

# The Smalcald Articles



## Introduction

“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?” -*Martin Luther, Preface to the Smalcald Articles*

The year is 1536, the Reformation was moving along. Some 6 years had passed since the Augsburg Confession had been presented to the Diet at Augsburg. But things were beginning to move. The Roman Catholic Church was preparing to announce a Christian Council to settle the matter in 1537 (what would become the Council of Trent 1545-1563). But for now, this kept getting delayed.

On top of this, the radical reformation was also twisting and going its own way, much that was not healthy or faithful. Luther spent more of his latter years struggling against the rest of the Reformation more so than Rome, which he largely gave up trying to persuade.

Against both the Roman Catholic Church and the Rise of the Radical Reformation, an aging Luther, now in his mid-50's, and those who supported the Lutheran movement needed to find a way to respond. Meanwhile, Lutheranism had spread north and east, finding a home in the Scandinavian Countries of Finland and Sweden as well as Denmark and Iceland.

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1536, Luther's Prince John Frederick assigned Luther to draw up a confession of faith to be presented at the Church Council and to also clear the air on controversies that were springing up using Luther's name. Though the articles when they were first written did little, generations of Lutherans quickly recognized their value in the years to follow.

## Reception of the Augsburg Confession



The Lutheran Princes had presented the Augsburg Confession before Emperor Charles V (pictured left) in June of 1530.

Charles V was not impressed by the Augsburg Confession, having fell asleep during its reading.

But those gathered in the room, especially the centrists and those curious at knowing what the Lutherans believed were impressed with the Bishop of Augsburg exclaiming, "This is nothing but the pure truth."

In the weeks and months following Augsburg the opposing sides of Catholic and Lutheran talked and negotiated. And it looked as if the breach that began with Luther's 95 theses in 1517 were very nearly healed and closed.

But it wasn't meant to be. Cooler heads did not prevail. In August of 1530, Charles V incited a crisis among the Reformers by stating that the Confutation, the Roman Catholic Church's document responding to the Augsburg Confession, had

answered and repudiated the Augsburg Confession, which was also called among Lutherans (even still today) as The Augustana. Charles gave the Reformers until April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1531 to submit to his judgment, or else.

The Lutherans were told to recant and return to Rome, without further discussion. So close to agreement, but yet so far. As a response, Melanchthon and colleagues drafted up the Apology, of Defense, of the Augsburg Confession, which was published along with the Augsburg Confession to the public in April of 1531. The choice was made, the Lutherans would not submit to what they saw as a denial of the Gospel. A crisis now was before them.

## The Lutherans Unite

The Crisis of the rejection of the Augsburg Confession was twofold for the Lutherans. They knew that being rejected meant that they were exposed both politically and spiritually. They needed to band together for protection and support. The breakdown of negotiations meant that war would be on the horizon.

But Charles V was unable to take military action and would not go to war with the Lutherans until after Luther died in 1546. Remarkably and ironically, the French had conflicts with Charles V, the Pope was giving Charles a hard time politically and also the Islamic Turks who were attacking his Eastern border. As a result, Charles V could only come through with threats and statements to the Lutherans for them to reconsider. In

late 1531, Charles signed an armistice in Nuremburg, to delay the conflict which gave Charles the ability to deal with bigger threats on his borders. The Lutherans had a moment of relief.

This gave time for a military alliance to form among the Lutherans. In late 1531, the



Figure 1: The Charter for the Smalcald League 1536

seven princes who had confessed the Augsburg Confession, as well as the Electoral Saxony and the city of Nuremberg formed a military arm that was called the Smalcald League. Throughout the 1530's this alliance grew until most German governments embraced it. At one point the infamous English King, Henry VIII, almost joined the League. He was rejected when he refused to confess the Augsburg Confession, which was required to be with the Lutherans.

With this protection and alliance formed, those in it were free to practice the actual ideas of the Reformation. Princes took responsibility of the political ramifications and also helped with the churches getting their footing. It should be noted that one advantage Lutherans had was their political savvy. Their princes and politicians were effective and communicated well and had good theological training to know the ins and outs of both church and state. Two notable people were John Frederick and Philip of Hesse.

With the negotiations broken down after Augsburg, the Lutherans unmuted other concerns they had at the time but had reserved during Augsburg in the hopes of seeking middle ground. But now being ignored, they began to change things politically and spiritually and culturally that planted the seeds of our modern world. Power structures were changing and there was no going back. The world that had existed for over 1000 years was coming undone.

Eventually, the Smalcald League would be destroyed by Charles V in the Smalcaldic War of 1547-1548, a year after Luther's death in 1546. The leading survivors either fled or submitted to Papal rule, which is story for when we cover the Formula of Concord.

But by the time of the League's destruction, it was too late to undo the changes the Reformation had brought. The Reformation was firmly attached to the minds and life of everyday people so much so that war and political badgering could not undo it. The goal of the League to live out the reformation and make the reforms was accomplished. It would soon take the first generation of Lutherans after Luther to make sure that what began would stay the course.

## Luther Prepares for The Church Council

With the breakdown of communication between Lutherans and Catholics and the formation of the Smalcald League, Lutherans began to build a new world both politically and spiritually. Much more could be said in the years between 1531 and 1536 but that is a story for another time.

But on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1536 a shocking event happened. Pope Paul III, recently installed as Pope, issued a formal decree that a general church council would occur at Mantua, Italy on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1537. This council had been promised since the early 1520's, but was always delayed or vaguely promised. But now an official announcement declared it would happen.

Sadly, it came out that this would not be a council to discuss and decide on the truth. On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1536 the Pope said that the purpose of the council would be to "expel and destroy the poisonous, pestilential Lutheran heresy." Hopes were dashed. Many of the Lutheran princes felt they should not attend, but Luther encouraged it to at least cause them to speak the truth and convince some.

Finally, the Lutheran princes agreed to attend. But Luther's prince, John Frederick, said they would go only on one condition: that they would be prepared with a confession of faith to present before the Pope and the Council, just as they had at Augsburg six years prior. And this time they wanted a confession clearer, less negotiated, and more direct and firmer than what the Augsburg Confession had been, which was construed hoping to achieve middle ground.

Who would write this Confession? Prince John Frederick turned to his subject, Martin Luther, to write what the Princes would present. On December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1536, Luther was commissioned to write the confession to be presented at a meeting of the Lutheran theologians and lay leaders at Smalcald, Germany on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1537 where they would hopefully be adopted. Hence why the articles are named the "Smalcald Articles."

The seriousness of the commission can be heard when we read the quote from Prince John Frederick. "It will, nevertheless, be very necessary for Doctor Martin

to prepare his foundation and opinion from the Holy Scriptures, namely, the articles hitherto taught, preached, and written by him, and which he is determined to adhere to and abide by at the council, as well as upon his departure from this world and before the judgment of Almighty God, and in which we cannot yield without becoming guilty of treason against God, even though property and life, peace or war, are at stake.”

In this quote we see two reasons for why Luther was chosen to write a confession. He was the main architect and theologian, and the Lutherans respected his writings. But also hidden is the realization that Luther’s health was failing.

After decades of not taking care of himself, as well as the abuse on his body as a monk was catching up with Luther. He was known for working and writing 72 hours in a row before collapsing only to get up and do it again. When he got married, Katie made him follow a more balanced regiment, but by the late 1520’s Luther had his first serious heart trouble.



Figure 2: Luther in his late 50's

By the early 1530’s and turning 50, Luther’s health began to deteriorate at a rapid pace. Many of the issues were minor troubles, but he also suffered from insomnia, tinnitus, vertigo, and a respiratory issue from a cold that set in his lungs that remained for the rest of his life due to a lack of antibiotics.

He often complained of a bad pain in his hip, which all added up to slowing him down. But in May of 1536, and continuing for the rest of that year, was what Luther called in his writings, “The Stone.” A kidney stone lodged in him that whole year which eventually poisoned him. He became seriously ill, and his friends and family were thinking he would die. Mercifully the stone passed, and Luther recovered, but these issues would continue into the last 10 years of his life.

All of this made Luther irritable and grumpy. His friends knew that Luther was not going to live on this side of things forever and that motivated them to want him to write. This was made all the more serious that a week after Luther began writing the Smalcald Articles, on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1536, he suffered a massive heart attack. He was close to death and he expected to die even as he began to recover. We should take this thought to mind when reading this document. Luther is dead serious and pulls no punches in this document.

Besides this, many people were abusing his writings and claiming what Luther taught though he did not. One major rumor floating around was that Luther had recanted his faith in Jesus entirely and was no longer Christian. Luther needed to clear the air before he died, and so his Prince, John Frederick, pressured Luther to write what he said was going to be Luther's final will and testament. Luther took that to heart by saying that these articles were what he planned to say before Christ.

These articles became Luther's Last Will and Testament. At one point, Luther said that he expected people after he died would say that if Luther were alive today, he would say "this or that" now. But Luther made it clear when he wrote the Smalcald Articles that "This" is what he believed and would always firmly believe. Afterwards, Luther published these articles as his last will and testament of faith.

What we have in these articles is a personal reflection of Luther's faith, so clear and concise. Lutherans after Luther's death saw these articles as a true treasure of the faith and many adopted them as their own confession as well.

## **Structure of the Smalcald Articles**

The Smalcald Articles themselves are broken up into three parts. By doing this, Luther was mimicking the three articles of the Apostles Creed.

The first part speaks chiefly concerning the persons of God. This reflects the ancient faith of the Church. Luther here is saying that he is in line with what the Church has always confessed. The first part is short because this is what both sides confess. This is due to the fact that the church for hundreds of years had fought and hammered this home. By doing this, Luther sees himself as a catholic

and as a Catholic the rest of these Articles follows. Luther is seeing the work of Jesus as something that cannot be denied as a catholic.

The second part then focuses on the work of Jesus Christ and our salvation. All abuses and threats to this work of Jesus for our justification are attacked by the articles on the mass, the chapters and cloisters of the monks, and the Papacy.

The third part focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of faith that the Holy Spirit works through and delivers to us the gifts of our salvation through Christ.

Here in this third part, Sin, the Law, Repentance, the Gospel, Baptism, The Lord's Supper, The Office of the Keys, Confession, Excommunication, Ordination and the Call, the Marriage of Priests, The Church, Good Works, Monastic Vows, and Human Traditions are all outlined in this third article. Luther sees these are flowing from the Second Part and are a consequence of faith in Jesus Christ.

Another major attack in this Third Part is against the Schwärmer, a word for swarming bees, that Luther called the Enthusiasts (god-within-ism), people who denied that the Holy Spirit worked through means but rather worked internally in man without the Word of God. Luther sees this problem at work in the radical reformers, such as Muntzer, but also in the Pope.

Finally, the Smalcald articles were signed by 44 of the Lutherans who assembled at the conference at Smalcald with the intent of adopting them to present at the Church Council at Mantua in 1537, but we will take note of what happened when we talk of the results of these articles at the end of this study.

## Preface

1. Read paragraphs 1-2. What are Luther's reasons for writing?  
What does he hope for?
2. Read paragraphs 3-4. Does Luther see hope for a change in the Pope or a Council? What is Luther's other reason for writing this document in paragraph 4?
3. Read paragraphs 5-7. Why does Luther wrestle with publishing his documents? What will happen if he does? What will happen if he doesn't? Who ultimately is at work?
4. Read paragraphs 8-9. Luther shares an anecdote of the abuse and lies. What does he describe in the story? Whose feet does Luther lay his concern at? What will Jesus do?
5. Read paragraphs 10-11. Luther would like to see a free council, why? But why does he say it is not needed? As a Pastor, what does Luther mourn and fear for Germany?

6. Read paragraphs 12-13. Besides life in the church, what area could a church council also help reform (though Luther notes that it could take dozens of councils)? What are some of the problems that Luther highlights that affect everyday people?

7. Read paragraphs 14-15. Luther states this confession is short, why? How does Luther end the Preface?

8. Any questions on what has been laid out so far? What do you hope to learn in this Document?

## The First Part

1. Luther lists out four creedal statements that show his catholicity and also lays the groundwork for the rest of the Articles. What words stick out to you? Any that you aren't sure what they mean?
2. Luther's first point, lays the ground work for the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct from each other, meaning that the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit and the Spirit is not the Father. But yet, there is only one divine being/nature.
3. Luther's second point highlights the distinctions between the Persons of the Trinity. The Father is the source and is begotten by no one. The Son is begotten of the Father. The Son owes everything to the Father, who is the source. And following in Western thinking, the Holy Spirit proceeds, or comes forth from the Father and the Son. (Eastern thinking only says the Father).
4. These distinctions allow now for us to realize that it is only the Son who became man. The Father and the Spirit are God only and remain God only. But the Son alone has become man. Here we see that the Trinity is necessary for how our salvation works. If God is not Triune, we could not be saved.

5. Luther's fourth point then highlights the work of God the Son. Luther speaks of how The Son became man, our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit and came to do the work of our salvation as set forth by the ancient creeds and Luther's Small Catechism!
  
6. As Luther concludes this section, why is this First Part short? But why does Luther include them anyway?

## The Second Part

The Second Part moves into the Work of Jesus Christ. Luther sees this as the central section in the Articles. Hence why this Article is called, “The Chief Article.” All other articles in the Second Part are threats to the Chief Article. The Third Part of the Smalcald Articles are the consequences of the Second Part.

### *Article I: The Chief Article*

1. Read Paragraphs 1-3. Each paragraph lays out the truth of God’s salvation for us in Jesus Christ. What do these paragraphs teach us? What Scriptures are quoted?
2. Read paragraph 4. How does one receive the work of Jesus? What Scriptures are quoted to show how we receive Jesus’ work?
3. Read paragraph 5. Can anything be surrendered on this point? Even though what else falls? What Scriptures are shown with this? If this is given up, what is lost?

## *Article II: The Mass*

The first abuse that goes against the chief article is the Mass. Here we understand Mass as the abuses that have been attached to the Lord's Supper and not the Lord's Supper itself. What are some abuses listed?

1. Read paragraphs 1-3. The abuses of the Mass are given. What are they? What are the two points that Luther brings up to show that the Mass is a human invention?
2. Read paragraphs 4-6. How should the Sacrament of the Altar be given? How should the teaching of the Mass be taught and if taught, what will happen to the Mass? Why should the Mass be abandoned?
3. Read paragraph 7. Luther refers that the Mass is treated among the papists as a human work for God, much how today people state baptism is a work for God that we do. What practice does Luther bring up that points to this?

4. Read paragraph 8-10. How is the Sacrament to be used? Is it an individual thing? (we can note topics such as online communion and communion only for the couple at a wedding.) What does Luther conclude about this point of the Mass?
  
5. Read paragraphs 11-15. Luther states that the dragon's tail is able to slip in once the head of the snake that is the mass squeezes through. What is the first abuse listed in these paragraphs? How does purgatory attack the chief article? Do they read the Church Fathers rightly on purgatory? Luther also attacks relics, why?
  
6. Read paragraphs 16-17. What "signs and wonders" have happened to convince people that the Mass should be done? Here we get a first sign of Luther's attack on Enthusiasm. Establishing Divine truth outside God's Word.
  
7. Read paragraphs 18-20. Pilgrimages are attacking the Chief Article. Why? What are some modern pilgrimages for us that make people think God is now pleased with them?

8. Read paragraphs 21-23. Monastic life and relics are now attacked as against the Chief article. How do these overturn what Christ has done and the confidence we are to have in Jesus?
  
9. Read paragraph 24. Finally, indulgences are against the chief article. How do indulgences work? And how do they overturn the Gospel?
  
10. Read paragraphs 25-29. Here we get the invocation of Saints that Luther added to these articles after editing them. He attaches them to the abuses listed with the Mass since during the service of the Mass the Saints were invoked and still are!

### *Article III: Chapters and Cloisters*

Chapters and Cloisters refers to the life of a monk or a nun. There are many orders of them, and still are today. Luther was an Augustinian Monk, coming from the order that St. Augustine help establish. Here Luther reflects on his life as a monk and looks back on that time realizing how much goes against the Chief Article. Who would know better about this than him?

1. Read paragraphs 1-2. What were chapters and cloisters originally made for? (Go into a brief history of the monasteries). Was this a good thing? What does Luther want them to do again? Note that today modern versions of chapters and cloisters are colleges. How have we made a secular version of chapters and colleges that drives people away from families and from the faith?
2. What should happen to the monasteries if they will not serve a better purpose? How do they reject the common life and also interfere with the Chief Article?

### *Article IV: The Papacy*

Perhaps no other article in the entire Book of Concord drips with as much passion as does this article. Here Luther sees the Papacy as the reason behind the first two articles and why so much discord and evil pervades the church. He flat out states that the Papacy is the Antichrist and that the history of the Church shows this.

What is Antichrist? Can we still say the Pope today is the Anthichrist? Quotes from some Church Fathers on 2 Thessalonians.

1. Read paragraphs 1-3. What does the Pope claim that Luther says from Scripture should not be? How should Christians relate to the Pope? Remember how Christ told the apostles that they should not be lords over one another. What has the Pope's actions caused for the church at large?
2. Read paragraphs 4-6. What does the Pope claim for himself that belongs only to Christ? Has the Church always had the pope? Do Christian in the East submit to him? What is Luther's judgment on the existence of the Pope?
3. Read paragraphs 7-8. Luther conjectures what might happen if the Pope dismissed his divine prerogatives, what would happen? Would he do this? Even if this did happen and should happen,

what does Luther see happening in the Church with sects? Note here that Luther is thinking of Enthusiasm. If the pope steps down, there would only be just thousands of popes because of the desire for people to see themselves as head.

4. Read paragraphs 9-11. Who does Luther see as the head of the Church? How do fellow brothers stand in the Office then? Why do we order pastors (think senior and associate)? Luther notes that the Church has done this before in Alexandria. What does this prove about the Papacy? What do even Muslims allow that the Papacy doesn't?
  
5. Read paragraphs 12-14. What does the Pope claim? Where does Luther claim this authority really comes from? What does the Pope teach and what does he ignore? In all of this, the Pope proves himself against Christ and in the place of Christ. What is he?
  
6. Read paragraphs 15-16. Luther jokes that the council will have enough to condemn in what he just says. Why? What does Luther place his hope in? What does Luther realize about those who attend the council, who will they stand before this time?

## The Third Part

The Third Part moves into the consequences of the Second Part. Here is what happens and what we believe when we hold fast to the Second Part. Luther notes that the Pope and his supporters will have not a care for these articles because they deny the Second Part and only care about money and power.

### *Article I: Sin*

1. Read paragraph 1. Luther defines original sin. What is it? His Roman opponents denied that the inclination to sin is sin. But Luther here strongly supports it.
2. Read paragraph 2. Original Sin leads to the fruit of sin. Where does the Bible show us where the fruit of sin comes from? What are the fruits of sin?
3. Read paragraph 3. Original Sin is such a deep corruption that we would never know about it from reason. (discuss what some people think murdering is). How can we know about original sin? What passages does Luther bring up? This leads Luther to condemn the following sentences as condemnations.

4. Read paragraphs 4-11 but stop at each one to discuss. Each of the following paragraphs discuss errors that people use when discussing sin. Any catch your eye or sound familiar? Paragraph 11 gives us Luther's rounding condemnation of each. What does Luther say is a consequence of believing the lies about paragraphs 4-10? Note also the realization that sin kills the soul and not just the body.

## *Article II: The Law*

1. Read paragraphs 1-2. Luther gets into the purpose of God's Law. He notes that God did not get it so we can prove our goodness. First, what does the law work as? Did this work? Why? Luther notes that the Law even makes us worse! Not because the Law is bad, but we are. Those who are disgustingly wicked even look to break the law because they hate God.
2. Read paragraph 3. The others become blind and try to do what with the Law?
3. Read paragraphs 4-5. Since the Curb of God's law fails, what does this lead to with the Chief purpose of God's law? Why did God give the law? Once the purpose of the law is realized, what does that do to our sinful hearts? What does the Law bring as Luther quotes from Romans?

### *Article III: Repentance*

1. Read paragraphs 1-3. The law cannot save sinners. The law drives us to what, which Luther calls God's thunderbolt? What does God's law create in us? Is this something we manufacture or is done to us? Even if we are good and righteous, what does the law say?
  
2. Read paragraphs 4-6. Here we see the interplay between Law and Gospel. The law tears down sinners and terrifies them of God's righteous wrath over their sin. What does the New Testament immediately add? Why is it immediately? Jesus says to do what? Why do we need the law and be told that we are sinners? It is so that we can be prepared for the \_\_\_\_\_ to receive \_\_\_\_\_ and to expect and accept from Him the \_\_\_\_\_.
  
3. Read paragraphs 7-9. If the Law comes alone, what happens to us? What does the Gospel give and where does the Gospel come? Note that again Luther is greasing the wheels for Enthusiasm which will not say Word and Sacrament.

4. Read paragraphs 10-18. Luther describes and condemns the false repentance of the Papists (Roman Catholics). Since they don't know about sin rightly, neither can they know repentance. What does this wrong headed idea about repentance lead to? How do Roman Catholics divide up Repentance? Why three parts? What is then given after they truly confess? Note that this is not the Gospel. There is no mention of who in all of this?
  
5. Read paragraphs 19-27. What is the procedure for Confession in the Papist church? What is lacking about that procedure? What is the result of the Roman position on Repentance? In order to give comfort, the Papists introduce indulgences to the church? Does this work? What is the problem?
  
6. Read paragraphs 28-39. Luther reflects a bit on his experience as a monk. What was it like? Did their efforts work? What do they hear from St. John the Baptist? How does St. Paul go about it? What does true Repentance produce?

7. Read paragraphs 40-45. Luther now gets to how repentance truly is. How long does repentance go for? Luther aims his cannon both at Rome and the other reformers. What does he aim at? What is the concern if we live in open manifest sin that refuses God's Word? Luther balances this in the end with two bible points, what are they?

### *Article IV: The Gospel*

Luther here then moves into the remedy that the Law and Repentance move us toward, the Gospel.

1. Read the article. Does the Gospel come from only one way? Where does the grace upon grace look like in our lives? Luther lists four main ways in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is delivered. What are they? Notice that all of these ways are outside of ourselves, unlike the enthusiasts.

*Article V: Baptism*

1. Read the article on Baptism. What is Baptism? Who is working in baptism? What does baptism give? How does baptism work? Should infants be baptized? Who do we disagree with and why?

*Article VI: The Sacrament of the Altar*

1. Read the Article. What is the Sacrament? If the wicked approach the table not believing in the Word, do they receive the body and blood if they partake? (faith doesn't make the sacrament, the Word does). Do people receive the Sacrament in one kind? Why does the institution of Jesus matter? What does Luther have to say about transubstantiation? What Scripture does Luther use?

*Article VII: The Keys*

1. Read the Article. What are the Keys? Who gets the keys? What sins get forgiven? Who here is Luther aiming his sights on with who gets the keys?

### *Article VIII: Confession*

1. Read paragraphs 1-6. Extending the discussion on the previous article. Luther here talks about what we call Private Confession and Absolution. Does Luther want this still in the church? Why? Here Luther finally makes clear his opponents on his mind from the start: Enthusiasts. Luther drops name drops Thomas Munzer who led the peasants revolt in 1525. He claimed to speak for God and led a revolt and ten of thousands were slaughtered as a result. Luther notes that enthusiasm is not just a problem in the reformers but sees in it the Pope. There is no difference then between Protestants and the Pope. They both are two sides of the same coin. Luther sees demonic inspiration here. Who were the first enthusiasts?
  
2. Read paragraphs 7-13. Even if people believe before being baptized, where has this come from? What example from the Bible does Luther give? What must first come to someone before they believe? Luther sees Enthusiasm as the chief heresy that inspires even the Pope and Islam. How does God only wish to deal with us? If we find God outside his Word and Sacraments, who have we really found? How does the Holy Spirit work?

### *Article IX: Excommunication*

1. Read the Article. In Luther's Day there were two forms of excommunication. The Major Ban and the Minor Ban. Luther here calls it the Greater Excommunication. Essentially, this marked you for non-existence. If declared a heretic, you had no protection under the law. People could do anything to you and there would be no repercussions. The minor/lesser excommunication is what Luther deems to be the true form of excommunication that God has given to his church. What is it? What is the purpose of excommunication? How should it be practiced today?

*Article X: Ordination and the Call*

1. Read the Article. Luther here focuses on ordination and call. Who has the right to ordain pastors? For order and love, how does Luther say it should be done? But is it necessary? The Bishops have neglected their duty, so what should the congregations present do? What does Luther show to explain this? Why do we need called pastors?

*Article XI: The Marriage of Priests*

1. Read the Article. What does the Church not have the authority to undo? What is Natural Law? (Sometimes called God's Order). What is the teaching of demons? What Scripture does Luther quote?

## *Article XII: The Church*

1. Who is not the Church? Who is the Church? Who knows what the Church is? Where does our Holiness come from? Why does this matter? What is the Hidden/Revealed Church?

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

1. Read the Article. Luther wants to state clearly what justification is. How do we receive salvation? Even if the remnants of our sin remain, how will God treat us? What follows our salvation? Is our sin still counted in our good works now? Why? What makes our works good? What must follow faith? Will a Christian want to do good works? Note that this is third use of the law!

### *Article XIV: Monastic Vows*

1. Read the Article. Luther here calls back to his life as a monk. What do Monastic vows reject? If they reject the chief article, what should we do with them? What do some claim equal to monastic vows? What is the problem with this?



## **Immediate reception of the Smalcald Articles**

The Smalcald League met in February of 1537 to decide and adopt a formal document to present at the Church Council.

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, sadly, Luther's health took a turn. The Kidney Stone that plagued him completely blocked his urinary tract and Luther quickly succumbed to the sickness. By February 14<sup>th</sup>, many considered Luther to be at death's door. Luther's Prince, John Frederick, was kind to give Luther his own coach to make it back home.

It appears that the mountainous terrain and rough medieval coaches was enough to clear the stone from Luther, 11 miles after leaving and he sent a message to his wife and family saying that "I was able to relieve himself nearly a gallon." Though he recovered, he was in no shape to return to the proceedings back at Smalcald. Before he had left, Luther had presented the Smalcald Articles and had fixed his name to them as well as 43 other signers, which began its trend as a confessional document.

As Luther was disposed, this created its own pressure back at Smalcald. Prince John Frederick and Prince Philip Hesse were divided on using Luther's document. Hesse and Melanchthon thought that Luther was too sharp and instead were pushing to just present the Augsburg Confession and Apology at the Council in Mantua.

Besides this thought, both Hesse and Melanchthon were wanting to be appease the southern Germans, who disagreed with Luther on the Lord's Supper and took Zwinglian views. They thought leaving the confession more vague would allow for more people to join the Smalcald League, to increase political and military support. Sadly, Melanchthon would continue to cause doctrinal differences and appeasements as he continued on, especially after Luther died that would lead the struggles between Lutherans and Calvinists that would finally be resolved in the formula of Concord in 1577 and with the Book of Concord's publishing in 1580.

But Luther's departure from the Smalcald meeting, as well as thoughts of his impending death gave the Smalcald Articles great symbolic power. And though Melanchthon and Hesse did not want to adopt them, they could not ignore them. And so to maneuver around them, Hesse and Melanchthon found parliamentary ways to prevent the Smalcald Articles from even being brought to the floor.

In the end, it was decided to go ahead and adopt the Augsburg Confession and the Apology as the document to be presented at the General Church Council in Mantua. But tacked on was a desire for Melanchthon to add a "29<sup>th</sup> Article" to the Augsburg Confession by writing a treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, which is another document in the Book of Concord.

Luther's Smalcald Articles were left in the air. The Smalcald League did not adopt them. John Frederick was disappointed in this, but still as Luther's last will and testimony had them published. Because 44 people had affixed their signature to them stating this was their confession of faith as well, this began a process that would continue and grow. From the time the Smalcald Articles were published to the public in 1538, the people loved them. Though they were not adopted at the council, the Articles became a cherished document to the laity and many pastors. This would continue to grow.

In the end, the proceedings to adopt a position and document at the Smalcald Meeting in February of 1537 came to nothing. In December of 1536, Pope Paul III decided that Mantua was not a good meeting place and decided to move the location, which was not stated where it would be. With this, the Lutherans, knowing that the council would not listen to them but had already decided to rebuke them prior to the council, decided to not attend. The Great Church Council of Mantua 1537 would never happen. The Council would happen though, in 1545-1563, in the City of Trent. Lutherans were not invited to attend and the Roman Catholic Church was born.

## Legacy of the Smalcald Articles

When Luther had the Smalcald Articles published in 1538 to the public, they were instantly recognized as a faithful witness to the truth. Many pastors and laity held them in high esteem and professed that they confessed them too.

What the Public loved was how Luther saw theological issues connected to the common life and faith of every day Christians. A good reminder that in everything, Luther saw himself as a pastor to Christ's sheep and cared very much about their wellbeing, more so than the doctors theologians and politicians that he often found himself arguing with.

We see this in the preface to the Articles that he added before their publication in 1538. Luther in the preface mentions political strife, greed, lavish living at the expense of others, gluttony, gambling, over consumption, refusal to obey authority, and extortion. In particular, Luther emphasized in them that Christians should have modest and moderate lifestyles, not having wealth nor using it to parade themselves as Luther saw as the habit of other pastors who cared more about pomp than delivery of God's Word. This connected with many, especially among the commoners.

As Prince John Frederick drew near to death in 1554, he ordered the Smalcald Articles to be printed as part of his last will and testament. He wasn't alone in this. By the year 1577, the Formula of Concord, written by Martin Chemnitz (who is the most important Lutheran in the years after Luther's death. He lived from November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1522 and died on April 8<sup>th</sup> 1586. We will hear from him more when we cover the Formula of Concord.).

But Chemnitz stated that the Smalcald Articles were regarded without qualification in every Lutheran Church/Congregation because of how well they were taken. This marked it for easy Confessional Standard when the Book of Concord was published as the Official Teaching of the Lutheran Church in 1580.