



CONCORDIA

THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS



A READER'S EDITION OF THE BOOK OF CONCORD



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Second Edition

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* was released on June 25, 2005, to coincide with the 475th anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession and the 450th anniversary of the publication of the Book of Concord. Within a few months, all 40,000 copies of the first printing had been distributed. Never before in the history of English-speaking Lutheranism has there been such an overwhelming response to an edition of the Book of Concord. Deeply moving comments were received from people around the world, who indicated how helpful they found *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* to be, all for which we thank and praise God.

Dr. Uwe Siemon-Netto, Director of the Institute on Lay Vocation at Concordia Seminary and former religious affairs editor for United Press International, captured the importance of this book well when he wrote in a review:

At a time of great perplexity, Lutheranism's theological treasure has been opened to the general public. This beautifully edited and elegantly presented "Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord" is a wonderful guide out of the spiritual labyrinth created by liberal fudge on the one hand and simplistic self-righteousness on the other. Often it seemed that Lutherans had buried their assets. Now finally we have an intelligible elucidation of what they "believe, teach, and confess" and what they "reject and condemn." What emerges is an unambiguous and certain witness to the Christian faith that has at this instant been made accessible to all—Lutherans and non-Lutherans alike.

We are grateful for the concern and attention given to this second edition by the Commission on Doctrinal Review of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which offered many useful recommendations as they conducted their review of the volume. We appreciate the collegial conversation and dialogue that characterized the collaborative work that took place between Concordia Publishing House and the Commission on Doctrinal Review.

The editors offer this second edition of *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* with a renewed fervent prayer to our good and gracious God, that He would bless all those who read and study and use this book, for the sake of Christ Jesus, our Lord.

We conclude this preface to the second edition with a comment about *Concordia* from Dr. Beverly Yahnke, Executive Director of Christian Counseling Services in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who wrote:

Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions is a book of timeless wisdom prepared explicitly for these times when God and His Truth are everywhere under attack. This offering is a call to faithfulness. The text offers refreshment and renewal in the faith for those familiar with the Book of Concord and a fascinating excursion of discovery for those who are eager to know what confessional Lutheranism is all about. The introductory material and the overviews are engaging, are wonderfully written, and cultivate a vibrant understanding of the context and content of the Lutheran Confessions. Even better, the countless resource features supporting and examining each of the documents can be used easily by anyone. This is an essential companion volume for every Lutheran who owns a Bible. It will fast become a classic, as it belongs in every home and Bible Study group and on each church worker's reference shelf.

Paul T. McCain
General Editor
Reformation 2006

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

With fervent prayer we offer this edition of the Lutheran Confessions, as contained in the Book of Concord of 1580. May God use it to encourage, equip, strengthen, and preserve Christians in the one, true faith as revealed in His holy Word, the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. God grant it for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whose glory this volume is dedicated. The text of this edition is based on the English translation in the *Concordia Triglotta* by William H. T. Dau and Gerhard F. Bente.

This edition of the Book of Concord is a “reader’s edition” because it is designed to serve the needs of those who may not be familiar with the Lutheran Confessions. It is intended for use in homes, congregations, classrooms, parish halls, and any place that people gather to reflect on God’s Word and how that Word is correctly believed, taught, and confessed. We trust that the various resources and features we have included will help the reader understand the persons, places, events, and teachings discussed in these documents.

We have included a number of original commentaries and essays on the important ideas and guiding principles necessary for a proper understanding of the Lutheran Confessions. Before each individual document is a specific introduction providing its historical setting and purpose, along with an overview of the specific Confessions in this book. The reader will also find a historical timeline and pictures of the chief authors of the Lutheran Confessions. Finally, within each document, the various chapters and articles are briefly explained.

This work is a collaboration of the undersigned. With gratitude to God for the opportunity He provided to work together on this edition of the Book of Concord, we acknowledge the individual contributions made. Rev. Paul T. McCain conceived of this edition, served as General Editor, and is responsible for the Augsburg Confession, all general introductions, the specific introductions to each document and article, as well as various notes and helps. Along with various notes, Rev. Edward Engelbrecht is responsible for the planning and formatting of this edition. He worked on the Small Catechism, Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord (both the Epitome and the Solid Declaration). Rev. Robert C. Baker is responsible for the Apology to the Augsburg Confession and the charts. Dr. Gene Edward Veith is responsible for the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope.

May God the Holy Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—bless all who use this reader’s edition of the Book of Concord, strengthening and preserving them in the true faith, unto life everlasting. To God alone be the glory!

The Editors:

Paul Timothy McCain

Robert Cleveland Baker

Gene Edward Veith

Edward Andrew Engelbrecht

June 25, 2005

The 475th Anniversary of the Augsburg Confession

The 425th Anniversary of the Book of Concord



WITH INTREPID HEARTS WE BELIEVE, TEACH, AND CONFESS

A General Introduction to the Book of Concord

This declaration . . . is our faith, doctrine, and confession.
By God's grace, with intrepid hearts, we are willing to appear before
the judgment seat of Christ with this confession.

—Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, XII 40

Intrepid hearts indeed! What could possibly be so important that you would stake eternity on it? What gives a person such courage and conviction? Only one thing—the truth. This is what this book is all about, the truth of God's Word.

God's people have always spoken this way. For example, the psalmist wrote, "I will speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame" (Psalm 119:46). Peter confessed his faith when Jesus asked him what he believed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Paul wrote, "Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we also believe, and so we also speak" (2 Corinthians 4:13).

Lutherans have used the Confessions of faith contained in this book for nearly five hundred years as their public witness and testimony of what the Bible teaches. These Confessions give clear, unambiguous, and certain witness to the Christian faith. They unite all those who bear the name Lutheran and wish to be—and remain—genuinely Lutheran. That is why this book uses the word *Concordia* as a title.

The Meaning of Concordia

Concordia comes from two Latin words meaning "with" and "heart." It describes a commitment to the truth so strong and so deep, it is as if those who share it have a single heart beat. To many twenty-first-century minds, the claim that there is objective truth is regarded with deep suspicion. To suggest that there is one, and only one, absolute truth about God is regarded by many today as absurd, foolish, ridiculous, or the sign of an intolerant and weak mind. Sadly, even many modern Christians now view claims of truth and certainty with a good deal of suspicion.

But truth and falsehood are real. It is possible to know truth and it is necessary to reject all errors that contradict the truth. God reveals absolute truth in His Word,

which is precisely what the documents in the Book of Concord assert, with complete and total conviction.

The Bible is the rock-solid foundation for the documents in the Book of Concord. Christians who embrace the documents in this book as their teaching, their belief, and their confession also believe that it is possible for people to know and be certain about truth. They are convinced. They are certain. They are sure. Why? Because of the One who has called them to this conviction: the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, “If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31–32).

Genuine, Historic Lutheranism

To embrace the freedom of truth means rejecting the slavery of error. That is why this book uses two phrases to capture the essence of biblical confession: “we believe, teach, and confess” and “we reject and condemn.” One cannot believe, teach, and confess the truth without also rejecting and condemning everything that endangers or contradicts the truth. This spirit of “confessional Lutheranism” is what continues to animate people today who hold to this collection of affirmations, professions, and confessions of faith.

Not all churches that go by the name “Lutheran” still regard the Book of Concord as highly as they once did. Some prominent Lutheran Church bodies in the United States and around the world regard these statements of faith as “historically conditioned.” They say that the older confessions are not necessarily correct in what they teach about God’s Word. These churches have embraced various ecumenical agreements with non-Lutheran churches that contradict what Lutheranism has taught historically.

Confessional Lutheran churches regard these compromises not only as a compromise of historic Lutheranism, but also as an actual denial of the truth of God’s Word. (A most serious matter indeed!) It is important to keep in mind this distinction among churches that use the name “Lutheran.” This is all the more reason to make sure that these Confessions are not merely historical documents in congregations that are genuinely Lutheran. They must be well known by laypeople and church workers alike.

Historic, genuine Lutheranism holds that the Bible is actually the Word of the Living God. We believe that it is both incapable of error and free from error. We hold strongly to the Lutheran Confessions because we are absolutely convinced that these confessions of faith are a pure exposition and explanation of God’s Word. Lutherans agree with the apostle Peter, who said, “We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

When God the Holy Spirit gives the gift of trust in Jesus Christ as the Savior, this gift of faith creates a desire to confess, to bear witness, to testify, to proclaim, and to speak this faith. That is what the documents in this book are all about. They are not musty, old relics from history. They are the living confession of God’s people, who have clung to the truths in these documents for nearly five hundred years. Today, we

who hold to these Confessions make the Book of Concord our confession, our witness, our public testimony of what the Bible teaches. With Martin Luther, we say, “Here we stand. We cannot do otherwise. God help us. Amen.”

A Story of Personal Sacrifice for the Truth

The historical introductions in this book will help you understand the personal sacrifice made to achieve this “Concordia,” this harmony in the teaching of God’s Word. During the years when these Confessions were written and defended, faithful men and women of God, both laypeople and clergy, sacrificed all they had—in some cases their very lives—to defend and extend the truths of God’s holy Word as confessed by the Lutheran Church. Men died in battle fighting to defend the right to teach Lutheran precepts in classrooms and preach the Lutheran faith in pulpits. They died defending their cities and towns—and most important, their convictions—from armies of political and church leaders trying to stamp out Lutheranism forever.

For example, during the Thirty Years’ War (1618–48) Roman Catholic rulers attacked the Protestant regions of Germany with the hope of stamping out the Reformation. The battles that followed forced tens of thousands of people out of their homes. Disease and famine deepened the misery, causing a level of suffering similar to what we see today in parts of Africa. Finally, the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus II (1594–1632), led his armies to defend the Protestants. His army’s victory at the battle of Lutzen ensured the survival of the Reformation. But Gustavus himself died in the fighting. Every Lutheran who values his or her Confession of faith should remember this “Lion of the North” and thank God for his sacrifice.

The courage of the first Lutherans is awe-inspiring for us today. It is difficult for us to imagine sacrificing everything for the sake of what we believe. It is hard for us today to even imagine a situation similar to what happened to Lutherans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Today, the attitude toward truth is very much one of compromise at all costs, rather than confession at all costs. There is within many churches today a “go along to get along” attitude. This attitude was around at the time of the writing of the Lutheran Confessions as well, but was eventually resoundingly rejected.

A Book for All People

Rev. Dr. C. F. W. Walther explained how important the Book of Concord is for all Lutherans.

The Book of Concord should be in every Lutheran home. For that reason [our Church] should provide a good, inexpensive copy, and pastors should see to it that every home has one. . . . If a person isn’t familiar with this book, he’ll think, “That old book is just for pastors. I don’t have to preach. After [working] all day, I can’t sit down and study in the evening. If I read my morning and evening devotions, that’s enough.” No, that is not enough! The Lord doesn’t want us to remain children, who are blown to and fro by every wind of doctrine; instead of that, He wants us to grow in knowledge so that we can teach

others. (*Essays for the Church*, vol. 2 [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992], 51)

This is not just a book for pastors and church “professionals” or “academics.” In fact, it is important to realize that the people most directly responsible for the Lutheran Confessions were laymen, not pastors and theologians. At tremendous personal risk to their own lives, their property, and their profession, laymen boldly stepped before the emperor and the pope’s representatives. They asserted that these Confessions were their own. They did not back down or compromise. For this reason, it is unfortunate that down through the years the Book of Concord has come to be regarded more as a book for pastors and professional theologians.

Tucked into the middle of this book is the most widely used of all the Lutheran Confessions: Martin Luther’s Small Catechism. Luther wrote this document not simply as a resource for the church and school, but, first and foremost, for the head of the household. Luther intended this little book to be used by laypeople, daily, to help them remain anchored to the solid teachings of God’s holy Word, the Bible. So keep this important fact in mind: The Book of Concord exists because of the faith and conviction of laypeople, who risked their very lives in order to have these Confessions produced, published, and distributed. The Book of Concord is a book for all Christians, church workers and laypeople alike.

Christians who want to be true and faithful to the teachings of the Bible return, again and again, to this book. In these confessions of faith they find agreement, unity, and harmony in the truths of God’s Word. These documents never take the place of the Bible. They distinguish between what the Bible teaches and the false teachings of others, which undermine the use of God’s Word. They give Christians a common voice to confess their faith to the world.

Reaching out boldly with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the goal of the Lutheran Confessions. They are not to be treated like museum pieces, kept under glass as interesting curiosities. Neither are they holiday decorations taken out once a year and admired, soon to be put away and forgotten. Nor are the Lutheran Confessions clubs used to bash people or shields to prevent contact with others or trophies set on a shelf. The Lutheran Confessions are resources for extending and defending vigorously the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They are powerful tools for everyone to use, in all circumstances, for preaching, teaching, and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and all the truths of God’s Word in the church, school, home, workplace, community, and throughout the world.

Lutherans particularly enjoy “Concordia” through these confessions. United in common conviction about God’s Word, they live together with a common heartbeat, declaring to the world and to one another, “This is what we believe, teach, and confess.”



ABOUT THIS EDITION

Our text for the Book of Concord is not a brand-new translation from the original German and Latin texts. This reader's edition is a revised and updated version of the translation originally prepared by William H. T. Dau and G. Friedrich Bente for the *Concordia Triglotta*, published in 1921.

For years, readers have appreciated the *Triglotta* translation. But over time it has become less and less readable for a variety of reasons. When Dau and Bente prepared their text, high school and college Latin courses were common. The audience for their English translation was more accustomed to seeing Latin-based terms and the complex sentences preferred in Latin composition. In the past eighty years, Latin instruction has virtually disappeared and English grammatical style has trended toward more simple and direct sentences. In view of these changes, we updated Dau and Bente's fine translation for modern use.

For example, their translation, closely following Latin and German style, often piled up subordinate clauses in complex sentences. Some of these sentences made up full paragraphs or covered an entire page. We have often simplified these passages by changing the subordinate clauses into independent sentences. Then we started the main clause with *therefore*, to show the relationship between the sentences. When we could not see a clear method for updating Dau and Bente's translation, we referred to the German and Latin texts for help in providing a simpler, clearer text.

Where Dau and Bente often used Latin-based words, we have used more common English words, often updating with contemporary meanings in mind. For example, the word *remission* now means something quite different to the English reader than it did a few generations ago. Today, this term makes us think of cancer and medical treatment instead of God's mercy. Therefore, throughout the manuscript, we have changed *remission* to the more familiar word *forgiveness*.

When the German and Latin texts differed from each other or included unique passages, Dau and Bente inserted the different reading in brackets. We deleted this bracketed material in most cases and focused on providing an English version for either the Latin or the German. (See Bente's preface on p. xxiii for information on the base text of each document.) Where we did include words or passages from the German 1580 or Latin 1584 edition, we set those words or passages within ‹ ›.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

For 425 years, the Book of Concord has united and guided Lutheran congregations, schools, pastors, and teachers. Yet today, many Lutherans are virtually unaware of its existence and use. As a result, when someone mentions the Book of Concord, one often hears, “Aren’t we just supposed to follow the Bible?” as though Christians do not use other publications based on the Bible (e.g., creeds, hymnals, catechisms, devotionals). One may even hear the Book of Concord compared to documents like the Book of Mormon, as though Lutherans were trying to add new texts to the Bible.

To overcome these misunderstandings, please read “With Intrepid Hearts We Believe, Teach, and Confess” (p. xiii) and “An Overview of the Book of Concord” (p. xxx). Take note that the Book of Concord functions very much like the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds, summarizing or clarifying what the Bible teaches on controversial topics. In particular, it thoroughly teaches God’s love and forgiveness for all people based on Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection—reminding us that this is the chief teaching of the Christian faith.

Here are some suggested uses for this book:

- **Laypeople.** Every Lutheran layperson should read and understand several key documents in the Book of Concord: (1) the ecumenical creeds, (2) the Small Catechism, (3) the Large Catechism, and (4) the Augsburg Confession. These documents were written for laypeople. After reading these documents, many will want to deepen their understanding of what it means to be Lutheran. They can do this best by thoroughly reading the Book of Concord (see reading guide, pp. xxxiv–xxxvii).
- **Confirmation Teachers.** All Lutheran congregations should use Luther’s Small Catechism for the instruction of both youth and adults. Confirmation teachers should supplement and explain the Small Catechism with the Large Catechism. This is what Luther himself described in his preface to the Small Catechism (pp. 313–15).
- **Leaders of Congregations and Schools.** Pastors and teachers take their vows of service based on the Book of Concord. Therefore, those who work with them must also be familiar with this book, such as laypeople involved in the call process and serving on various boards. For example, elders’ or board meetings could begin with a brief discussion of a particular article or passage. In this way, understanding of Lutheran doctrine and practice would continually grow among the people, with the Book of Concord becoming a resource for guiding the congregation or school.
- **Pastors, Teachers, and Other Church Professionals.** When pastors and other church workers are ordained or commissioned for service in a Lutheran congregation or school, they vow that they will teach the Bible in conformity with the Book of Concord. In view of this vow, they should read and study the entire Book of Concord in college or seminary. During their ministry, they should continually refresh themselves through its

teaching and application (see the reading guide, pp. xxxiv–xxxvii). Circuit conferences, District conferences, and other gatherings are excellent opportunities for church professionals to study and reflect on the Book of Concord together. This continued study will foster unity and understanding, benefits this book has provided since the sixteenth century.

Pastors and other church professionals should also note that we have greatly enlarged the Bible reference section provided in the original Triglotta edition. The Bible references now include hundreds of biblical allusions. These references will help church professionals discover how the Reformers interpreted and applied God's Word. Preachers will be able to look up their sermon texts. They should also note the Illustrations Index, which shows how to find sermon-style illustrations used by the Reformers to teach the Christian faith.

A Word about the Annotations

For the convenience of readers who are new to the Confessions, the editors have provided annotations as introductions to the various articles. We took this idea from the famous *Altenburger Bibelwerk* (St. Louis, 1877–80) published under C. F. W. Walther. See the User's Guide on the next page to learn more about page features and editors' notes.



USER'S GUIDE

Article number → ARTICLE XII

Article heading → **The Church**

Annotation by the editor → Note: In his writings, Luther would often refer to a young child as capable of understanding doctrine better than theologians. Here Luther presents a seven-year-old child as knowing very simply and clearly that the Church consists of those who hear and follow the voice of the Good Shepherd. The Church's holiness is not found in man-made rituals and decorations, but only in the Word of God, which creates and calls forth true faith in Christ. (See AC VII/VIII; LC II, The Third Article.)

Confessional article begins

Marginal number

1 We do not agree with them that they are the Church. They are not the Church. Nor will we listen to those things that, under the name of Church, they command or forbid.

2 Thank God, <today> a seven-year-old child knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd [John 10:11–16]. For the children pray, "I believe in one holy Christian Church." This holiness does not come from albs, tonsures, long gowns, and other ceremonies they made up without Holy Scripture, but from God's Word and true faith.

< > Wording provided from a translation (in this case, a German document is clarified by wording from the Latin translation; each document's introduction describes its German or Latin base text; e.g., p. 25).

[] Reference or wording provided by an editor



AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF CONCORD

The Book of Concord contains documents Christians have used since the fourth century to explain what they believe and teach on the basis of the Holy Scriptures. First, it includes the three creeds that originated in the Ancient Church: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. Second, it contains the Reformation writings known as the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Luther's Small and Large Catechisms, and the Formula of Concord.

The Catechisms and the Smalcald Articles came from the pen of Martin Luther; the Augsburg Confession, its Apology, and the Treatise were written by Luther's co-worker, the scholarly Philip Melancthon; the Formula of Concord was given its final form chiefly by Jacob Andreae, Martin Chemnitz, and Nicholas Selnecker.

I. The Creeds

The Apostles' Creed was not composed by the apostles but is a faithful Confession of apostolic doctrine; it is a "daughter" of the creed used by early Christians in Rome. The wording of the creed, as we confess it today, can be traced to southern Gaul (France).

The Nicene Creed is spoken today in many Lutheran congregations during Communion services or festive occasions. It was formulated by the Council of Nicaea (AD 325) and revised by the Council of Constantinople (AD 381). (This popular history has been challenged. Another theory is that the creed had its roots in the creed of Jerusalem adopted by Epiphanius of Cyprus.) One addition to the original formula—that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father "and the Son"—is Western in origin and appears as early as the Synod of Toledo (AD 589).

The Athanasian Creed is the longest of the three. Though included in Lutheran hymnals, many congregations use it only on Trinity Sunday (the First Sunday after Pentecost). It is named after Athanasius, the great fourth-century champion of orthodoxy against heretics who denied the deity of Christ. The creed originated in southern Gaul, probably about the middle of the sixth century.

The inclusion of the three ancient creeds in the Book of Concord shows that Lutherans are not a sect but that they embrace and confess the ancient and orthodox faith.

II. The Lutheran Confessions

Among the particular Lutheran Confessions, the two catechisms of Dr. Martin Luther are the earliest. Luther published them in the spring of 1529 to help pastors, teachers, and parents give instruction in the chief parts of Christian doctrine.

The Augsburg Confession was written by Melancthon in 1530. Emperor Charles V had invited the Lutheran princes and theologians to attend a meeting of

NAME	DATE	AUTHOR
Apostles' Creed <i>Baptismal Creed used in Rome.</i>	Second Century	Unknown
Nicene Creed <i>This Creed intends to clearly state on the basis of Scripture that Jesus Christ is true God, equal with the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is also true God, equal with the Father and the Son.</i>	325, 381	Assembled church leaders at the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Council of Constantinople
Athanasian Creed <i>Confesses the teaching of the Trinity and the person and work of Jesus Christ.</i>	Sixth–Eighth Centuries	Unknown; named after the great Church Father Athanasius, who was instrumental in the drafting of the Nicene Creed
Small Catechism <i>A short work that was to educate the laity in the basics of the Christian faith.</i>	1529	Martin Luther
Large Catechism <i>Though covering the same chief parts of Christian doctrine as the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism is really a series of re-edited sermons that Luther preached.</i>	1529	Martin Luther
Augsburg Confession <i>Often viewed as the chief Lutheran Confession; it was presented by the Lutherans to Emperor Charles V at the Imperial Diet of Augsburg as a statement of the chief articles of the Christian faith as understood by Lutherans; also contains a listing of abuses that the Lutherans had corrected.</i>	June 25, 1530	Philip Melanchthon
Apology of the Augsburg Confession <i>After the Roman theologians had condemned many of the teachings of the Augsburg Confession, Melanchthon authored this lengthy defense. Rightly considered a Christian classic.</i>	May 1531	Philip Melanchthon
Smalcald Articles <i>Articles of faith intended by Luther to be an ecumenical platform for an upcoming ecumenical council. Stated what the Lutherans could not compromise and why.</i>	1536	Martin Luther

NAME	DATE	AUTHOR
Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope	1537	Philip Melanchthon
<i>Was intended to serve as a supplement to the Augsburg Confession, giving the Lutheran position on the pope.</i>		
Formula of Concord	1577	Jacob Andreae, Martin Chemnitz, Nicholas Selnecker
<i>A restatement of some teachings in the Augsburg Confession over which Lutherans had become divided. The Solid Declaration is the unabridged version. The Epitome is an abridged version intended for congregations to study. Over 8,100 pastors and theologians signed it, as well as over 50 government leaders.</i>		

government leaders at Augsburg. He wanted to discuss how the religious controversy in his Empire could be settled, so that German Lutheran princes would join the Imperial forces to keep the Turks out of Europe. The Augsburg Confession is composed from several documents that already existed but which were combined by Melanchthon to give a clear but conciliatory summary of the teachings and practices of the Lutheran pastors and congregations. To this day it is the basic Lutheran Confession.

The Apology (or defense) of the Augsburg Confession was published in 1531. After the Augsburg Confession had been read to the emperor, a committee of Romanist theologians prepared a reply called the Confutation. The Apology defends the Augsburg Confession against the accusations of the Confutation.

The Smalcald Articles were written by Luther in late 1536. On June 4, 1536, Pope Paul III announced that a council would be held in Mantua beginning May 8, 1537, to deal with the concerns of the Protestants. The elector (or prince) of Saxony requested Luther to prepare some articles for discussion at the council. Luther indicated on which points Lutherans would stand fast and on which points a compromise might be possible. These articles were never used for their intended purpose, but Lutherans at once recognized their value as a statement of pure evangelical doctrine, and they were therefore included in the Book of Concord.

The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope was prepared by Melanchthon at the meeting at Smalcald in 1537. Luther's Smalcald Articles were to be discussed at the meeting; but, partly because Luther became ill, they were never publicly presented to the assembly. Instead, Melanchthon was requested to prepare a treatise, which is actually an appendix to the Augsburg Confession.

The Formula of Concord was written a generation after Luther's death. Serious controversies had arisen among theologians of the Augsburg Confession; these

threatened the very life of the Reformation. The Formula of Concord deals with these dissensions and presents the sound biblical doctrine on the disputed issues.

No doubt much will—and should—be made of the Book of Concord as we observe its anniversary. But the most worthy and God-pleasing way for Lutherans of the twenty-first century to commemorate the publication of the Book of Concord would be to engage in earnest study of the precious Confessions it contains and to commit themselves anew to the glorious truths of God’s Word that they teach.

A number of years ago, Professor William Arndt eloquently described the significance of the confessional writings. In the *Concordia Theological Monthly* (now the *Concordia Journal*), he wrote:

The Confessions are the brightest jewel in the crown of the Lutheran Church. In speaking of our Confessions we dwell on facts that should make the heart of every Lutheran swell with joy and thanksgiving. We look here on one of the brightest pages of our history as a Church. It is true, I admit, that the laurels of our fathers must not become the soft bed of the children on which they repose in sweet indolence, and it may be that there is somebody who speaks about the achievements of his ancestors to such an extent that he entirely forgets about the plowing, harvesting, and threshing which he himself ought to do. But my plea is that we do not become so occupied with our daily tasks in the churches that we forget the magnificent treasures which are furnished us in our Confessions. To study them, to read them frequently, to ponder their content, is like traveling in a mountain country, where the air is pure, the brooks sparkle, the birds sing their most beautiful songs, and the clatter of the noisy streets cannot disturb and intrude.



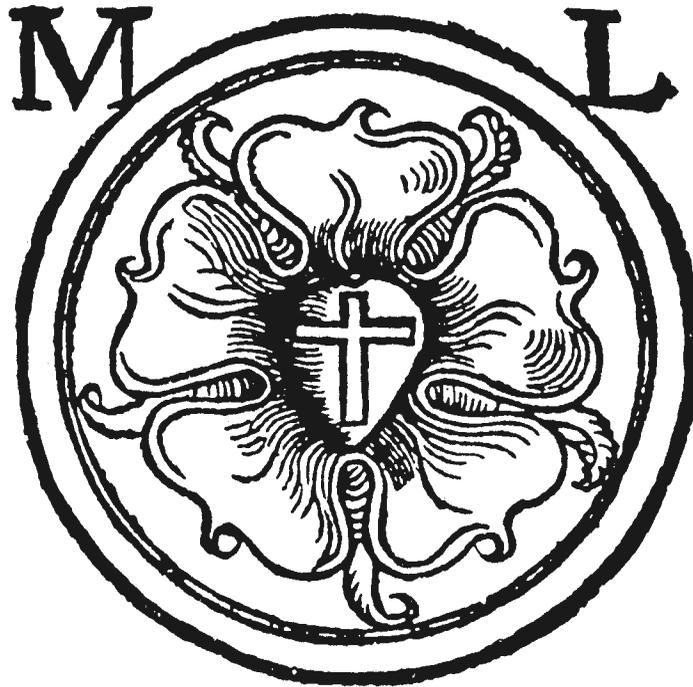
THE SMALCALD ARTICLES

ARTICLES OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

that we would have presented to the council, if one had been convened at Mantua or elsewhere, pointing out what we could give up and what we could not.

Written by
Dr. Martin Luther
in the Year 1537.





The Luther Rose

The Luther Rose is the most well-known symbol of Lutheranism.
Here is how Martin Luther explained it:

First, there is a black cross in a heart that remains its natural color. This is to remind me that it is faith in the Crucified One that saves us. Anyone who believes from the heart will be justified (Romans 10:10). It is a black cross, which mortifies and causes pain, but it leaves the heart its natural color. It doesn't destroy nature, that is to say, it does not kill us but keeps us alive, for the just shall live by faith in the Crucified One (Romans 1:17). The heart should stand in the middle of a white rose. This is to show that faith gives joy, comfort, and peace—it puts the believer into a white, joyous rose. Faith does not give peace and joy like the world gives (John 14:27). This is why the rose must be white, not red. White is the color of the spirits and angels (cf. Matthew 28:3; John 20:12). This rose should stand in a sky-blue field, symbolizing that a joyful spirit and faith is a beginning of heavenly, future joy, which begins now, but is grasped in hope, not yet fully revealed. Around the field of blue is a golden ring to symbolize that blessedness in heaven lasts forever and has no end. Heavenly blessedness is exquisite, beyond all joy and better than any possessions, just as gold is the most valuable and precious metal. (Letter to Lazarus Spengler, July 8, 1530 [WA Br 5:445]; tr. P. T. McCain)



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE SMALCALD ARTICLES

We cannot yield without becoming guilty of treason against God,
even though property and life, peace or war, are at stake.

—Elector John Frederick the Magnanimous

Since the start of the Reformation the Lutherans had been asking the Church to convene a general council. For example, in his *Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520), Luther called for an open and free council. The Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, assured the reformers that he supported their call for a general council. They were hopeful that such a gathering would give their concerns a fairer hearing than was possible if they had to deal only with the pope and his representatives. Finally, on June 4, 1536, Paul III, who had only recently been installed as pope, issued a formal decree for a general council to be held in Mantua, Italy, beginning on May 23, 1537.

The Lutheran rulers debated whether they should attend the council. Martin Luther encouraged them to attend because he considered it to be a great opportunity to speak the truth and perhaps persuade some people. Luther's own prince, Elector John Frederick, nephew of Luther's first protector, Frederick the Wise, did not want to attend. His reason was that by the very act of attending, the Lutherans would be, in effect, acknowledging the pope as head of the Church. His concerns grew all the more when on September 23, 1536, the pope made clear that the purpose of the council would be "the utter extirpation of the poisonous, pestilential Lutheran heresy" ("Bull concerning the Reforms of the Roman Court," LW 16:1914). So much for a free, open council.

John Frederick was finally persuaded to attend, but ordered that the Lutherans from his territory attend only with adequate preparation. Just as the Lutheran princes came to the Imperial Meeting at Augsburg (1530) with a Confession in hand, so also they should attend Mantua firmly united in what they believed, taught, confessed, and practiced in their respective territories. This time their Confession must be more clear, direct, and firm than the Augsburg Confession.

Writing the Articles

On December 11, 1536, John Frederick commissioned Martin Luther to prepare a statement of faith in the form of confessional articles for presentation to a meeting of Lutheran theologians and lay leaders on February 7, 1537, in Smalcald, Germany. He said, "It will, nevertheless, be very necessary for Doctor Martin to prepare his foundation and opinion from the Holy Scriptures, namely, the articles as 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” (Bente, 120). This was serious business indeed.

Luther began working on the document. But on December 18 he became seriously ill, experiencing what may have been a heart attack. He was convinced that death was near. It is important to keep this in mind as one considers just how seriously Luther regarded the Smalcald Articles. He thought this would be his only chance to prepare something for a general council. What is more, Luther believed that the document he was working on would be the last chance he had to confess his faith. As it turned out, Luther lived almost ten more years. At the time, though, he was convinced he was at death’s door. The Smalcald Articles, therefore, truly are to be regarded as Luther’s “last will and testament.”

Luther’s document was to be presented and discussed at the meeting of the Smalcaldic League, an association of Lutheran territories and cities formed in 1531 in Smalcald, Germany, as a defense against any who would try to eliminate Lutheranism by force. Public agreement (subscription) to the Augsburg Confession was required for membership. Just how seriously the Smalcaldic League took such subscription is seen by the fact that King Henry VIII of England was not permitted to join when he refused to agree with the Augsburg Confession.

The Meeting at Smalcald

On December 28, 1536, theologians from Wittenberg reviewed Luther’s first draft of the document. They had a few minor changes to suggest. Luther accepted these changes, and together they signed his document and sent it on to Elector John Frederick. John then presented Luther’s document to the meeting of the Smalcaldic League on February 8, 1537. The elector was sure that the articles would be acceptable and adopted by everyone there. Things did not turn out as he had planned.

Some of the members of the League were concerned that Luther’s statement of faith was too strong. Instead, they wanted simply to present the Augsburg Confession, along with the Apology to the Augsburg Confession. Philip Melancthon signed Luther’s document, but added a caveat that if the pope were to allow the Gospel, his authority could be accepted for the sake of order in the Church—only by human right, not by divine institution.

Unfortunately, Luther was not able to be present personally as the Lutherans met in Smalcald. He lay sick in a house nearby. As a result, Philip Melancthon persuaded the gathering to set aside Luther’s document.

It should be mentioned that by this time Melancthon had become more favorably inclined toward the representatives of cities in Southern Germany who had been influenced by Ulrich Zwingli and so did not want to upset them by endorsing a document that clearly rejected their view of the Lord’s Supper. Philip’s tendency to compromise, even at the cost of watering down essential doctrinal truths, would cause great problems after Luther’s death.

Although Luther's articles were not formally adopted by the Smalcaldic League, forty-four of the Lutherans present did sign them. Five delegates from cities in southern Germany, who were inclined toward the Zwinglian view of the Lord's Supper, did not sign the articles. By the time the Formula of Concord was completed and adopted in 1577, Luther's articles were highly regarded and adopted as part of the Lutheran Church's formal confession of faith. It should be noted as well that by 1577 the compromising doctrinal position of Philip Melancthon and his followers had been thoroughly exposed and rejected.

The Content and Use of the Articles

The Smalcald Articles very clearly establish the differences between Romanism and Lutheranism. This very sharply worded document leaves little to the imagination. When clear confession is necessary, it is wrong to speak in ways that can be interpreted to fit everyone's opinion. Faithfulness and clarity demand a precise two-fold presentation that (a) rejects error and (b) affirms truth.

Luther left Smalcald disappointed that his articles had not been formally adopted. He revised them a bit more, and in 1538 he had the document published as a last will and testament, as he says, "In case I should die before there would be a council (as I fully expect and hope). For those scoundrels who run away from the light and avoid the day are taking pains to delay and prevent the council. If I do die, those who are alive and those who come after me will have my testimony and confession (in addition to the one I have issued previously). I have remained in this confession up to now, and by God's grace, I will remain in it" (SA, Preface 3).

Ironically, Luther's words proved true. The Council of Mantua never took place. Delay after delay prevented it. The council was postponed until finally it did meet, in the city of Trent, Italy, beginning in 1545, right before Luther's death. It met in various sessions until 1563. At the end of the process, the Council of Trent's decisions set in stone the doctrinal position of the Roman Catholic Church as it is known today. The published decisions from Trent, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, became for Rome what the Book of Concord is for Lutherans. A second Lutheran named Martin prepared the definitive Lutheran response to Trent. Martin Chemnitz wrote *The Examination of the Council of Trent*. To this day Chemnitz's work is the best biblical analysis and refutation of the errors of Roman Catholicism.

The Smalcald Articles were held in high esteem by Lutheran laypeople and rulers. Elector John Frederick cherished them. As his own death drew near in 1554, he ordered them to be printed as part of his last will and testament. By 1577, the Formula of Concord said that the Smalcald Articles had "everywhere been regarded as the common, unanimously accepted meaning of our churches" (FC SD Rule and Norm 11). This is why it was included in the Book of Concord of 1580.

The translation is from the 1580 German edition of the Book of Concord, which was the base text for the Smalcald Articles in the *Concordia Triglotta*. See the User's Guide on page xxvii for details about the use of brackets and symbols.

TIMELINE

- 1531 Smalcaldic League meets, February 8
- 1536 English Reformer William Tyndale strangled, then burned at stake for heresy
Pope Paul III issues decree for general council to be held in Mantua, Italy, on May 23, 1537
John Frederick commissions Luther to prepare statement of faith, December
- 1538 Luther's *Smalcald Articles* published
Reforms of John Calvin and William Farel lead to banishment from Geneva
- 1539 Frankfurt Truce enacted between Protestant and Catholic territories
- 1540 Melanchthon's *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* published
Melanchthon publishes his revised *Augsburg Confession*, the *Variata*
- 1541 John Calvin returns to Geneva and establishes theocratic government
John Knox leads Reformation in Scotland
- 1543 Copernicus publishes *On the Revolution of Heavenly Bodies*, describing a sun-centered universe
- 1545 Council of Trent's first session
- 1546 Luther dies at Eisleben, February 18
- 1549 Francis Xavier introduces Christianity in Japan
- 1552 Luther's wife, Katharina von Bora, dies, December 20
- 1555 Peace of Augsburg allows territorial rulers to decide religion for their subjects

- 1560 Philip Melanchthon dies, April 19
- 1563 Council of Trent ends, settling Roman doctrine and establishing the Roman Catholic Church

OUTLINE

- Preface
- The First Part: Divine Majesty
- The Second Part: Office and Work
- I. Jesus Christ
- II. The Mass (Calling upon Saints)
- III. Chapters and Cloisters
- IV. The Papacy
- The Third Part
- I. Sin
- II. The Law
- III. Repentance
- IV. The Gospel
- V. Baptism
- VI. The Sacrament of the Altar
- VII. The Keys
- VIII. Confession
- IX. Excommunication
- X. Ordination and the Call
- XI. The Marriage of Priests
- XII. The Church
- XIII. How One Is Justified before God and Does Good Works
- XIV. Monastic Vows
- XV. Human Traditions



SMALCALD ARTICLES

Preface of Dr. Martin Luther

1 Pope Paul III called a council last year that was supposed to assemble at Mantua around Pentecost. Later, he moved it from Mantua. Now, no one knows where he will or can hold it. On our side, we expected either to be summoned to the council or to just be condemned without being summoned. I was told to set forth and pull together the articles of our doctrine. In the deliberations at the council, we could then be clear about what we would be willing and able to concede to the papists, and what points we intended to persist with and stand for to the end.

2 So I have compiled these articles and presented them to our side, which has unanimously accepted and confessed them. We have resolved to present these publicly to set forth the confession of our faith. (Perhaps the pope with his supporters would be so bold as to hold a truly free Christian council, seriously and in good faith, as is his duty, without lying and cheating.)

3 The Roman court, though, is terribly afraid of a free Christian council. They are ashamed to be exposed to the light. The Roman court has dashed the hope, even of those who are on their side, that they will ever permit a free council—much less hold one themselves. Many on the pope's side are greatly offended and rightly troubled at this negligence. For they realize that the pope would rather see all Christendom perish and all souls damned than allow either himself or his followers to be reformed even a little or to have their tyranny be limited. Yet I have decided to publish these articles in plain print in

case I should die before there would be a council (as I fully expect and hope). For those scoundrels who run away from the light and avoid the day are taking pains to delay and prevent the council. If I do die, those who are alive and those who come after me will have my testimony and confession (in addition to the one I have issued previously). I have remained in this confession up to now, and by God's grace, I will remain in it.

4 What should I say? Why should I complain? I am still alive—writing, preaching, and lecturing daily. 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?

5 I should reply to everything while I am still alive. Then again, how can I stop all the mouths of the devil by myself? Especially of those so poisoned that they will not listen or pay attention to what we write. Instead, with all diligence, they only busy themselves with how they can most shamefully twist and pervert every letter of our words. These I let the devil answer, or, ultimately, God's wrath, as they deserve. I often think of the good Gerson, who doubts whether anything good should be *written for the public and* published. If it is not published, many souls are neglected who could be freed. But if it is published, the devil is there with malignant,



Duke John Frederick of Saxony (The Magnanimous; 1503–54)
c. 1533, Gotha

Portrait of John Frederick, shortly after he became Elector in 1532. He was educated by Luther's lifelong friend Spalatin and considered Martin Luther his spiritual father. John Frederick defended and spread the Reformation. He was the leading force behind the formation of the Smalcaldic League and asked Luther to prepare a statement of faith for the League (the Smalcald Articles). He cherished the Smalcald Articles and made them part of his last will and testament.

deceitful tongues without number that poison and pervert everything, so that the usefulness of the writing is prevented. Yet what they gain by doing this is obvious. Even though they have lied so shamefully against us and by their lies tried to get the people on their side, God has constantly advanced His work. He has been making their following ever smaller and ours greater. He has caused them to be shamed with their lies and still causes this.

I have to tell a story. A doctor was sent here to Wittenberg from France, who openly told us that his king was convinced that we have no Church, no government, no marriage, but that we all live promiscuously like cattle and do as we please. Imagine those whose writings have instilled such crude lies into the king and other countries, presenting them as the pure truth. How will they face us when we are brought before the judgment seat of Christ [2 Corinthians 5:10]? Christ, the Lord and Judge of us all, knows well that they lie and have lied. They, in turn, must hear His sentence. I know that certainly. May God convert to repentance those who can be converted! To the rest will be said, "Woe and alas!" for eternity.

And so I return to the subject. I really would like to see a truly Christian council, so that many people and issues might be helped. Not that we need help. Our churches are now, through God's grace, enlightened and equipped with the pure Word and right use of the Sacraments, with knowledge of the various callings and right works. So, on our part, we ask for no council. On such points, we have nothing better to hope or expect from a council. But we see throughout the bishops' jurisdictions so many parishes vacant and desolate that it breaks our heart. Still, neither the bishops nor the Church officials care how the poor people live or die. Christ has died for them, and yet they are not allowed to hear

Him speak as the true Shepherd with His sheep [John 10:11–18]. This makes me shudder and fear that someday He might send a council of angels upon Germany who will utterly destroy us like Sodom and Gomorrah [Genesis 19:1–25] for wickedly mocking Him with the pretext of a council.

Besides such necessary Church affairs, many important matters in the political realm could also be improved. The princes and the estates disagree. Interest rates and greed have burst in like a flood and are defended under the law. Also, disrespect, lust, extravagance in dress, gluttony, gambling, pomp, and all kinds of bad habits and evil. Subjects, servants, and workers in every trade are insubordinate. The demands on the peasants are unfair. Prices are exorbitant. (Who can list everything?) These things have increased so much that they cannot be corrected by ten councils and twenty commissions. The council would have their hands full if such important issues of the spiritual and earthly realms that are contrary to God would be considered. The childish absurdity of long «official» gowns, large tonsures, broad sashes, bishops' or cardinals' hats, maces, and other vanities would be forgotten. If we had first followed God's command and ordering in the spiritual and secular realms, we could then find enough time to reform food, clothing, tonsures, and surplices. As long as we want to swallow camels and strain at gnats [Matthew 23:24], ignore the logs and judge the specks [Matthew 7:3], we might be satisfied with the council.

That is why I have presented just a few articles. We already have so many commands of God to observe in the Church, the state, and the family that we can never fulfill them. So what good are decrees and statutes from a council, especially when the important matters commanded by God are ignored? As if He had to

honor our vanities as a reward for our treading His solemn commandments under foot. But our sins weigh upon us and cause God not to be gracious to us. For we do not repent and instead want to defend every abomination.

- 15 O Lord Jesus Christ, may You Yourself hold a council! Deliver Your servants by Your glorious return [Titus 2:13]! The pope and his followers are done for. They will have none of You. Help us who are poor and needy, who sigh to You, and who pray to You earnestly [Romans 8:23, 26], according to the grace You have given us through Your Holy Spirit [Romans 12:3, 6], who lives and reigns with You and the Father, blessed forever. Amen.

THE FIRST PART

The Awe-Inspiring Articles on the Divine Majesty

Note: Luther repeats the historic creedal formulas that confess God the Holy Trinity and the two natures in Christ. He concludes by indicating how these articles are the historic Confession of the Christian Church. When Luther uses the word *catechism* he is not referring to his Small Catechism but to the historic teaching of the faith in the Western Church: the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed. The Romanists and Lutherans agreed on these points of biblical, orthodox Christianity, so there was no need for Luther to elaborate on them. (See the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds; AC I; SC II; LC II.)

1. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons in one divine essence and nature [Matthew 28:19], are one God, who has created heaven and earth [1 Corinthians 8:6].

2. The Father is begotten of no one; the Son is begotten of the Father [John 1:14]; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son [John 15:26].

3. Neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit, but the Son became man [John 1:14].

4. The Son became man in this manner: He was conceived, without the cooperation of man, by the Holy Spirit [Luke 1:34–35], and was born of the pure, holy Virgin Mary. Afterward, He suffered, died, was buried, descended to hell, rose from the dead [1 Corinthians 15:3–4], ascended to heaven [Acts 1:9–11], sits at the right hand of God [Acts 2:33], will come to judge the quick and the dead, and so on, as the Apostles' and Athanasian Creeds and our children's catechism teach.

Concerning these articles, there is no argument or dispute. Both sides confess them. Therefore, it is not necessary now to discuss them further.

THE SECOND PART

The Articles That Refer to the Office and Work of Jesus Christ; That Is, Our Redemption

ARTICLE I

The Chief Article

Note: Agreeing on the content of the historic Christian Creed is one thing. Agreeing on what it means is quite another. Luther launches immediately into the "chief article" of the Christian faith: Christ's saving work can never be given up, or compromised, for the sake of peace and unity in the Church. This teaching is the very heart of the Gospel itself; therefore, it must be kept pure and free from error and proclaimed boldly and thoroughly. Luther returns to this chief article over and over again throughout the rest of the Smalcald Articles, demonstrating how the various errors and abuses in the Church of his day originate from false teaching about justification by grace through faith. (See the Apostles', Nicene, and

Athanasian Creeds; AC III; SC II; LC II; FC Ep VIII and SD VIII.)

The first and chief article is this:

1 Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:24–25).

2 He alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29), and God has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

3 All have sinned and are justified freely, without their own works or merits, by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood (Romans 3:23–25).

4 This is necessary to believe. This cannot be otherwise acquired or grasped by any work, law, or merit. Therefore, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us. As St. Paul says:

For we hold that one is justified by

faith apart from works of the law. (Romans 3:28)

That He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. [Romans 3:26]

Nothing of this article can be yielded or surrendered, even though heaven and earth and everything else falls [Mark 13:31].

For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

And with His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

Upon this article everything that we teach and practice depends, in opposition to the pope, the devil, and the whole world. Therefore, we must be certain and not doubt this doctrine. Otherwise, all is lost, and the pope, the devil, and all adversaries win the victory and the right over us.



The Seven-Headed Luther

An example of the savage attacks launched against Luther by his opponents; in this case, it is by John Cochlaeus. This woodcut portrays Luther as a seven-headed monster. Heads from left to right: Luther as (1) Doctor of theology, (2) Martin, (3) Luther, (4) Churchman, (5) Schwärmer (enthusiast), (6) Visitor, and (7) Barabbas, a revolutionary. Luther's reaction? He said the picture would have looked better if the heads had necks.

ARTICLE II
The Mass

Note: Nowhere was Rome's corruption of the doctrine of justification more clearly seen than in the abuses and errors associated with the celebration of Holy Communion (the Mass; see article, p. 245). Luther forcefully calls the Roman Mass a "horrible abomination" because it thoroughly contradicts the chief article of the faith, justification. Notice how, over and over again, Luther takes his stand against the corruptions of the Mass by showing that God did not command the Church to perform these corrupt ceremonies. (See AC XXI and XXIV; FC Ep X and SD X.)

- 1 The Mass in the papacy has to be the greatest and most horrible abomination, since it directly and powerfully conflicts with this chief article. Above and before all other popish idolatries the Mass has been the chief and most false. For this sacrifice or work of the Mass is thought to free people from sins, both in this life and also in purgatory. It does so even when offered by a wicked scoundrel. Yet only the Lamb of God can and will do this [John 1:29], as said above. Nothing of this article is to be surrendered or conceded, because the first article does not allow it.
- 2 If there were reasonable papists, we might speak moderately and in a friendly way, like this: First, why do they so rigidly uphold the Mass? It is just a purely human invention and has not been commanded by God. Every human invention we may safely discard, as Christ declares, "In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" [Matthew 15:9].
- 3 Second, the Mass is unnecessary and can be omitted without sin and danger.
- 4 Third, the Sacrament can be received in a better and more blessed way (indeed, the

only blessed way): according to Christ's institution [Matthew 26:26–28]. Why, then, do they drive the world to woe and misery for something fictitious and unnecessary when it can be had in a different, more blessed way?

One should publicly preach the following 5
to the people: (a) the Mass, as a human invention, can be left out without sin; (b) no one will be condemned who does not observe it; (c) they can be saved in a better way without the Mass. I wager that the Mass will then collapse of itself, not only among the crude common people, but also among all pious, Christian, reasonable, God-fearing hearts. This would happen all the more, when people hear that the Mass is dangerous, fabricated, and invented without God's will and Word.

Fourth, the Mass should be abandoned 6
because so many unspeakable abuses have arisen in the whole world from the buying and selling of Masses. Even if the Mass in itself had something advantageous and good, it should be abolished for no other reason than to prevent abuses. How much more should we abandon it since it is also completely unnecessary, useless, and dangerous; and since we can have everything by a more necessary, profitable, and certain way without the Mass?

Fifth, the Mass is and can be nothing 7
more than a human work (as Church law and all the books declare, even when it is performed by wicked scoundrels). The attempt is to reconcile oneself and others to God [see 2 Corinthians 5:18–20], and to merit and deserve the forgiveness of sins and grace by the Mass. (This is how the Mass is held at its very best. Otherwise, what purpose would it serve?) This is why it must and should be condemned and rejected. For the Mass directly conflicts with the chief article, which says that it is not someone paid to perform

the Mass (whether wicked or godly) who takes away our sins with his work, but the Lamb of God, the Son of God.

8 If anyone says that he wants to administer the Sacrament to himself as an act of devotion, he cannot be serious. If he sincerely wishes to commune, the surest and best way for him is in the Sacrament administered according to Christ's institution. To administer Communion to oneself is a human notion. It is uncertain, unnecessary, even prohibited. He does not know what he is doing, because without God's Word he follows a false human opinion and invention. It is not right (even if otherwise done properly) to use the Sacrament that belongs to the community of the Church for one's own private devotion. It is wrong to toy with the Sacrament without God's Word and apart from the community of the Church.

10 This article about the Mass would completely preoccupy the council. Even if they could concede all the other articles, they could not concede this. Cardinal Campegius said at Augsburg that he would rather be torn to pieces than give up the Mass. So, by God's help, I, too, would rather be burned to ashes than allow someone paid to perform a Mass—whether he is good or bad—to be made equal to Christ Jesus, my Lord and Savior, or to be exalted above Him. In this, we remain eternally separated and opposed to one another. They know well that when the Mass falls, the papacy lies in ruins. Before they will let this happen, they will, if they can, put us all to death.

11 In addition to all this, this dragon's tail [Revelation 12:3–4]—that is, the Mass—has begotten many vermin and a multitude of idolatries.

12 First, purgatory. They carried their trade into purgatory by selling Masses for the souls of the dead. They started vigils; weekly,

monthly, and yearly celebrations of funeral anniversaries; special services for the Common Week and All Souls' Day; and soul baths. So the Mass is used almost solely for the dead, although Christ has instituted the Sacrament solely for the living. Therefore, purgatory, along with every service, rite, and commerce connected with it, should be regarded as nothing more than the devil's ghost. For it conflicts with the chief article: only Christ, and not human works, are to help souls [Galatians 5:1]. Besides, God has commanded or assigned us nothing about the dead. Therefore, all this may be safely left out, even if it were not error and idolatry.

The papists quote Augustine and some of the Church Fathers who are said to have written about purgatory. They think we do not understand why they spoke as they did. St. Augustine does not write that there is a purgatory. Nor does he have evidence from Scripture as a basis. Rather, he leaves it in doubt whether purgatory exists. He does say that his mother asked to be remembered at the altar or Sacrament. This is nothing but human devotion, indeed of individuals, and does not establish an article of faith, which is God's privilege alone.

Our papists, though, cite such human opinions so people will believe in their horrible, blasphemous, and cursed traffic in Masses for souls in purgatory. But they will never prove these things from Augustine. Once they have abolished the traffic in Masses for purgatory, which Augustine never dreamed of, then we can discuss whether to accept what Augustine said beyond Scripture and whether the dead should be remembered at the Eucharist. It will not do to frame articles of faith from the works or words of the holy Fathers. Otherwise, their kind of food, clothing, houses, and such, would have to become an article of faith, as was done with relics.

The true rule is this: God's Word shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel can do so [Galatians 1:8].

16 Second: Following these things, evil spirits have produced many wicked tricks by appearing as the souls of the departed [1 Samuel 28], and with unspeakable lies and tricks demanded Masses, vigils, pilgrimages, and other alms. All of this we were expected to receive as articles of faith and to live accordingly. The pope confirmed these things, as he did the Mass and all other abominations. Here, too, there must be no yielding or surrendering.

17
18 Third, pilgrimages. Here, too, the forgiveness of sins and God's grace were sought, for the Mass controlled everything. Pilgrimages, without God's Word, have not been commanded. Nor are they necessary, since 'the soul can be cared for' in a better way. These pilgrimages can be abandoned without any sin and danger. So why do they leave behind their own callings, their parishes, 'their pastors,' God's Word, their wives, their children, and such? These *are* ordained and commanded. Instead, they run after these unnecessary, uncertain, dangerous illusions of the devil. Perhaps the devil had been riding the pope, causing him to praise and establish these practices. By them, the people again and again revolted from Christ to their own works, and, worst of all, became idolaters. Furthermore, pilgrimages are neither necessary nor commanded, but are senseless, doubtful, and harmful. On this, too, there can be no yielding or surrendering. Let it be preached that pilgrimages are not necessary, but dangerous, and then see what will happen to them.

20
21 Fourth, monastic societies. Monasteries, foundations, and representatives have assigned and transferred (by a legal contract and sale) all Masses, good works, and such,

both for the living and the dead. This is nothing but a human trick, without God's Word and entirely unnecessary and not commanded. It is also contrary to the chief article on redemption. Therefore, it cannot in any way be tolerated.

22 Fifth, relics. So many falsehoods and such foolishness are found in the bones of dogs and horses that even the devil has laughed at such swindles. Relics should have been condemned long ago, even if there were some good in them, and all the more because they are without God's Word. Since they are neither commanded nor counseled, relics are entirely unnecessary and useless. Worst of all, these relics have 'been imagined to cause' indulgence and the forgiveness of sins. 'People have revered them' as a good work and service of God, like the Mass and other such practices.

23
24 Sixth: Here belong the precious indulgences granted—but only for money—both to the living and the dead. By indulgences, the miserable Judas, or pope, has sold Christ's merit, along with the extra merits of all saints, of the entire Church, and such things.

All these things are unbearable. They are not only without God's Word, are unnecessary and not commanded, but are against the chief article. For Christ's merit is obtained not by our works or pennies, but from grace through faith, without money and merit [Ephesians 2:8–9]. It is offered not through the pope's power, but through the preaching of God's Word [1 Corinthians 1:21].

The Invocation of Saints

25 The invocation of saints is also one of the Antichrist's abuses that conflicts with the chief article and destroys the knowledge of Christ [Philippians 3:8]. It is neither commanded nor counseled, nor has it any warrant in Scripture. Even if it were a pre-

cious thing—which it is not—we have everything a thousand times better in Christ.

- 26 The angels in heaven pray for us, as does Christ Himself [Romans 8:34]. So do the saints on earth and perhaps also in heaven [Revelation 6:9–10]. It does not follow, though, that we should invoke and adore the angels and saints [Revelation 22:8–9]. Nor should we fast, hold festivals, celebrate Mass, make offerings, and establish churches, altars, and divine worship in their honor. Nor should we serve them in other ways or regard them as helpers in times of need. Nor should we divide different kinds of help among them, ascribing to each one a particular form of assistance, as the papists teach and do. This is idolatry. Such honor belongs
- 27 to God alone. As a Christian and saint upon earth, you can pray for me in many necessities. But this does not mean that I have to adore and call upon you. I do not need to celebrate festivals, fast, make sacrifices, or hold Masses for your honor. I do not have to put my faith in you for my salvation. I can honor, love, and thank you in
- 28 Christ in other ways. If such idolatrous honor were withdrawn from angels and departed saints, the remaining honor would be harmless and quickly forgotten. When advantage and assistance (both bodily and spiritual) are no longer expected, the saints will not be troubled, neither in their graves nor in heaven. No one will much remember or esteem or honor them without a reward or just out of pure love.
- 29 In short, we cannot tolerate the Mass or anything that proceeds from it or is attached to it. We have to condemn the Mass in order to keep the holy Sacrament pure and certain, according to Christ's institution, used and received through faith.

ARTICLE III

Chapters and Cloisters

Note: Reflecting on his own experiences as a monk, Luther rejects the Roman system of monastic life. By making monasticism meritorious for eternal life, Rome contradicted the chief article of the Christian faith. Monasteries were originally founded as institutions of education. Luther advocates returning them to that noble purpose; otherwise they should be destroyed.

Monastic chapters and cloisters were formerly founded with the good intention of educating learned men and virtuous women. They should be used for that again. They could produce pastors, preachers, and other ministers for the churches. They could also produce essential personnel for the secular government in cities and countries, as well as well-educated young women for mothers, housekeepers, and such. 1

If these institutions will not serve this purpose, it is better to abandon them or tear them down than have their blasphemous, humanly invented services regarded as something better than the ordinary Christian life and the offices and callings ordained by God. This too is contrary to the chief article on the redemption through Jesus Christ. Like all other human inventions, these religious institutions have not been commanded. They are needless and useless. They are also occasions for dangerous «annoyances» and empty works [Isaiah 29:20], what the Hebrew prophets call *Aven* (i.e., pain and labor). 2

THE SEVENTH PETITION

But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean?

Answer: We pray in this petition, as in a summary, that our Father in heaven would deliver us from all kinds of evil, of body and soul, property and honor. And finally, when our last hour shall come, we pray that He would grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself into heaven.

Amen.

What does this mean?

Answer: I should be certain that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and are heard by Him. For He Himself has commanded us to pray this way and has promised that He will hear us. Amen, Amen; that is, “Yes, yes, it shall be so.”



CHRIST HEALS THE CANAANITE
WOMAN'S DAUGHTER
(MATTHEW 15)

[Note: "For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever" did not appear in Luther's Small Catechism.]

IV. THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

As the Head of the Family Should Teach It in a Simple Way to His Household



THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST
(MATTHEW 3)

FIRST

What is Baptism?

Answer: Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water included in God's command and connected with God's Word.

Which is that Word of God?

Answer: Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Matthew, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" [Matthew 28:19].

SECOND

What does Baptism give or profit?

Answer: It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are these words and promises of God?

Answer: Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Mark, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" [Mark 16:16].

THIRD

How can water do such great things?

Answer: It is not the water indeed that does them, but the Word of God, which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts this Word of God in the water. For without the Word of God the water is simple water and no Baptism. But with the Word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit. As St. Paul says in Titus chapter three, “He saved us . . . by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy” [vv. 5–8].

FOURTH

What does such baptizing with water signify?

Answer: It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts. And also it shows that a new man should daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

Answer: St. Paul says in Romans chapter 6, “We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” [v. 4].

