

With the Same Heart

An overview of the Book of Concord

Session 6 - The Smalcald Articles



Warm up question

When in your life has a seeming failure turned out to be a success later on?



The Setting

About 6 years had passed since the Apology of the Augsburg Confession had been written. At this point, Lutherans are distinctly Lutheran both in terms of religion and in terms of political affiliation. There are sub states within and throughout Germany that align themselves with Luther. These Lutheran states have joined forces both politically and militarily as the “Schmalkaldic League” under the leadership of a Saxon elector (a political title) named John Frederick who himself is a patron of Luther.

- *Question:*
- *What do you think the Lutherans were feeling and thinking?*



Asking Luther to Write

John Frederick asked Luther to write up some articles that would be used as the theological basis of the Schmalkaldic League. This was an interesting move as these articles would be written by the more popular Luther rather than the more diplomatic Melanchthon. Luther did write the articles but due to a kidney stone attack was not able to present them to the League.

The League, however, for unreported reasons did not choose to adopt the Articles as their own. This may have been due to Melanchthon who was present at the meeting, advising against it.

- *Question:*
- *Why do you think the League wanted something more than the Augsburg documents?*



Structure

The Smalcald Articles are written in three parts. The first part discusses the basics of Christian doctrine about the Triune God. The second part begins with a clear exposition on the Son of God, Jesus, but then drifts away into sub articles on the Mass, Chapters and Cloisters (monastic life), and the Papacy. The third part goes through 15 sub articles on various points of disagreement with the Roman Catholic church, all of which are at some length discussed in the Augsburg documents. Rather than being “new” information, these articles are restated points from Dr. Luther himself.

- *Question:*
- *What items of Christian theology do you think are worth restating today?*



From Luther's Preface

“I have accordingly compiled these articles and presented them to our side. They have also been accepted and unanimously confessed by our side, and it has been resolved that, in case the Pope with his adherents should ever be so bold as seriously and in good faith, without lying and cheating, to hold a truly free [legitimate] Christian Council (as, indeed, he would be in duty bound to do), they be publicly delivered in order to set forth the Confession of our Faith.”

- *Question:*
- *Luther was hoping for a Council to be held concerning these points.*



All of Part 1

Treats of the Sublime Articles Concerning the Divine Majesty, as:

I. That Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct persons in one divine essence and nature, are one God, who has created heaven and earth.

II. That the Father is begotten of no one; the Son of the Father; the Holy Ghost proceeds from Father and Son.

III. That not the Father nor the Holy Ghost but the Son became man.

IV. That the Son became man in this manner, that He was conceived, without the cooperation of man, by the Holy Ghost, and was born of the pure, holy [and always] Virgin Mary. Afterwards He suffered, died, was buried, descended to hell, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of God, will come to judge the quick and the dead, etc. as the Creed of the Apostles, as well as that of St. Athanasius, and the Catechism in common use for children, teach.

Concerning these articles there is no contention or dispute, since we on both sides confess them. Therefore it is not necessary now to treat further of them.

- *Question:*

- *This Part is essentially creedal, stating a beginning point for the articles. What do you notice that is similar or different from the Creeds?*



From Part Two

Part two includes three sub articles, one on the Mass, another on monastic life, and another on the Papacy itself. This is taken from the third sub article which contains a very explosive article of the Lutheran faith - that the Pope is the antichrist.

- “Therefore the Church can never be better governed and preserved than if we all live under one head, Christ, and all the bishops equal in office (although they be unequal in gifts), be diligently joined in unity of doctrine, faith, Sacraments, prayer, and works of love, etc., as St. Jerome writes that the priests at Alexandria together and in common governed the churches, as did also the apostles, and afterwards all bishops throughout all Christendom, until the Pope raised his head above all.
- This teaching shows forcefully that the Pope is the very Antichrist, who has exalted himself above, and opposed himself against Christ because he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power, which, nevertheless, is nothing, and is neither ordained nor commanded by God. This is, properly speaking to exalt himself above all that is called God as Paul says, 2 Thess. 2, 4. Even the Turks or the Tartars, great enemies of Christians as they are, do not do this, but they allow whoever wishes to believe in Christ, and take bodily tribute and obedience from Christians.
- The Pope, however, prohibits this faith, saying that to be saved a person must obey him.”

• *Question:*

- *How would you restate what it means for Luther here to say that the pope “is the very Antichrist”?*



From Part Three

Part Three goes into 15 separate articles, much like Augsburg. The longest of these articles is “On Repentance”, an excerpt below:

This, then, is what it means to begin true repentance; and here man must hear such a sentence as this: You are all of no account, whether you be manifest sinners or saints [in your own opinion]; you all must become different and do otherwise than you now are and are doing [no matter what sort of people you are], whether you are as great, wise, powerful, and holy as you may. Here no one is [righteous, holy], godly, etc.

But to this office the New Testament immediately adds the consolatory promise of grace through the Gospel, which must be believed, as Christ declares, Mark 1,15: Repent and believe the Gospel, i.e., become different and do otherwise, and believe My promise. And John, preceding Him, is called a preacher of repentance, however, for the remission of sins, i.e., John was to accuse all, and convict them of being sinners, that they might know what they were before God, and might acknowledge that they were lost men, and might thus be prepared for the Lord, to receive grace, and to expect and accept from Him the remission of sins. Thus also Christ Himself says, Luke 24, 47: Repentance and remission of sins must be preached in My name among all nations.

But whenever the Law alone, without the Gospel being added exercises this its office there is [nothing else than] death and hell, and man must despair, like Saul and Judas; as St. Paul, Rom. 7, 10, says: Through sin the Law killeth. On the other hand, the Gospel brings consolation and remission not only in one way, but through the word and Sacraments, and the like, as we shall hear afterward in order that [thus] there is with the Lord plenteous redemption, as Ps. 130, 7 says against the dreadful captivity of sin.

- *Question:*
- *What does this tell you about repentance?*



Next Time - Another Short Break

We will be taking a short break next week due to PJ being in Illinois for Kristin and Colby's wedding.

