

The Smalcald Articles

Lesson Two

The One True God

Part I

The First Part

Treats of the Exalted Articles Concerning the Divine Majesty, such as:

I.

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

II.

The Father is begotten of no one; the Son of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. [Q1]

III.

Neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit, but the Son became man. [Q2]

IV.

The Son became man in this way: He was conceived without human cooperation by the Holy Spirit, and was born of the pure, holy, Virgin Mary. [Q3] Afterwards He suffered, died, was buried, descended into hell, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of God, will come to judge the living and the dead, etc., as the Apostles' Creed, as well the Athanasian, and the Small Catechism, teach.

Concerning these articles there is no quarrel or dispute, since we confess them on both sides. [Q4] Therefore it is not necessary to deal with them further now.

Discuss

1. Go to the source. [Part II]

Read John 14:6-14.

- What does Jesus mean by “comes to the Father”? How only do we get there?
- What does that teach us about doctrines such as those of the Trinity or of the incarnation (Jesus being both God and man)?
- How alone can we truly know God the Father? Why is this true?
- What does Christ do for those who know him and the Father?

Read John 14:6-21.

- What is Jesus' relationship to the Holy Spirit?
- What does the Spirit do for us?
- Why do you think Luther began his confession by treating these issues?

2. You make the call. [Part III]

One afternoon, Susie answered the doorbell. Outside were two nicely dressed people, who wanted to talk to her about God. They told her that her church had been lying to her. Then they showed her passages that seemed to say Jesus wasn't really God. Susie was very confused. She was sure that Jesus was God, but the passages they showed her really troubled her. What was happening?

3. Go to the source. [Part IV]

Read Luke 1:26-38.

- What did the angel Gabriel promise Mary?
- How did the angel deal with her concern?
- What was Mary's response to all this?

Read Luke 1:46-49.

- What would all generations do for Mary? What does that mean?
- So how are we to understand Luther's description of Mary as "the pure, holy, Virgin Mary"?

4. What did Luther recognize? [Part IV]

During the week

1. Reread Part I.

2. Read Part II, Article I, of the Smalcald Articles.
3. Sometimes it may seem as though doctrines like the Trinity are too abstract to be of practical use for the everyday Christian's life. Yet God carefully reveals them for a reason. What is the practical benefit of the doctrine of the Trinity for a Christian's life?