

# The Smalcald Articles.

**Articles of Christian Doctrine which were to have been presented on our part to the Council, if any had been assembled at Mantua or elsewhere, indicating what we could accept or yield, and what we could not. Written by Dr. Martin Luther in the Year 1537.**

**Preface 1]** Since Pope Paul III convoked a Council last year, to assemble at Mantua about Whitsuntide, and afterwards transferred it from Mantua, so that it is not yet known where he will or can fix it, and we on our part either had to expect that we would be summoned also to the Council or [to fear that we would] be condemned unsummoned, **I was directed to compile and collect the articles of our doctrine [in order that it might be plain] in case of deliberation as to what and how far we would be both willing and able to yield to the Papists, and in what points we intended to persevere and abide to the end.**

2] 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.**

3] But though the Romish court is so dreadfully afraid of a free Christian Council, and shuns the light so shamefully, that it has [entirely] removed, even from those who are on its side, the hope that it will ever permit a free Council, much less that it will itself hold one, whereat, as is just, they [many Papists] are greatly offended and have no little trouble on that account [are disgusted with this negligence of the Pope], since they notice thereby that the Pope would rather see all Christendom perish and all souls damned than suffer either himself or his adherents to be reformed even a little, and his [their] tyranny to be limited, nevertheless **I have determined meanwhile to publish these articles in plain print, so that, should I die before there would be a Council (as I fully expect and hope, because the knaves who flee the light and shun the day take such wretched pains to delay and hinder the Council), those who live and remain after me may have my testimony and confession to produce, in addition to the Confession which I have issued previously, whereby up to this time I have abided, and, by God's grace, will abide.**

...10] But to return to the subject. **I verily desire to see a truly Christian Council [assembled some time], in order that many matters and persons might be helped. Not that we need It, for our churches are now, through God's grace, so enlightened and equipped with the pure Word and right use of the Sacraments, with knowledge of the various callings and of right works, that we on our part ask for no Council, and on such points have nothing better to hope or expect from a Council. ....**

15] O Lord Jesus Christ, do Thou Thyself convoke a Council, and deliver Thy servants by Thy glorious advent! The Pope and his adherents are done for; they will have none of Thee. Do Thou, then, help us, who are poor and needy, who sigh to Thee, and beseech Thee earnestly, according to the grace which Thou hast given us, through Thy Holy Ghost who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Father, blessed forever. Amen.

## The Smalcald Articles.

**THE FIRST PART: Treats of the Sublime Articles Concerning the Divine Majesty...**

**THE SECOND PART: Treats of the Articles which Refer to the Office and Work of Jesus Christ, or Our Redemption.**

[Article I.] The first and chief article is this, 1] That **Jesus Christ**, our God and Lord, died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification, Rom. 4, 25. ....

**Article II: Of the Mass.**

*Of the Invocation of Saints.*

**Article III: Of Chapters and Cloisters.**

**Article IV: Of the Papacy.**

**THE THIRD PART OF THE ARTICLES.**

**I. Of Sin**

**II. Of the Law**

**III. Of Repentance.**

*Of the False Repentance of the Papists.*

**IV. Of the Gospel.**

**V. Of Baptism.**

**VI. Of the Sacrament of the Altar.**

**VII. Of the Keys.**

**VIII. Of Confession.**

**IX. Of Excommunication.**

**X. Of Ordination and the Call.**

**XI. Of the Marriage of Priests.**

**XII. Of the Church.**

**XIII. How One is Justified before God, and of Good Works.**

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## THE FIRST PART

### 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.

## THE SECOND PART

### Treats of the Articles which Refer to the Office and Work of Jesus Christ, or Our Redemption.

**The first and chief article** is this, **1]** *That Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification, Rom. 4, 25.* **2]** *And He alone is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, John 1, 29; and God has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all, Is. 53, 6.* **3]** *Likewise: All have sinned and are justified without merit [freely, and without their own works or merits] by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood, Rom. 3, 23f* **4]** Now, since it is necessary to believe this, and it cannot be otherwise acquired or apprehended by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us as St. Paul says, Rom. 3, 28: *For we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law.* Likewise 3, 26: *That He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Christ.* **5]** Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered [nor can anything be granted or permitted contrary to the same], even though heaven and earth, and whatever will not abide, should sink to ruin. *For there is none other name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved, says Peter, Acts 4, 12. And with His stripes we are healed, Is. 53, 5.* And upon this article all things depend which we teach and practice in opposition to the Pope, the devil, and the [whole] world. Therefore, we must be sure concerning this doctrine, and not doubt; for otherwise all is lost, and the Pope and devil and all things gain the victory and suit over us.

### Article II: Of the Mass.

**1]** That **the Mass in the Papacy** must be **the greatest and most horrible abomination**, as it directly and powerfully conflicts with this chief article, and yet above and before all other popish idolatries it has been the chief and most specious. For it has been held that this sacrifice or work of the Mass, even though it be rendered by a wicked [and abandoned] scoundrel, frees men from sins, both in this life and also in purgatory, while only the Lamb of God shall and must do this, as has been said above. **Of this article nothing is to be surrendered or conceded, because the first article does not allow it.**

**2]** If, perchance, there were reasonable Papists we might speak moderately and in a friendly way, thus: first, why they so rigidly uphold the Mass. For it is but a pure invention of men, and has not been commanded by God; and every invention of man we may [safely] discard, as Christ declares, Matt. 15, 9: *In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

**3]** **Secondly.** It is an unnecessary thing, which **can be omitted without sin and danger.**

4] **Thirdly.** The Sacrament can be received in a better and more blessed way [more acceptable to God], (yea, the only blessed way), **according to the institution of Christ....**

6] **Fourthly.** Since such innumerable and unspeakable abuses have arisen in the whole world from **the buying and selling of masses**, the Mass should by right be relinquished, ...

7] **Fifthly.** ... **a work of men (even of wicked scoundrels), by which one attempts to reconcile himself and others to God, and to obtain and merit the remission of sins and grace ...**

8] **But if any one should advance the pretext that as an act of devotion he wishes to administer the Sacrament, or Communion, to himself, he is not in earnest** [he would commit a great mistake, and would not be speaking seriously and sincerely].

10] **This article concerning the Mass will be the whole business of the Council. ...**

11] *In addition to all this, this dragon's tail, [I mean] the Mass, has begotten a numerous vermin-brood of manifold idolatries.*

12] **First, purgatory.** Here they carried their trade into purgatory by masses for souls, and vigils, and weekly, monthly, and yearly celebrations of obsequies, and finally by the Common Week and All Souls Day, by soul-baths so that the Mass is used almost alone for the dead, although Christ has instituted the Sacrament alone for the living. ...

16] **Secondly.** From this it has followed that evil spirits have perpetrated much knavery [exercised their malice] by appearing as **the souls of the departed, and with unspeakable [horrible] lies and tricks demanded masses, vigils, pilgrimages, and other alms.** 17] All of which we had to receive as articles of faith, and to live accordingly; and the Pope confirmed these things, as also the Mass and all other abominations. Here, too, there is no [cannot and must not be any] yielding or surrendering.

18] **Thirdly. [Hence arose] the pilgrimages. ...**

21] **Fourthly. Fraternities [or societies],** in which cloisters, chapters, vicars have assigned and communicated (by a legal contract and sale) all masses and good works, etc., ...

22] **Fifthly. The relics,** in which there are found so many falsehoods and tomfooleries concerning the bones of dogs and horses, that even the devil has laughed at such rascalities...

24] **Sixthly.** Here belong **the precious indulgences** granted (but only for money) both to the living and the dead, by which the miserable [sacrilegious and accursed] Judas, or Pope, has sold the merit of Christ, together with the superfluous merits of all saints and of the entire Church...

#### *Of the Invocation of Saints.*

25] The invocation of saints is also **one of the abuses of Antichrist** conflicting with the chief article, and destroys the knowledge of Christ. **Neither is it commanded nor counseled, nor has it any example [or testimony] in Scripture,** and even though it were a precious thing, as it is not [while, on the contrary, it is a most harmful thing], **in Christ we have everything a thousandfold better** [and surer, so that we are not in need of calling upon the saints].

26] And although the angels in heaven pray for us (as Christ Himself also does), as also do the saints on earth, and perhaps also in heaven, yet it does not follow thence that we should invoke and adore the angels and saints, and fast, hold festivals, celebrate Mass in their honor, make offerings, and establish churches, altars, divine worship, and in still other ways serve them,

and regard them as helpers in need [as patrons and intercessors], and divide among them all kinds of help, and ascribe to each one a particular form of assistance, as the Papists teach and do. For this is idolatry, and such honor belongs alone to God. **27]** For as a Christian and saint upon earth you can pray for me, not only in one, but in many necessities. But for this reason I am not obliged to adore and invoke you, and celebrate festivals, fast, make oblations, hold masses for your honor [and worship], and put my faith in you for my salvation. I can in other ways indeed honor, love, and thank you in Christ. **28]** If now such idolatrous honor were withdrawn from angels and departed saints, the remaining honor would be without harm and would quickly be forgotten. For when advantage and assistance, both bodily and spiritual, are no more to be expected, the saints will not be troubled [the worship of the saints will soon vanish], neither in their graves nor in heaven. For without a reward or out of pure love no one will much remember, or esteem, or honor them [bestow on them divine honor].

**29]** In short, the Mass itself and anything that proceeds from it, and anything that is attached to it, we cannot tolerate, but must condemn, in order that we may retain the holy Sacrament pure and certain, according to the institution of Christ, employed and received through faith.

### **Article III: Of Chapters and Cloisters. ...**

### **Article IV: Of the Papacy.**

**1]** That the Pope is not, according to divine law or according to the Word of God the head of all Christendom (for this [name] belongs to One only, whose name is Jesus Christ), but **is only the bishop and pastor of the Church at Rome**, and of those who voluntarily or through a human creature (that is, a political magistrate) have attached themselves to him, to be Christians, not under him as a lord, but with him as brethren [colleagues] and comrades, as the ancient councils and the age of St. Cyprian show.

**2]** But to-day none of the bishops dare to address **the Pope as brother** as was done at that time [in the age of Cyprian]; but they must call him most gracious lord, even though they be kings or emperors. This [Such arrogance] we will not, cannot, must not take upon our conscience [with a good conscience approve]. Let him, however, who will do it, do so without us [at his own risk].

**3]** Hence it follows that **all things which the Pope, from a power so false, mischievous, blasphemous, and arrogant, has done and undertaken, have been and still are purely diabolical affairs and transactions** (with the exception of such things as pertain to the secular government, where God often permits much good to be effected for a people, even through a tyrant and [faithless] scoundrel) for the ruin of the entire holy [catholic or] Christian Church (so far as it is in his power) and for the destruction of the first and chief article concerning the redemption made through Jesus Christ.

**4]** For all his bulls and books are extant, in which he roars like a lion (as the angel in Rev. 12 depicts him, [crying out] that no Christian can be saved unless he obeys him and is subject to him in all things that he wishes, that he says, and that he does. All of which amounts to nothing less than saying: **Although you believe in Christ, and have in Him [alone] everything that is necessary to salvation, yet it is nothing and all in vain unless you regard [have and worship] me as your god, and be subject and obedient to me.** And yet it is manifest that the holy Church has been without the Pope for at least more than five hundred years, and that even to the present day the churches of the Greeks and of many other languages neither have been nor are

yet under the Pope. **5]** Besides, as often remarked, it is a human figment which is not commanded, and is unnecessary and useless; for the holy Christian [or catholic] Church can exist very well without such a head, and it would certainly have remained better [purer, and its career would have been more prosperous] if such a head had not been raised up by the devil. **6] And the Papacy is also of no use in the Church, because it exercises no Christian office; and therefore it is necessary for the Church to continue and to exist without the Pope.**

**7]** And supposing that the Pope would yield this point, so as not to be supreme by divine right or from Gods command, but that we must have [there must be elected] a [certain] head, to whom all the rest adhere [as their support] in order that the [concord and] unity of Christians may be preserved against sects and heretics, and that such a head were chosen by men, and that it were placed within the choice and power of men to change or remove this head, just as the Council of Constance adopted nearly this course with reference to the Popes, deposing three and electing a fourth; supposing, I say, that the Pope and See at Rome would yield and accept this (which, nevertheless, is impossible; for thus he would have to suffer his entire realm and estate to be overthrown and destroyed, with all his rights and books, a thing which, to speak in few words, he cannot do), nevertheless, even in this way Christianity would not be helped, but many more sects would arise than before.

**8]** For since men would have to be subject to this head, not from God's command, but from their personal good pleasure, it would easily and in a short time be despised, and at last retain no member; neither would it have to be forever confined to Rome or any other place, but it might be wherever and in whatever church God would grant a man fit for the [taking upon him such a great] office. Oh, the complicated and confused state of affairs [perplexity] that would result!

**9] 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.

**10]** 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. **11]** 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.

**12]** The Pope, however, prohibits this faith, saying that to be saved a person must obey him. This we are unwilling to do, even though on this account we must die in God's name. **13]** This all proceeds from the fact that the Pope has wished to be called the supreme head of the Christian Church by divine right. Accordingly he had to make himself equal and superior to Christ, and had to cause himself to be proclaimed the head and then the lord of the Church, and finally of the whole world, and simply God on earth, until he has dared to issue commands even to the angels in heaven. **14]** And when we distinguish the Pope's teaching from, or measure and hold it against, Holy Scripture, it is found [it appears plainly] that the Pope's teaching, where it is best, has been taken from the imperial and heathen law and treats of political matters and decisions or rights, as the Decretals show; furthermore, it teaches of ceremonies concerning churches, garments, food, persons and [similar] puerile, theatrical and comical things without measure, but

in all these things nothing at all of Christ, faith, and the commandments of God. Lastly, it is nothing else than the devil himself, because above and against God he urges [and disseminates] his [papal] falsehoods concerning masses, purgatory, the monastic life, one's own works and [fictitious] divine worship (for this is the very Papacy [upon each of which the Papacy is altogether founded and is standing]), and condemns, murders and tortures all Christians who do not exalt and honor these abominations [of the Pope] above all things. Therefore, just as little as we can worship the devil himself as Lord and God, we can endure his apostle, the Pope, or Antichrist, in his rule as head or lord. For to lie and to kill, and to destroy body and soul eternally, that is wherein his papal government really consists, as I have very clearly shown in many books.

**15] In these four articles they will have enough to condemn in the Council. For they cannot and will not concede us even the least point in one of these articles.** Of this we should be certain, and animate ourselves with [be forewarned and made firm in] the hope that Christ, our Lord, has attacked His adversary, and he will press the attack home [pursue and destroy him] both by His Spirit and coming. Amen.

**Four Articles**

1. Justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ
2. The Mass, Invocation of Saints
3. Chapters and Cloisters
4. The Papacy

**16]** For in the Council we will stand not before the Emperor or the political magistrate, as at Augsburg (where the Emperor published a most gracious edict, and caused matters to be heard kindly [and dispassionately]), but [we will appear] before the Pope and devil himself, who intends to listen to nothing, but merely [when the case has been publicly announced] to condemn, to murder and to force us to idolatry. Therefore we ought not here to kiss his feet, or to say: Thou art my gracious lord, but as the angel in Zechariah 3, 2 said to Satan: *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.*

**THE THIRD PART OF THE ARTICLES.**

Concerning the following articles we may [will be able to] treat with learned and reasonable men, or among ourselves. The Pope and his [the Papal] government do not care much about these. For with them conscience is nothing, but money, [glory] honors, power are [to them] everything.

**I. Of Sin**

**II. Of the Law**

**III. Of Repentance. *Of the False Repentance of the Papists.***

**IV. Of the Gospel.**

**V. Of Baptism.**

**VI. Of the Sacrament of the Altar.**

**VII. Of the Keys.**

**VIII. Of Confession.**

**IX. Of Excommunication.**

**X. Of Ordination and the Call.**

**XI. Of the Marriage of Priests.**

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**XIII. How One is Justified before God, and of Good Works.**

**XIV. Of Monastic Vows.**

**XV. Of Human Traditions.**