be able to read the Bible and the Small Catechism and sing the doctrinal hymns. This book also became one of the Lutheran Confessions.

## B. Sorting friends from foes

### 1. Different slants on Scripture and reason

- a. The Germans in the southwestern corner of the Holy Roman Empire had been more influenced by the Renaissance than Saxony and were more willing to try to use their reason to grasp the teaching of the Scriptures. They particularly disagreed with Luther on the nature of the sacraments.
- b. Zwingli's reformation in Switzerland was even more Humanistic. He not only rejected Luther's teaching on the sacraments, but he questioned fundamental teachings like the nature of the person of Christ.
- c. Meetings were held between Lutheran theologians and the other reformers, but agreement on such things as the meaning of certain words of Scripture could seldom be achieved. A particularly important meeting, called the Marburg Colloquy, was held between Luther and Zwingli in 1529, but it failed to find common ground.

### 2. Diet of Augsburg - 1530

- a. Emperor Charles V was facing war with an invasion by the Muslim Turks, and he needed the support of all Germany. In addition, he wanted to unify all Christians in Germany. He was therefore forced to convene a diet at Augsburg to sort these matters out.
- b. All members of the diet were directed to submit statements of the religious doctrines being taught in their lands. Luther could not go to the diet because he was an outlaw, so he went as close as he could, to the castle at Coburg.
- c. Melancthon was delegated to draw up the confession for the churches of Saxony. Numerous other Lutheran territories also accepted that document. Luther kept in touch via messengers and advised on the contents of the document.
- d. This document, called the Augsburg Confession, was read to the emperor and the assembled members of the diet by Dr. Christian Beyer, chancellor of Saxony. It became one of the Lutheran Confessions.
- e. Catholic theologians drafted a response to the Augsburg Confession called the Confutation, which they read to the diet but failed to present in writing to the Lutherans. Lutherans rejected the Confutation and demanded that the emperor pressure the pope to call a church-wide council to meet on German soil and discuss the issues dividing the parties.

### 3. Teaching the world

- a. Upon returning to Wittenberg, Melancthon used the notes that people had taken on the Confutation and wrote a detailed defense of the Augsburg Confession. This document, called the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, is also one of the Lutheran Confessions.

- b. Melancthon had previously written a dogmatics textbook based on the collected Lutheran teachings. Over time, he revised this book several times to address new issues.
- c. Martin Luther continued his hectic schedule of teaching, preaching, and writing. Because he was limited in his movements to the duchy of electoral Saxony, he was restricted in where he could meet people. They basically had to come to him. In some respects this was good because it reduced the risk that he would be assassinated. All the materials he produced were eagerly sought by printers, who spread his teachings throughout Europe.
- d. The pastors and theologians from Wittenberg were in high demand in other cities throughout northern Europe. Luther often had to assume part of their workload when they were absent from their posts.

### C. The church-wide council

1. The history of the idea
  - a. From almost the beginning of the Reformation, the Lutheran party had called for a general council of the church to purify its doctrine and check the power of the pope. It was a theme that resonated with the German people and leaders alike.
  - b. After the Diet of Worms, the desire to have such a council increased, and a growing chorus demanded that it be held on German soil.
2. The pope and the emperor
  - a. Relations between the emperor and the pope were not always smooth. In fact, sometimes they were at war with each other, either directly or through proxy states. As part of the settlement of these conflicts, the emperor wrung a concession from the pope to call such a council.
  - b. In many ways, papal agreement meant next to nothing. Popes during this period turned over every few years. No pope was in favor of convening a council that would limit his power, so the date would always be set a few years into the future, allowing time for the current pope to die and a new pope to create a further delay or for an epidemic to threaten the proposed site, causing a rescheduling. By the middle of the 1530's this dance was still going on.
3. The Smalcald Articles
  - a. As time passed, the interest among the Lutheran party for a council steadily declined. As they got their churches organized and established doctrinal order, many could not see anything to be gained by sitting down with people they felt were entrenched in false teachings. There was grave concern that any council could be fair.
  - b. Due to the continual delays, Luther began to doubt that the council would convene in his lifetime. He feared that others would misrepresent his teachings before the council, and he wanted to prevent this. It was for this reason that he drafted what he regarded as his final testament to the world, which has been entitled the Smalcald Articles.
  - c. The articles were drafted for a Lutheran meeting at Smalcald where Luther hoped to present them and have them formally accepted. Because he was ill, the articles never were presented at that meeting. However, they were later incorporated into the Lutheran Confessions.
  - d. Luther's own attitude to the convening of a council is clear from his preface to the Smalcald Articles. He had come to recognize that there would not be doctrinal agreement with the Catholic party because their very existence depended on the control they gained over people and princes through their false teachings.

**All Glory Be to God Alone 936/948/36**

All glory be to God alone,  
For evermore the Highest One.  
He is our sinful race's friend;  
His grace and peace to us extend.  
May humankind see his good will,  
May hearts with deep thanksgiving fill.

Lord God, Our King on heaven's throne,  
Our Father, the Almighty One.  
O Lord, the Sole begotten One,  
Lord Jesus Christ, the Father's Son,  
True God from all eternity,  
O Lamb of God, to you we flee.

You take the whole world's sin away;  
Have mercy on us, Lord, we pray.  
You take the whole world's sin away;  
Oh, listen to the prayer we say.  
From God's right hand, oh, send today  
Your mercy on us, Lord, we pray.

# The Smalcald Articles

## 2. The 1<sup>st</sup> Part & The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part Art. I, II & III

### IV. The First Part - God

#### A. The Trinity

##### 1. The Unity

- a. The LORD is one distinct essence. Moses wrote, “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God. The LORD is one!” (Deuteronomy 6:4).
- b. But that essence contains three distinct persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). Jesus said, “Therefore go and gather disciples from all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).
- c. This one God created everything in existence. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

##### 2. The relationship

- a. The Father begot the Son. “The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We have seen his glory, the glory he has as the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).
- b. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Jesus said, “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me” (John 15:26).

#### B. The incarnation

1. What it was not – In the incarnation the Son, but not the Father nor the Holy Spirit, became man.
2. What it was
  - a. The Son was conceived through the Holy Spirit. “The angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you’” (Luke 1:35).
  - b. He was born of the Virgin Mary. Luke wrote, “And she gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger” (Luke 2:7).
  - c. He lived a human life, suffered, died, and was buried. Paul wrote, “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and he was buried” (1 Corinthians 15:3,4).
  - d. He arose from the dead, descended into hell, and ascended into heaven. Peter said, “This Jesus is the one God has raised up. We are all witnesses of that. So, after he was exalted to the right hand of God” (Acts 2:32,33).
  - e. He will return to judge all people who ever lived. Paul wrote, “Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead” (2 Timothy 4:1).

### V. The Second Part - Article I - Justification

#### A. Jesus the Christ

1. He died for our sins. – Paul wrote, “He was handed over to death because of our trespasses and was raised to life because of our justification” (Romans 4:25).

2. He alone is the Lamb of God.
    - a. John the Baptizer said, "Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).
    - b. Isaiah wrote, "We all have gone astray like sheep. Each of us has turned to his own way, but the LORD has charged all our guilt to him" (Isaiah 53:6).
- B. All people are sinners.
1. Christ justified them freely. – Paul wrote, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God publicly displayed as the atonement seat through faith in his blood. God did this to demonstrate his justice, since, in his divine restraint, he had left the sins that were committed earlier unpunished" (Romans 3:23–25).
  2. People must believe to be saved.
    - a. Paul wrote, "For we conclude that a person is justified by faith without the works of the law" (Romans 3:28).
    - b. Paul wrote, "He did this to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so that he would be both just and the one who justifies the person who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).
    - c. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Mark 13:31).
    - d. Peter said, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).
  3. This is the chief article of faith and can under no circumstances be yielded.

## VI. The Second Part - Article II – The Mass & The Saints

### A. The Mass (according to the RCC catechism)

1. Why is something like the mass necessary?
  - a. The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) teaches that Jesus died for original sin and for all mortal sins. A mortal sin is an intentional sin done against the laws of God or of the church, and therefore it is a sin that destroys saving faith. The church can forgive mortal sins in Christ's stead, but only through the sacrament of penance.
  - b. The RCC further teaches that Jesus' death made it possible for people to make satisfaction for their own venial sins. Venial sins are sins against God and the church which Christians do out of weakness. The church has prescribed numerous ways for people to make such satisfaction, but the most important is the mass.
2. What is the mass?
  - a. The primary way the church has decreed to make satisfaction for venial sins is through the mass. By attending a mass, or even though being absent having their names read during the mass, people automatically receive a certain amount of merit (i.e., *ex opere operato*) that they can apply against the debt of satisfaction they owe for their sins. Actually, it is the church that offers the merit earned by each person to God, because only the church can represent the sinner before God.
  - b. Merit is gained in the mass because the priest changes the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ (i.e., transubstantiation), thereby summoning Christ to be physically present, and then offers Christ up as a bloodless sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead.
  - c. Receiving the elements personally increases the merit received from a mass.

3. Why is the mass sacrilege?
  - a. First, it makes a church rite a mandatory means of grace. To be saved, people need to have their venial sins forgiven because failure to seek to make satisfaction for one's venial sins is a mortal sin.
  - b. It denies that Christ made complete satisfaction for all sins of all people. Thus, it denies that the Lamb of God was the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the entire world.
  - c. Human works become necessary for salvation, thus contradicting the Scriptures and leaving salvation in doubt because who can know if they have done enough good works.
4. The "legal" implication
  - a. God's justification of the human race through the sufferings and death of Christ was a judicial action. He proclaimed it without any input or interaction with sinful people. They were made righteous in His sight merely by His word.
  - b. The RCC rejects this proclamation of righteousness and seeks to act as a broker between the sinner and God to get the best deal for the sinner it can based on the sinner's "good" works and additional merits that it can add from the treasury of the saints. The RCC thereby ignores God's free salvation and tries to plea bargain with Him for each of its members.
5. Luther's first point
  - a. Luther argued that what the RCC is doing in the mass is worthless for the salvation of people's souls. It is not commanded in the Scriptures. Only the Lamb of God can save. John the Baptizer said, "Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)
  - b. Because the mass was not commanded by God in the way it is celebrated, it is false, and therefore deceitful, worship. Jesus said, "They worship me in vain, teaching human rules as if they are doctrines" (Matthew 15:9).
6. Luther's second and third points
  - a. Because the mass is unnecessary, it can be omitted without harm.
  - b. The Sacrament can and must be received in the way that Christ instituted it. "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples. He said, 'Take, eat, this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it all of you, for this is my blood of the new testament, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matthew 26:26–28).
  - c. The truth about the nature of the mass should be preached to the people. It is not a sin to avoid the RCC mass. People can be saved in a better way without risking their souls by attending masses.
7. Luther's fourth point.
  - a. The mass is inherently evil, and it should therefore be abolished. It is the fountain from which many abuses in the church flow.
  - b. Even if it were in itself good, it should be abolished because it can no longer be separated from the numerous abuses associated with it that have sprung up.
8. Luther's fifth point
  - a. Even at its best, the mass cannot do anything to save people. Paul wrote, "All these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Corinthians 5:18–19).
  - b. The mass has led to the practice of priests administering the Sacrament to themselves. This effectively allows them to be the arbitrator of their own case before God.

- c. The mass is so interwoven with the nature of the RCC that it is impossible for the RCC to honestly review whether it is scriptural or not. Without the demonic theory behind the mass, the RCC would collapse.
9. Purgatory
- a. Purgatory is an effort by the RCC to carry the errors introduced in the mass beyond a person's death into eternity. There is no scriptural basis for purgatory, so there is no detailed description about how it works. Everything about it is arbitrary. This means that the RCC can continue to use the threat of purgatory to not only coerce the living on their own behalf but also on behalf of their dead relatives who might be in purgatory.
  - b. Furthermore, there is also no clear evidence that the ancient church fathers believed in it or had received information about it from the apostles.
  - c. The attempt to drag in the church fathers runs the risk of subordinating the current church to the errors and idiosyncrasies of the church fathers and thus leading the church away from Christ.
10. Witchcraft
- a. The devil is certainly behind the mass because it leads souls away from trusting completely in Christ for their salvation.
  - b. The evil spirits take advantage of the superstition that the RCC promotes to lead people into doing unspeakable acts. Pope have regularly "sanctified" such acts.
11. Pilgrimages
- a. The motivation for pilgrimages is that masses said at particular places or by clerics of particular rank and station earn more merit for the sinner.
  - b. People neglected their other responsibilities to go on pilgrimages, thereby harming those whom God had entrusted to them in order to do things He had not told them to do.
12. Monastic societies
- a. Monastic societies had been started for the dubious purpose of helping people get closer to God and thereby become more worthy through isolating themselves from the world.
  - b. Things went downhill from there as the "sacred works" of the monks were offered for sale to those who were not willing to undertake the monastic life but who wanted the benefits of it for their souls. Masses said by monastic priests were therefore particularly prized, and monasteries became rich and even luxurious using this concept of good works for rent.
13. Relics
- a. Honoring dead members of the church for their heroic actions dates back to the second century and has only grown over the years. Because people in the Western church did not have easy access to the graves of the saints, the RCC began dividing the bodies of the saints into pieces and shipping them to various sites so people would have the ability to honor the saints.
  - b. "Honoring" relics soon became "venerating" relics, and then people were only allowed to view them for a price which, of course, also gained merit that the church could use on people's behalf in its bargaining with God over their eternal judgment.
14. Indulgences
- a. Indulgences were letters, usually from the pope, that gave the bearer remission of a certain amount of punishment in purgatory for a fee without the need to go to penance.
  - b. These became popular for those who wanted to live a sinful life and not have to face their own priest about their behavior. They also were used like an insurance policy to guarantee against committing a mortal sin just before death and not having time to confess it.



## B. The Invocation of Saints

1. It was an early abuse.
  - a. When the Christian church became the state religion of the Roman Empire, many pagans were forced into the church. Because these people were used to praying to numerous gods for various problems in life, the Christian church tried to redirect people to looking to the lives of saints rather than the pagan gods. Unfortunately, the people regarded the saints as intercessors and began praying to them for help.
  - b. This type of praying led people away from Christ. Paul wrote, ““For his [Christ’s] sake, I have lost all things and consider them rubbish, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, which comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God by faith” (Philippians 3:8–9).
2. Heavenly intercessors
  - a. Paul wrote, “Christ Jesus, who died and, more than that, was raised to life, is the one who is at God’s right hand and who is also interceding for us!” (Romans 8:34).
  - b. Jesus said, “See to it that you do not look down on one of these little ones, because I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10). Nevertheless, we do not worship angels because they are merely God’s servants.
3. Earthly intercessors
  - a. Our spiritual leaders pray for us, but we should not worship them. Paul wrote, “Every time I pray for all of you, I always pray with joy” (Philippians 1:4).
  - b. Our fellow Christians pray for us, but we should not worship them either. James wrote, “So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, in order that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is able to do much because it is effective” (James 5:16).

## VII. The Second Part - Article III – Chapters and Cloisters

### A. Original purpose

1. These institutions were set up for the education of the young, often supported by rich individuals or religious orders. They had, however, like so many other things, become involved in wasting people’s time on the manmade works of the church.
2. They should be returned to their original purpose because the need still exists.

### B. Their future

1. If they cannot be returned to their original purpose, then they should be abandoned. There is no use in retaining institutions in the church that serve no heavenly purpose.
2. Because they have become intermeshed with the false teachings of the church, they might well be beyond reclamation.

## **May God Bestow on Us His Grace - 906/823/591**

May God bestow on us his grace,  
with blessings rich provide us;  
and may the brightness of his face  
to life eternal guide us,  
that we his saving health may know,  
his gracious will and pleasure,  
and also to the heathen show  
Christ's riches without measure  
and unto God convert them.

Yours over all shall be the praise  
and thanks of ev'ry nation;  
and all the world with joy shall raise  
the voice of exultation.  
For you will judge the earth, O Lord,  
forbidding sin to flourish;  
your people's pasture is your Word,  
their souls to feed and nourish,  
in righteous paths to keep them.

# The Smalcald Articles

## 3. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Part Art. I, II, IV, V, VI & VIII

### VIII. The Third Part - Article I - Sin

#### A. The fall

1. It all started with Adam.
  - a. The first sin is clearly documented in Genesis 3:6, where it reads, “She [Eve] took some of its fruit and ate. She gave some also to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” Throughout the Bible God holds Adam responsible for this sin even though both Adam and Eve ate, and Eve ate first. It was Adam who had first received the command not to eat.
  - b. Paul wrote, “Just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, so also death spread to all people because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).
2. The essence of this sin is rebellion, and it has corrupted everything.
  - a. The target of man’s rebellion was the first commandment, that man was to love God above all things, but that rebellion quickly spread to every commandment that God gave.
  - b. Paul wrote, “Now the works of the sinful flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, complete lack of restraint, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, discord, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and things similar to these. I warn you, just as I also warned you before, that those who continue to do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19–21).
3. The corruption is deep beyond comprehension.
  - a. Original sin is such a deep corruption of nature that our reason cannot understand its true essence.
  - b. It was not until Nathan confronted King David with his sins of adultery and murder, that David finally caught even the slightest glimpse of the depth of his depravity. He wrote, “Certainly, I was guilty when I was born. I was sinful when my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5).

#### B. Errors concerning original sin

1. The natural powers of human beings remain whole and uncorrupted.
2. People have free will to do good and avoid evil or to do evil and fail to do good.
3. By natural human powers, a person can observe and keep all God’s commandments.
4. By natural human powers, a person can love God above all things and love his neighbor as himself.
5. If a person does as much as is in him, God will certainly grant him grace.
6. If a person goes to the Sacrament, there is no need for positive intentions to do good. It is only necessary not to have wicked intentions to do evil.
7. Scripture does not teach that the Holy Spirit with His grace is necessary for a good work.

## IX. The Third Part - Article II - The Law

### A. Restraining evil

#### 1. The Sinai Covenant

- a. The Sinai covenant was two-sided. It promised blessings, but it required obedience to God's laws to obtain those blessings. In this it was intended to serve as a curb on the people's desires to do evil because that would lead to temporal loss.
- b. Moses wrote, "If only this would be in their hearts—to fear me and to keep all my commandments always, so that it might go well for them and for their children continually" (Deuteronomy 5:29).

#### 2. The Moral Law

- a. While the Sinai Covenant applied only to the people of Israel, the moral law had been written in man's heart at the time of creation. Although it had been tarnished by original and actual sins, it still could remind people that someone was watching them. The fear of potential retribution could help curb people's willingness to risk sinning.
- b. Paul wrote, "In fact, whenever Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature what the law requires—even though they do not have the law—they are a law for themselves. They demonstrate the work of the law that is written in their hearts, since their conscience also bears witness as their thoughts go back and forth, at times accusing or at times even defending them" (Romans 2:14–15).

### B. Revealing sin

#### 1. The Law reveals the nature of sin.

- a. Our will would like to be able to do whatever it chooses, but the existence of social taboos makes us realize that there must be something greater than us that everyone feels needs to be given due respect.
- b. People feel a pressure to justify their actions, but this never seems to work completely. Paul wrote, "For this reason, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by works of the law, for through the law we become aware of sin" (Romans 3:20).
- c. John noted that we have a real problem if we think we have full control of ourselves. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

#### 2. The Law reveals the details of sin.

- a. When people have a general feeling of guilt, they try to find methods of getting rid of that feeling if they cannot pin it to a specific cause. By showing people the manners in which they have offended God, the Law gives people a knowledge of what to fear if they do not come clean before God.
- b. Paul noted how the coming of the Law made things clear. "What will we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! On the contrary, I would not have recognized sin except through the law. For example, I would not have known about coveting if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." But sin, seizing the opportunity provided by this commandment, produced every kind of sinful desire in me. For apart from the law, sin is dead" (Romans 7:7–8).
- c. David sensed that he could not cope with the details of the Law when he realized that there was no place to hide from the eyes of the Lord. He wrote, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your Presence? If I go up to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in hell—there you are!....And if I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light will become night around me,' then even the darkness will not be too dark for you" (Psalm 139:7–12).

## X. The Means of Grace

### A. The Third Part - Article IV - The Gospel

1. The Gospel is pure grace.
  - a. The works of the Law cannot do anything to save us, and they must be completely rejected as contributing anything to our salvation.
  - b. Paul wrote, “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).
2. This is completely contrary to RCC teachings.
  - a. The RCC removes salvation as a gift out of God’s hands and makes it a matter of negotiation between God and the church, which attempts to gain the best deal possible for each of its members based on their good deeds and satisfactions.
  - b. RCC members are faced with both divine commandments and church rules which are believed to gain merit to complete man’s part of the saving process.

### B. The Third Part - Article V - Baptism

1. What is Baptism?
  - a. Baptism is the washing with water under the command of God for the purpose of removing sins and creating spiritual life.
  - b. It is not that the water removes physical dirt, but that it removes “spiritual corruption,” and this not of itself. It is only the Word of God in and with the water that accomplishes this great and necessary work.
  - c. Paul wrote, “He saved us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs in keeping with the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5–7).
  - d. Baptism places God’s seal on us. We should always look to our Baptism as a mark of God’s favor, and we can always return to God’s love for us given through our Baptism even if we fall into sin.
2. The RCC view of Baptism
  - a. The RCC teaches that Baptism makes us children of God by removing original sin and any actual sin committed before we were baptized. We, in effect, get a clean slate to begin working to please God.
  - b. It teaches that if we commit a mortal sin after Baptism, our faith is shipwrecked, and we no longer have access to the grace we received in Baptism. We must therefore seek penance as the “second plank” through which we can gain forgiveness for mortal sins by making the imposed satisfactions.

### C. The Third Part - Article VI – The Sacrament of the Altar

1. What the Scriptures teach.
  - a. Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Altar to give us, and assure us of, the forgiveness of sins through the partaking of His body and His blood which is in, with, and under the bread and wine which we receive.

- b. “While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples. He said, “Take, eat, this is my body.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it all of you, for this is my blood of the new testament, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:26–28).
- 2. Who does not benefit from it?
  - a. Those who do not believe that in the Sacrament they are receiving the true body and blood of Christ or who do not repent of their sins but only want their sinful lives “sanctified” by participating in this practice of the church will receive damnation rather than blessing.
  - b. Paul wrote, “For if anyone eats and drinks in an unworthy way because he does not recognize the Lord’s body, he eats and drinks judgment on himself” (1 Corinthians 11:29).
- 3. What RCC teachings do we reject?
  - a. That the whole Sacrament can be administered under one form rather than both. At Luther’s time the church only gave the bread to the lay communicants. Concerning the alteration of the truths given us by Jesus, Paul wrote, “If anyone preaches to you any gospel other than the one you received—a curse on him!” (Galatians 1:9).
  - b. That the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, losing their substance as bread and wine and retaining only their form. Paul wrote, “Let a person examine himself and after doing so, let him eat of the *bread* and drink *from the cup*” (1 Corinthians 11:28).

## XI. The Third Part - Article VIII - Confession

### A. Private confession

- 1. Confession
  - a. When we have sinned against someone, we should confess our sin to that person. But there are times when we have committed sins against God or against the community which trouble us. These sins too we should be encouraged to confess to a brother or a sister and ask that person to grant us God’s forgiveness.
  - b. James wrote, “So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, in order that you may be healed” (James 5:16).
- 2. Absolution
  - a. Absolution is the response to a sincere confession of having committed a sin or sins. It must be spoken in Jesus’ name and stead to the person who desires it based on his or her confession. One does not need to be a pastor to give the free gift of forgiveness that God has given to all of us.
  - b. “Then Peter came up and asked Jesus, ‘Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother when he sins against me? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but I tell you as many as seventy-seven times’” (Matthew 18:21–22).

### B. The publicly revealed Word

- 1. The written Word
  - a. The Holy Scriptures are the source of all the knowledge that we need to have to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved eternally.

- b. Paul wrote, “Whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that, through patient endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we would have hope” (Romans 15:4).
  - c. To Timothy he wrote, “From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).
- 2. The spoken Word
  - a. Yet, the Word of God generally is the effective means for the Holy Spirit to work saving faith when it is spoken, that is, preached or taught by Christians.
  - b. To the Romans Paul wrote, “How can they believe in the one about whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news of peace, who preach the gospel of good things!’” (Romans 10:14-15).

### C. The Enthusiasts

- 1. The “inner” Word
  - a. Luther called those who believed they needed to be led by the “inner light” of the Gospel enthusiasts or *Schwärmer*.
  - b. He included in this category not only those whom we might today call the Pentecostals or the Evangelicals, but also the papacy because it relies on the “shrine of the pope’s heart” for its doctrine.
- 2. The outer hypocrisy
  - a. Despite claiming that their religion came to them in their hearts directly from God, they nevertheless felt the need to preach their ideas to others. If God works directly on the heart, why did he only work on their hearts and not on the hearts of the people they felt a need to preach to?
  - b. Relying on the “supposed” revelation in their hearts meant that they could be judged against no standard. Since all the people who made this claim did not agree on what the Holy Spirit had revealed to them, how could anyone decide who was really teaching what the Holy Spirit had revealed and who was teaching them what Satan wanted them to believe?

**Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word - 862/655/589**

Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word;  
curb those who by deceit or sword  
would seek to overthrow your Son  
and to destroy what he has done.

Lord Jesus Christ, your pow'r make known,  
for you are Lord of lords alone;  
defend your Christendom 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.



# The Smalcald Articles

## 4. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Part Art. IV & The 3<sup>rd</sup> Part Art. III

### XII. The Second Part - Article IV - The Papacy

#### A. Its history

1. The early church
  - a. Originally all pastors were equal and were responsible only for their own congregations.
  - b. As the church in an area grew and new congregations were started, the pastor of the first church became the supervisor of the other pastors and even reduced them to a lower status. He became the “bishop,” and they became “priests” that he could reassign at will.
2. The Patriarchies
  - a. While all bishops were initially equal, those with greater resources in the larger cities moved to the head of the class.
  - b. Four “patriarchies” were established at Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. A fifth was added when the capital of the empire was moved to Constantinople. These patriarchs set the tone for church work in their geographical areas but had little functional authority.
  - c. Already in the third century the bishops of Rome began claiming to be the first among equals and soon the superior to all other bishops. The bishop of Constantinople, who had the emperor’s ear, regularly contested Rome’s claim.
3. Power vacuum in the West
  - a. With the fall of the Roman Empire in the West in the fifth century, the pope became a political as well as a religious leader, holding the region together in the face of continual invasions by Germanic and Asiatic tribes.
  - b. As the political situation stabilized, due mainly to the rise of the Franks, the popes worked to retain influence in the affairs of the various countries.
  - c. The popes began developing their own spiritual army, namely, the monastic orders. These were completely dependent on the popes, unlike the bishops and priests who sometimes tried to assert their independence.
4. The church of Hildebrand
  - a. Hildebrand, both before and after he became Pope Gregory VII, worked to force the emperors and kings to submit to papal dictates. In particular, he gained control over the appointment of all religious leaders in the Holy Roman Empire and several other countries.
  - b. The scholastic theologians began codifying the doctrines of the church under the influence of the ancient Greek philosophers, particularly Aristotle.
  - c. The popes supported this work which corrupted the essence of Christianity. They used their power to excommunicate, torture, and kill their opponents to gain absolute control over the religious and political situation in the West.

#### B. Luther versus the popes

1. Were the popes merely ill-advised?
  - a. Pope Leo X reacted strongly to the disturbance in church order caused by Martin Luther. He used the various offices of the church to try to deal with this “wild boar in the Lord’s vineyard.”

- b. Luther initially thought Leo X was merely ill-advised and tried unsuccessfully to reeducate him. The pope was not amused by Luther's attempts.
- 2. The universal spiritual dictatorship
  - a. The pope's power lay in his claim to be the vicar of Christ on earth. As such, he claimed the Holy Spirit worked only through him. The Spirit worked spiritual understanding directly in the pope's heart, so only the pope could speak for God and His Church.
  - b. This meant that the rest of the bishops were not his equals and brothers, but only his servants who had to bow before him. His power could not be checked by councils, because their members were inferior to him.
- 3. The "Great Antichrist"
  - a. By his actions, the pope had focused the church on himself, rather than on Christ. He sat in the church in Christ's place. In Greek the preposition "anti" can mean "in place of," so the pope was the "anti Christ." Because of the damage he had done to the church, Luther labelled him the "Great Antichrist" who had been foretold in the Scriptures.
  - b. The perversion of the church by the pope has been incredible. Justification through faith, the only way of salvation, has been replaced with the path of work righteousness. All the offices of the church have been turned to glorifying the RCC and its head, the pope.
- 4. Impossibility of reform
  - a. The papacy depended upon the distortions of Christianity to maintain its power. If it agreed to serve as the head of the church by human right instead of divine right, people would soon abandon it as a corrupt institution.
  - b. No council over which the pope presided would be able to reform the papacy, and no pope was about to allow any council which he or his trusted aides did not control. The Council of Trent validated Luther's predictions.

### XIII. The Third Part - Article III - Repentance

#### A. The office of the Law

- 1. The world is guilty of sin.
  - a. Paul wrote that God will not tolerate the suppression of his truth. "God's wrath is being revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who try to suppress the truth by unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18).
  - b. Paul then added, "Now we know that whatever the law says is addressed to those who are under the law, so that every mouth will be silenced and the whole world will be subject to God's judgment. For this reason, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by works of the law, for through the law we become aware of sin" (Romans 3:19-20).
  - c. Jesus said, "When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world about sin, about righteousness, and about judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned" (John 16:8-11).
- 2. God will strike down the guilty.
  - a. The purpose of the Law is to smash our pride and our resistance which we have raised against the revealed will of God. It was established to make us aware of God's wrath upon those who think that He does not care or that they can finesse Him.
  - b. Jeremiah wrote, "Is not my word like a fire? declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29).

## B. True repentance

1. The Law must first do its work.
  - a. People must be brought through the Law to see their depravity before God. So long as they believe that they have some merit in themselves to employ before God, they will not repent and throw themselves solely upon God's mercy.
  - b. John the Baptizer's message was strong and blunt to those who thought repentance was not for them. He said, "You offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore produce fruits in keeping with repentance! Do not even think of saying to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'" (Luke 3:7-8).
2. The Gospel must follow the Law.
  - a. "'The time is fulfilled,' he [Jesus] said. 'The kingdom of God has come near! Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:15).
  - b. Jesus said, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).
  - c. While the call to repent must come first, the proclamation of the forgiveness of sin must follow whenever people give any indication that they acknowledge their sins.
3. The Law alone cannot save.
  - a. Although King Saul (1 Samuel 31) and Judas (Matthew 27:5) realized that they had committed grievous sins, they could not bring themselves to seek forgiveness but resorted to their own devices and died.
  - b. One of the psalms of ascents reads, "Israel, wait confidently for the LORD, because with the LORD there is mercy. With him there is abundant redemption" (Psalm 130:7).

## XIV. The Third Part - Article III – False Repentance of the Papists

### A. The RCC theology of sin

1. Original sin
  - a. It is removed in Baptism so that it no longer prevents a person from choosing to do good works to please God.
  - b. As a result, if a person does the best he or she can, God will give grace so that the person can do more and better works. These better works lead to more grace which permits even better works to be done until a person becomes sanctified by his/her works and is then declared justified by God.
2. Actual sins
  - a. Actual sins are only those actions that are committed which are contrary to God's Law or the church's rules. People can avoid these sins by making use of the grace they receive from God.
  - b. Evil thoughts, inclinations, or words are not sinful unless they are acted on. As a result, Roman Catholics do not recognize or confess most of their sins.

### B. The steps of Penance

1. Contrition
  - a. Contrition is true sorrow for sin and the sincere resolve in the heart never to commit a particular sin again. Such contrition earns merit before God that counts toward the satisfaction that needs to be made for having committed that sin.

- b. If a person realizes that he or she cannot promise to try to avoid committing a particular sin again, then the person is asked if he/she would like to be able to make such a promise. This is “attrition,” that is, recognizing that a sin has been committed but not being willing to repudiate the sin because one expects to keep on committing it.
- 2. Confession
  - a. Confession involves the enumeration of the sins that a person has committed. Any sin not confessed cannot be absolved, nor can satisfaction be made for it.
  - b. If sins are forgotten, they must be confessed at some future date when they are remembered. Failure to confess one’s sins thoroughly is a mortal sin.
  - c. Because Catholics do not believe that sins of thought or word are actual sins, they are never confessed, so people remain unrepentant of these sins. Because they cannot even remember all their actual sins, this type of confession is a farce.
- 3. Satisfaction
  - a. Satisfactions are good works prescribed by the priest hearing the confession that the sinner is told to do to merit the forgiveness of sins. Upon the promise to do the prescribed works, the sinner is absolved of his or her sins.
  - b. Because the absolution is always conditioned on the complete confession of sins, the person confessing can never be sure that the absolution is sufficient to cover all the sins actually committed.
  - c. Moreover, because the priest cannot know how much merit is being gained through the good works prescribed or how much merit is necessary to offset the sins committed, a person confessing has no certainty that after having performed the prescribed works, he or she will really receive forgiveness for the sins committed.
  - d. This gnawing uncertainty is the reason that the RCC can induce its members to do more good works, such as pilgrimages or buying indulgences, in the hope of cleaning up any deficit that resulted from the priest inaccurately assigning works of satisfaction.

### C. The underlying deceit

- 1. Basis of forgiveness
  - a. The basis of forgiveness is never the work of Christ. If the forgiveness of sins were announced in Christ’s name, then there would have been no point in the satisfactions because nothing more would have been needed for a sinner who had been declared righteous.
  - b. Sinners are pointed back to their own works, which have been inadequate in the past, in an effort to gain the merit that they need to be sin-free and eligible for salvation. The phrase “do more good works” can always be used whenever a sinner is troubled that he or she has yet not done enough.
- 2. Purgatory
  - a. The RCC invented purgatory as a place of limited-time punishment. People can gain merit through their suffering in purgatory which will atone for their sins so they can enter heaven.
  - b. Being an invented place, no one knows how much time is needed to gain the remission of even one sin, much less all someone’s sins that have not been sufficiently paid for through good works. Nevertheless, it allows the church to claim it has power over people’s souls even after their deaths.
- 3. The indulgences’ racket
  - a. With people fearing the suffering they and their relatives will have to bear if sent to purgatory, the RCC finds it useful to play on that fear to sell people indulgences.

- b. Papal letters of indulgence supposedly reduce the time in purgatory for a financial contribution to the church. While these indulgences grant a specified number of years of relief from suffering in purgatory, because the length of the sentences is unknown, it is impossible to say whether the indulgence makes a significant difference to a person's sentence or whether the person is already in heaven or in hell.
  - c. Indulgences were gradually attached to many activities to squeeze as much money from the people as possible.
  - d. What one pope gives; another can take away. The changing nature of indulgences over the years means that no one can be quite certain what they mean. There is always the feeling allowed to remain that some indulgences are better than others.
- 4. Monastic holiness
  - a. The most total and certain hope of the remission of sins is the monastic life. In the monasteries the monks and nuns strive to live holy lives. Because of their vows, the merits associated with all their good works are magnified. Because all the monks in a monastery are rendering the same service, the merit is intensified as a laser intensifies light.
  - b. The surplus merit earned by the monks can be shared with others who need more merit. Naturally, a fee for such sharing has been common. Nevertheless, this holier-than-thou aura with its near certainty of salvation has attracted many to the monastic life.
- 5. Complete repentance and absolution
  - a. The underlying fallacy in the RCC's thinking is its view of sin as a separable group of acts. Each sin has to be confessed and atoned for. This gives the church tremendous leverage to use to coerce people into obeying it. The church can assign a value to the sinfulness of actions and use this value to extract obedience and money.
  - b. The biblical teaching is that sin is a unit. Everyone is totally depraved. Therefore, people have to confess their total unworthiness before God and plead for mercy based on Jesus' complete atonement for sins.
  - c. Paul clearly shows us our depravity. "Indeed, I know that good does not live in me, that is, in my sinful flesh. The desire to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out. So I fail to do the good I want to do. Instead, the evil I do not want to do, that is what I keep doing" (Romans 7:18–19).
  - d. And Isaiah clearly shows us our Savior. "We all have gone astray like sheep. Each of us has turned to his own way, but the LORD has charged all our guilt to him" (Isaiah 53:6).
- 6. Continual repentance
  - a. Repentance is a lifelong activity. Just because we have come to faith does not mean that Satan and his angels will leave us alone. They want to drag us into hell with them. Peter wrote, "Be alert. Your adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Resist him by being firm in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8–9).
  - b. Paul frequently warns us to be prepared so that we are ready for the assaults of Satan. He wrote, "So let him who thinks he stands be careful that he does not fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12) and "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can stand against the schemes of the Devil" (Ephesians 6:11).
  - c. Only if we continually repent and renew our trust in the saving work of Jesus through the means of grace can we be saved.

## **A Mighty Fortress Is Our God - 863/656/250**

A mighty fortress is our God,  
A trusty shield and weapon;  
He helps us free from every need  
That hath us now o'ertaken.  
The old evil foe  
Now means deadly woe;  
Deep guile and great might  
Are his dread arms in fight;  
On Earth is not his equal.

With might of ours can naught be done,  
Soon were our loss effected;  
But for us fights the Valiant One,  
Whom God Himself elected.  
Ask ye, who is this?  
Jesus Christ it is.  
Of Sabaoth Lord,  
And there's none other God;  
He holds the field forever.

Though devils all the world should fill,  
All eager to devour us.  
We tremble not, we fear no ill,  
They shall not overpow'r us.  
This world's prince may still  
Scowl fierce as he will,  
He can harm us none,  
He's judged; the deed is done;  
One little word can fell him.

The Word they still shall let remain  
Nor any thanks have for it;  
He's by our side upon the plain  
With His good gifts and Spirit.  
And take they our life, goods,  
Fame, child and wife,  
Let these all be gone,  
They yet have nothing won;  
The kingdom ours remaineth.

# The Smalcald Articles

## 5. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Part Art. VII & IX- XV

### XV. Church Discipline

#### A. The Third Part - Article VII - The Keys

##### 1. Binding and loosing

- a. The Office of the Keys was given to the visible church for the purpose of maintaining church discipline. If a person refuses to repent, then the binding key must be used to lock the chains of his sin around him and lock heaven so he cannot enter.
- b. If a person repents, then the loosing key is to be used to release him from his sins and open heaven for him so he can enter.
- c. Jesus charged the church with the responsibility of pronouncing God's judgment on people based on whether they repented of their sins or continued to embrace their sins. He said, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18).

##### 2. Properly applying the keys

- a. The visible church cannot see people's hearts. Therefore, it is limited to correctly reacting to public sins. It is not to conduct "witch hunts" to try to find some grounds of withholding forgiveness because we all have private sins concerning which the state of our repentance is unknown. David wrote, "Who can recognize his own errors? Declare me innocent of hidden sins" (Psalm 19:12).
- b. Nor can the church apply the keys based on the magnitude or putridness of the sins that someone has committed. All people are totally depraved before God, so we all reek, yet God forgives the sins of all the penitent, and so must the church. Paul wrote, "I know that good does not live in me, that is, in my sinful flesh. The desire to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out" (Romans 7:18).
- c. The church also must not give its members the idea that the little sins of important, upright people do not really matter. Everyone must acknowledge his complete sinfulness and not hide it, because God sees everything. David wrote, "Do not bring charges against your servant, because no one living can be righteous before you" (Psalm 143:2). Paul wrote, "I do not in fact know of anything against myself, but I am not justified by this; rather, the one who evaluates me is the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:4).

#### B. The Third Part - Article IX - Excommunication

##### 1. "Greater excommunication"

- a. This was a papal invention in which the church excommunicated someone and imposed civil penalties on him that it expected the state would enforce.
- b. The pope extended this to include whole cities and territories if the rulers disobeyed the papal wishes. Communion was denied to everyone in the affected area.

2. “Lesser excommunication”

- a. True excommunication excludes people from the church because they are no longer of the same spirit as the people in the church. This can generally happen for one of three reasons: 1) A person is teaching or promoting false doctrine. 2) A person is unrepentant of a sin or sins. 3) A person forcefully insists that the church adopt practices that are in themselves adiaphora, but that are opposed by most of the rest of the congregation.
- b. Excommunication is carried out to bring a brother or a sister to his/her senses and to lead the person to repent. While the person may come and hear the Word preached, he or she may not take part in any of the other activities of congregational life. Jesus said, “If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as an unbeliever or a tax collector” (Matthew 18:17).

XVI. Concerning the Church

A. The Third Part - Article X – Ordination and the Call

1. Ordination

- a. Ordination is the act of setting aside someone for service to the LORD. That person is to do the Lord’s work instead of his own work. Because he does not work in the same manner as other people, he has special recognition and special prerogatives in the church and often also in secular society.
- b. The RCC claims that ordination can only be performed by bishops because ordination places a special mark or seal on a man which permits him to perform the sacraments of the church, one of which is ordination itself. If a sacrament, except Baptism, is performed by someone who has not been ordained, then the RCC does not recognize the action as valid.
- c. Luther claimed that the only purpose for ordination is to set men aside for the work of the LORD and that no special seal is involved, so any Christian can, in theory, ordain someone for the work of the LORD. In an emergency, a layman, such as duke, can do this.

2. The call

- a. While ordination sets men apart for the work, it is the call that gives the man or woman his or her specific assignment in the LORD’s kingdom. Without a call, even if ordained, a person cannot undertake spiritual work in the name of the church but only act as an individual Christian.
- b. The doctrine of the call has caused divisions within confessional Lutheranism. Some feel that the call can only be issued by a local congregation because it is the only calling body specifically mentioned in the Scriptures. Others feel that any group of Christians that is gathered for any scriptural purpose, such as synods and boards, can issue a call to help achieve that purpose.
- c. Being called is not the same as being hired. A called worker must have the freedom to do his or her work as service to the LORD using sound Christian judgment and not merely according to a set of protocols.



## B. The Third Part - Article XI – The Marriage of Priests

1. The RCC position on celibacy for the clergy
  - a. The Roman church argues that the responsibilities of the clergy are so important that they have to be the clergyman's sole focus. Domestic issues caused by a wife and children could draw him physically and emotionally away from his work for the LORD. A priest must be effectively married to the church as Christ's visible representative.
  - b. Paul wrote, "The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord and thinks about how to please the Lord. But the married man is concerned about the things of the world and thinks about how to please his wife, and so he is divided" (1 Corinthians 7:32–34). Because Paul was not married, the RCC takes this as an endorsement of its position.
2. Luther's position
  - a. While Luther agreed that being celibate is the right decision for some, it is not good for most men and only leads to sexual adventurism on the part of the clergy. Paul wrote to Timothy about misguided church leaders, "They devote themselves to deceitful spirits and the doctrines of demons....They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from foods..." (1 Timothy 4:1–3).
  - b. Paul indicated that he could have had a wife if he had chosen to. "Do we not have a right to take along a wife who is a believer, as the rest of the apostles do, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Corinthians 9:5).
  - c. Furthermore, Paul included a clergyman being married in the list of qualifications for his position. "It is necessary, then, for the overseer to be above reproach, the husband of only one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2).

## C. The Third Part - Article XII - The Church

1. The RCC view
  - a. The Roman Catholic Church claims to be "the" Christian church because its bishops have apostolic succession back to the apostles themselves and particularly Peter, who the RCC claims Christ made the "rock on which the church was founded" (Matthew 16:18).
  - b. In addition, the RCC claims to be the actual agent of salvation so that no one can be saved without membership in or at least affiliation with the RCC. All paths to God lead through the RCC.
2. Luther's view
  - a. The Scriptures teach that the Christian church consists of all believers in the saving work of Christ and only those who believe in the saving work of Christ. Because we cannot see into people's hearts, the Christian church is invisible. We do not know who knows who is in it and who only pretends to be in it.
  - b. The Rock on which the church stands is Christ Himself. Paul wrote, "You have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the Cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:20–21).

- c. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who saves His sheep without the help of any human agent. Jesus said, “I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me....And I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14–15).
- d. The church’s role in salvation is to proclaim Jesus’ teachings and works. Jesus said, “Therefore go and gather disciples from all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and by teaching them to keep all the instructions I have given you” (Matthew 28:19–20).

## XVII. Concerning Works

### A. The Third Part - Article XIII – Justification & Good Works

- 1. The essence of good works
  - a. The essence of good works is a heart that has been changed by the Holy Spirit to believe in Jesus rather than to rely on itself. Works required by the Law or by the church which are done as a matter of duty are not good works before God.
  - b. Peter said, “He also showed that there is no distinction between us and them (the Gentiles], cleansing their hearts by faith. Now then, why are you testing God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke, which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary! We believe that we are saved in the same way they are—through the grace of our Lord Jesus” (Acts 15:9–11).
  - c. Jeremiah reminded us where our strength to do good works comes from. “This is what the LORD says. The wise man should not boast in his wisdom. The strong man should not boast in his strength, nor the rich man in his riches. Instead, let those who boast, boast about this: that they have understanding, and that they know me. They know that I am the LORD, who shows mercy, justice, and righteousness on earth, for I delight in these things, declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:23–24).
- 2. Good works always follow justification.
  - a. Jesus identified himself as the source of the ability to do good works when He said, “I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him is the one who bears much fruit, because without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).
  - b. Paul wrote, “Indeed, it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8–10).

### B. The Third Part - Article XIV – Monastic Vows

- 1. The roots of monasticism
  - a. In the second and third centuries some Christian fled the turmoil and persecution of the Roman Empire in an effort to get closer to God. These men were called “hermits.” As time passed hermit communities began to grow where men could study God’s Word.
  - b. After Christianity was legalized, groups of men continued to seek isolation to study and learn self-discipline against the temptations of the world. People began to regard them as holier than the ordinary Christians because they sacrificed the joys of the world for God.

2. The religion of monastic works
  - a. A monk named Benedict developed rules for monastic life which emphasized poverty, chastity, and obedience to one's superiors. As groups of monks formed, many adopted this "Rule of St. Benedict" as the basis of their monastic life. Monastic life became a life centered around self-prescribed works and endless ceremonies.
  - b. The popes harnessed the various monastic orders as their servants to coerce the regular clergy to adhere to the papal wishes. Most orders grew wealthy because they sold their "excess" good works to rich purchasers who desired to strengthen their case for admission to heaven.
  - c. Luther had been part of this work-righteous game and condemned it as evil.

### C. The Third Part - Article XV – Human Tradition

1. Church traditions
  - a. People in the past loved traditions because they bound the generations together. Rather than allow the people to root their traditions in superstition, the early church tried to direct people to root them in the events of the life of Christ or in His people.
  - b. As people with different customs joined the Christian church, the church sensed the need to standardize the customs so that its clergy could serve the people who came from vastly different cultural backgrounds.
2. The merit system
  - a. To get people to accept the standardized church traditions, the RCC began attaching merit to the performing of them. The activities were made more elaborate to increase the merit that supposedly could be gained by performing them. These are still seen in RCC areas of the world today.
  - b. Rather than just being events associated with the church, they gradually became key elements in the worship life of the church. For example, the simple lighting of a candle in memory of a friend could become a prayer to a saint by placing it before the saint's statue. Thus, traditions moved people hearts away from Jesus.
3. Traditions became doctrines.
  - a. Because God's blessing is always important to us in the activities of our lives, the church developed traditions to bestow God's blessing, such as those involved with blessing bells or certain types of food. Sometimes these actions were done for a fee, and sometimes merely to bind the people closer to the offices of the church.
  - b. Luther recognized that these activities, which were originally adiaphora, had become tools to lead people away from trusting in Christ for both salvation and earthly blessing. Concerning them, Jesus paraphrased Isaiah, "These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. They worship me in vain, teaching human rules as if they are doctrines" (Matthew 15:8,9).

**O Lord, We Praise You - 673/617/327**

May God bestow on us His grace and favor  
To please Him with our behavior  
And live as brethren here in love and union  
Nor repent this blest communion!  
O Lord, have mercy!  
Let not your good Spirit forsake us;  
Grant that heavenly-minded he make us;  
Give your Church, Lord, to see  
Days of peace and unity:  
O Lord, have mercy!