

# Augsburg Confession Study



Presenting the Augsburg Confession to Emperor Charles V in 1530

## Christ Lutheran Church: Sunday Morning Bible Class



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## Introduction

On Saturday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1530, at 3:00pm in the afternoon, The elector princes of the Holy Roman Empire had gathered for an Imperial Diet (Council) at Augsburg, Germany.

Inside the hall, 200 people were gathered as Dr. Christian Beyer began to read a charter and confession of faith to Emperor Charles V. Outside, hundreds of people more were gathered under the open windows of the hall and were hanging on every word that was being spoken in German for the next two hours.

What was being publicly proclaimed at the Diet of Augsburg? None other than the Augsburg Confession itself, named because of where it was first proclaimed. This became the Confession of the Reformation that Martin Luther had stirred and since 1580, has been the defining document and confession of their heirs in what we call the Evangelical Lutheran Church of which our own denomination, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, hails from.

The Augsburg Confession was read and given to be a witness of the Teachings of the Churches that had began the Reform of Christ's Church from the Abuses of the Roman Church and to also distinguish themselves from the errors that were growing from the other Reformed Christians.

## History

Following Martin Luther's nailing of the 95 theses on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1517, forces began to move throughout the Holy Roman Empire. On April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1521, at the Diet of Worms, Luther refused to recant his teaching and was declared a heretic for his defiance against the abuses of the indulgence system and other abuses that were maligning Christ Church. Many of these problems and theological errors would become several of the articles listed in the Augsburg Confession.

With Luther branded a public enemy and bearing on his head the sentence of death, he was not allowed in public spaces.



*Figure 1 Luther nailing the 95 theses.*

What saved Luther was his own territorial prince, Frederick the Wise, who would not turn Luther over and granted him safety in his territory. Because of this, many of Luther's works and writings would spread and more German Princes were converting to the Lutheran Confession and Practice.

In the Political forces of the Holy Roman Empire, the budding reformation church was growing so fast that in 1526, the Lutheran Princes forced a resolution during an Imperial Meeting at Speyer that gave them the right to arrange the religious affairs in their own territories until the Emperor was able to have the Pope call for a General Council of the Church (Think like Vatican II in our era), to sort out the disagreements and arrive at the truth.

But from 1526-1529, little happened. Both the Emperor and the Pope were busy and most likely were thinking that the movement would die out.

But it didn't die out. In fact, by 1529, most of Northern German was Lutheran with a great area in Southern Germany also falling in with the Reformation. Things changed then in 1529, at a Second Diet at Speyer, where the princes loyal still to Rome reversed the decision made in 1526. The Lutheran Princes protested this decision fiercely and issued a "Protestio." This then caused the Catholics to label and the Lutheran Princes: Protestants, a name that has stuck to all Churches in the West outside the Roman Catholic Church ever since.

Due to the growing unrest among his princes, Emperor Charles V called for a Diet to settle, once and for all, this growing movement within his German sphere of influence. At this point, Charles V was looking to the East where the Muslim Turks were knocking on the eastern borders of his Empire and he wanted unity in his

empire to fight the growing Muslim threat.

So he ordered the Diet to be held at Augsburg the following summer in 1530. The Reformers quickly began to meet and to discuss what to present at the coming Diet. Princes also wanted to band together militarily, which they would end up doing, being called the



Figure 2: Luther and Zwingli arguing in October 1529

Smalcald League. But Luther would agree to no such political unity unless there was theological unity.

On October 2-4<sup>th</sup>, 1529, many of the reformers met to achieve this theological unity. Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, got together to try and reach theological unity to reach a united Protestant front. During this famous conference, called the Marburg Colloquy, the hope for any Protestant unity failed. While they could agree on most of the points of doctrine, Luther and Zwingli could not agree on the Lord's Supper. Luther famously carved the words, "Hoc est Corpus Meum" (This is my body) on the table. During a heated moment, Luther lifted the table cloth to reveal the words etched into the table and would not depart from them. The Protestant Reformation would not be a theologically united front.

For the growing "Lutheran" movement, many articles had been written before during and after this conference that would lead to the eventual construction of the Augsburg Confession. Documents such as the Marburg Articles, Schwabach Articles, and the Torgau Articles, of which we still have all documents.

Eventually on Good Friday, April 14<sup>th</sup> 1530 the delegation, led by Luther's best friend, Philip Melanchthon departed for the Diet at Augsburg. Luther remained some distance away at Coburg castle, not being able to attend because of being an outlaw.

One last note on the history leading up to the writing of the Augsburg Confession. At first, they planned to present the Torgau Articles, but it was found out that Luther's oldest opponent John Eck had prepared a slanderous document against Luther and lies about what Lutherans taught in a document titled "Four Hundred and Four Articles for the Diet in Augsburg."

Considering this development, the Lutheran delegation had to scrap plans and quickly write a new confession. Notes and questions were sent by carrier to Luther who would spend night and day helping draft the new confession that not only presented what they confessed, but also distanced themselves from Zwinglians, Anabaptists, and others.

This new confession would be named: The Augsburg Confession. It was written in both Latin and German. Both texts, though slightly different, are canon.

## Purpose and Subscription

The Augsburg Confession, though first meant to be a confession presented to the Emperor by the Lutheran Princes, came to be seen quickly as the defining document of the Lutheran Confession.

Others, have heard what was confessed, quickly wanted to sign onto the Confession of faith. As the document spread, pastors, princes, and other theological leaders would state that this is what they also believed and confessed. They would begin to sign their names and make it their confession as well.

In 1580, the Augsburg Confession became the flagship document for the Lutherans in what became the Book of Concord. To this day, Lutheran denominations across the world subscribe to it and the teachings as a true exposition of the Christian faith and a symbol that they equated with the Apostles Creed.

Before he became Pope, the now late Benedict XVI had himself read the Augsburg Confession and stated that this was a faithful Confession of the Christian faith and that it should be added as an acceptable confession to the Church Catholic. Only one thing held him back from pushing this thought forward: The addendum which was seen to later be part of the Augsburg Confession which was called “On the Power and Primacy of the Pope.” Also included in the Book of Concord.

The primary purpose of the Augsburg Confession is to confess what we believe and what we do not believe. The goal was not to separate and become a different church, but to show how Lutherans were the One True Church and were not deviating from the Church Catholic.

To show this, the Augsburg Confession will primarily quote Scripture, but then will also quote from the Church Fathers to show that this is always what the Church has believed. The Augsburg Confession, along with the other Book of Concord, are what all member Churches within the LCMS subscribe to as the right teaching of what the Scriptures teach and of the faith delivered to us from Jesus Christ by the blessed apostles.



Image courtesy Concordia Seminary Library  
Saint Louis, Missouri

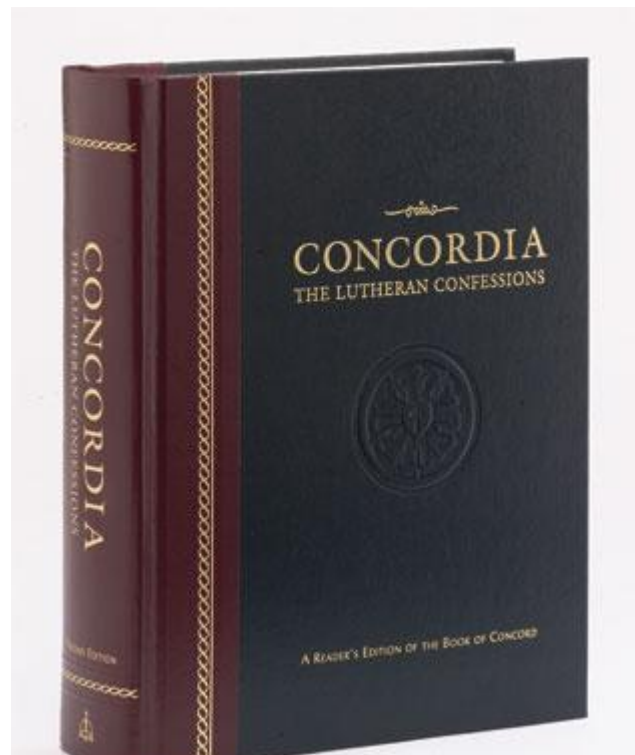
Figure 3: 1580 edition of the Book of Concord

## Outline

There are 28 articles in the Augsburg Confession. Of these 28, 1-21 present the main confession of the faith. This first section covers the summary of all Christian doctrine that has been taught and believed through the age of the Church. This is the teaching of the Gospel.

It also tells a story. Each Article builds and comes from the one proceeding it. God leads us to the Original Sin, to our Savior, to how we are saved, to how we get that salvation, etc. The structure of each article presents what we believe, an explanation depending on the controversy, and also false teachings that are condemned.

Once we get to Article 22, the rest of the Augsburg Confession takes on the various reforms that the Lutherans have undertaken and why. Reforms such as why the laity receive both kinds in the Sacrament, the marriage of priests, and the power of the Church and the State. Some of these articles were written because the reformers knew that the contents of those articles would someday become an issue.



*Figure 4: 2006 Edition of the Book of Concord*

# Articles of the Augsburg Confession

## Preface

The preface in the published edition of the Augsburg Confession began with the words, “I will also speak of your decrees before kings, and shall not be put to shame.” Psalm 119:46.

The preface shows us why the Diet at Augsburg was called, “To consider taking action against the Turk.” Para. 1. The threat of Muslim invasion into Germany was the kickstarter for the need for this Diet to achieve religious unity in order to be one under political banner against a common enemy.

The hope is expressed by saying, “Then we may embrace and maintain the future of one pure and true religion under one Christ.” This was often the case in Christendom where Church and State were united that religious unity also meant political unity. Reconciliation influenced all manner of life from Constantine in 325 AD that we see here in 1530 AD.

Notes:

# I. God

The Confession begins, properly, with God. It all begins with God. And we follow in the train of the Council of Nicaea. We say the same thing that they did. That Scripture reveals that there is One God and Three Persons. Shorthand: The Trinity.

Essence: We might say “What something/someone is”

Person: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each their own person. They are not part of the Godhead (modalism). They are complete individuals.

There is One What (God) and Three Who’s.

Here is what we do not mean by that:

Manichaeans: followers of Mani from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century in Persia who mixed Christian, Buddhist, Gnostic, and other Eastern elements into his worship. There were two gods in his view. One evil and one good. The evil god made creation; the good god is Jesus who is freeing us from creation.

Valentinians: named after Valentinus who was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. This is Gnosticism at its height. Gnostics taught the duality between flesh and blood. The spiritual world is good and is achieved through knowledge. The material world is evil and is the home of those ignorant of the truth.

Arians: Arius, the heretic that caused the council of Nicaea and the need for the Nicene Creed to be written. Taught that Jesus was not God. He taught that Jesus was not of the same substance of God the Father. Jesus for Arius was the first being created by God or an elevated angel.

Eunomians: Eunomius was Arius on steroids. He taught that Jesus was not even related to the Father in any way of substance.

Mohammedans: Islam. The Lutheran reformers, as well as a large part of the Church, considered Islam to be a Trinitarian Heresy.

Samosatenians: Paul of Samosata taught that Jesus was not divine in nature but was just a man who achieved divinity through his works and connection to the Holy Spirit. They also rejected the Trinity.

Notes:

## II. Original Sin

Natural way: as opposed to how Jesus was conceived. Original Sin, also called Hereditary sin, is the corruption of human nature that is passed on to all of Adam's children. Adam's guilt and sin causes his whole line to corrupt. Nothing of goodness remains of mankind.

It is this original sin that condemns us. We sin because we are sinners. The root is evil and that makes the fruits evil, even when they appear good! By nature, we are children of wrath and are dead as St. Paul writes in Ephesians 2.

Pelagianism: Followers of Pelagius (354-418 AD) who taught that we can save ourselves and that we are not corrupted fully. He taught we do not need God to be saved, but through our own will and reason can come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. God will then see our efforts and give us grace. Believed ultimately that humans have free will before God. Later, Semi-Pelagians would take a softened position saying that God will get us started but we have to keep up the work and then God will give us a little more grace to get better. (This becomes the charge that Lutherans will level on Rome.)

Notes:

### III. The Son of God

While the Trinity is One What and Three Whos, the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ our Lord is One Who and Two Whats. Jesus Christ has a Divine Nature and a Human Nature. These natures are united and inseparable so that there is truly one Christ that cannot be mingled nor divided. (See Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD). Jesus is one Person, one Christ. (Idea of Iron and Fire/Man on an Airplane). He received his Divine Nature from His Father before all ages, and His Human Nature is from His Mother, the Virgin Mary.

This Jesus came to do all the work that he did for our salvation. He needed to be God so that the redemption is eternal. He needed to be fully man so that the payment could be credited to us. As we express in the creeds, so we also say here. Here are some heresies regarding the person of Christ—

Ebionism: Early Jewish offshoot from Christianity that denied Jesus as God but only a special prophet. Natural Son of Joseph and Mary. At his Baptism, Holy Spirit turned Jesus into Christ. Due to areas settled in Arabia by this sect, it is thought that these later interacted and inspired Mohammed reaction to Christianity. Rejected all of Paul's letters.

Adoptionism: Related to Ebionism, this is the belief that Jesus was adopted by the Father and became his Son. At the end of his life, they taught that the Holy Spirit left Jesus so that it was the man Jesus that died but not the God-Man.

Sabellianism: A Trinitarian heresy that stated that there is only one person in the Godhead and that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was just God appearing in different forms. (The Shack runs into this)

Arianism/Subordinationism: Arius (256-336 AD) after hearing a sermon in Alexandria Egypt that proclaimed Jesus as equal to the Father, was worried about Sabellianism by equating Jesus with the Father. So he went the other way and denied that Jesus shared the same substance (Homoousios- same substance) with the Father but said that Jesus had like substance. (homoiousios- like substance).

Gnosticism: Thought the spritual world was good and the physical world was bad. Using Platonic Thought it thought there were two gods. An evil god who made

everything and a good god, who is represented by Jesus who frees us from the creation to become enlightened individuals.

Docetism: The idea that Jesus was not real, tangible, human flesh and blood. The word Docetism means “to seem.” Jesus only seemed to be human, but was a visible spirit. Today we may say hologram or projection. They denied the incarnation.

Apollinarianism: Apollinarius (died 382 AD) was so eager to defeat Arius’ position that he held that Jesus had a human body and soul but his mind was divine. But this meant that Jesus does not have a complete human nature and therefore the human mind is not redeemed. Jesus becomes a hodgepodge of Divine and Human parts.

Besides these heresies regarding the personhood of Christ, there also arose discussions on how these attributes of Jesus’ Divine and Human Natures work. How can God die? How can a human walk on water? This discussion became known as the Communication of Attributes. The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) eventually convened to work all this out. Christ is able to die according to his human nature not because of his divine nature and because Jesus is One Christ we can then say that God died. The natures communicate with each other. The divine allows the human nature to walk on water and rise from the dead. However the human nature does not reciprocate, the human nature does not add anything to the Divine Nature.

Other questions became of this: Did Mary give birth to God, is she the Theotokos (God bearer)? A denial of this led to the heresy of Nestorianism that stated that Mary only gave birth to a human and not to God. Here are some heresies regarding how the two natures fit together—

Nestorianism: The two natures of Jesus are like two pieces of wood glued together. The divine nature and human nature of Jesus only pretend to be one.

Eutychianism: The divine nature of Jesus swallowed up his humanity. Like a drop of water put into the ocean. The Divine Nature overrides and erases the human nature of Jesus.

Notes:

## **IV. Justification**

This article is often called “The Article upon which the Church Stands or falls.” This article is all or nothing. This will become the center piece in all of Lutheran thinking. Without this article, every other article will unravel.

To justify means to “make someone righteous.” Everyone seeks to be justified. To be made right before God is only possible because of Jesus Christ. This declaration of God’s righteousness comes from Jesus Christ, and then trust that Jesus is enough seals and gives that righteousness to us. Only Jesus can give us what we try and win for ourselves.

Notes:

## V. The Ministry

Though Article V is listed as a separate article, by its grammar it falls under AC IV. How does one receive the faith that AC IV declares? How does what Jesus did 2000 years ago benefit us today? How does it come to me? Article V answers that.

To “obtain such faith” God instituted the office of preaching. Office (Predigamt—who has the authority to do something) here denotes a station in life which God calls men to fill.

This office is to deliver the gifts of Preaching the Gospel and the Sacraments. Though these “means” of grace, God gives the Holy Spirit as it pleases him. This is God’s delivery method of the Gospel.

Anabaptists: literally means those who “Baptize again.” They believed it was by their efforts that God would grant them the Holy Spirit. God sees what we can do in their mind and gives us grace. God’s grace then for them becomes a response and not a cause of our works, as we will go into next article.

The Word, “external” in the article means: “physical.” They believed that God would connect with them in other ways.

Notes:

## VI. New Obedience

What is the purpose of good works? Namely that God commands them. They are the righteousness of man. This is sometimes also called civil, or natural righteousness. Even evil people can do good works in this sense.

But before God, only those works that are good are those covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.

The AC states that good works are necessary. They are not in order to be saved, only faith in Christ grants that. But in this world, God has established an order that we are to work at to cause life to thrive.

Here a Church Father, Ambrose of Milan (339-397 AD), is quoted. Though in the last couple hundred years it was discovered that it was not Ambrose but another unknown Saint from the 400's who quotes the oldest surviving commentary on 1 Corinthians. We will see that the Fathers will be quoted more and more to show that this is what the Church has always taught.

Notes:

## VII. The Church

What is the Church? That is the question here and in Article VIII which is grammatically the same article. The Church is that which Jesus Christ has made. In the early days of the reformation, and still today, the radical reformers taught that the church died or was hidden by oppression from the Orthodox position. (Search Baptist thought on "The Trail of Blood") But here it is stated that Christ promised that the Church will always remain.

Who is the Church: Believers who hold to Christ the Lord.

Where is the Church: Where the Word is purely preached and the Sacraments administered. (Define pure and administer)

What does not make the church is the need to have the exact setting of worship. Only that the services conform to the Gospel and Sacraments. What service each culture and place has (building, ability, means, and talents) will help decide the vehicle for the Word and Sacraments.

Notes:

## VIII. What the Church Is

This further elaborates on Article VII. It makes clear that the Church only consists of believers in Christ. Hypocrites might be with the Church, but are not in the church. “In the Church but not of the Church” to spin a popular phrase. Visible and Invisible Church. Or better to say: Hidden and Revealed Church. The marks of the Church.

This brings to mind the question. If a Pastor is a hypocrite, does that mean that the Preaching and the Sacraments that he performs make them not efficacious? That is, are they void of the Holy Spirit?

The answer is a confident no. God uses wicked people to achieve his ends (see Old Testament Pharaoh, Babylon, etc.) while also rejecting them. The Confessions quote Matthew 23:2-3 as proof. The Pharisees are wicked, but the sacrifices they did in the temple gave the promised goods. The office is good even if the person occupying the office is evil.

Donatists: Named after Donatus, a North African Bishop (???-355 AD), who advocated that the validity of sacraments were voided when people were unfaithful or denied the faith. (First accused by the Pope of rebaptizing clergy who fell away from the faith in 313 AD). This heresy was quickly squashed (using St. Peter as an example of coming back to the faith) but in the Reformation the Anabaptists said that those baptized by a sinful priest had an invalid baptism.

Notes:

## IX. Baptism

Having moved on from talking about the Church, we go into what Jesus gives through the Church: The Sacraments, or the Means of Grace. Articles IX-XII will detail them each. XIII will talk about how the Sacraments are to be used. Article XIV teaches who can apply the Gifts of the Church.

Here Baptism is discussed. And the Confession now discuss Baptism. It is brief because Baptism was not a disagreement. But Lutherans added it in because John Eck, an opponent who hated Luther and Lutherans accused them of being Anabaptists and Donatists when it came to Baptism. So it was added in to clarify.

Lutherans teach the following about Baptism:

1. Baptism is necessary for salvation.
2. Baptism offers God's grace.
3. Children are to be Baptized because they are offered to God and received by God's grace.

Lutherans reject and condemn the following:

Rejecting children from Baptism and saying that children are saved without it, or without means.

Notes:

## **X. The Lord's Supper**

Another short article because there was no dispute between the Catholics and Lutherans regarding the basic principles of Communion. As we shall see later in the Book of Concord, there would be one thing that Lutherans would come to see as horrendous about Communion from the Roman Catholic position and that would be the Sacrifice of the Mass.

But here, presenting their confession, the Lutheran briefly but succinctly state that we teach this about the Lord's Supper. It is the true body and blood of Jesus Christ. All who partake of the Supper under this institution have his Body and Blood. Everyone who teaches contrary to this is rejected.

Notes:

## **XI. Confession**

By the year 1530, Private Confession and Absolution had been established Church practice going back over 1000 years. By the 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council in 1215, it was coded into the practice of the Church that all must go to Private Confession prior to being admitted to the Lord's Supper. This kept up, even in our circles until around the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Private Confession has since fallen into disuse among us, though revived publicly in the Church Service itself. Here Lutherans confess that we retain it since it was commanded by Christ and is of benefit to the Church to ease burdens of those with a troubled conscious.

The issue with Catholics is that Catholics demand every sin to be confessed, which causes uncertainty. Lutheran confess that it is not possible, but all sins should be repented of as we ask in the Lord's prayer, but in Private Confession, only those sins that we know and feel as we examine God's law should be confessed. Psalm 19 is cited from Scripture.

Notes:

## XII. Repentance

On the heels of Confession begs the question of Repentance. What is it, how do we know we have repented. Related to Justification as all doctrines do, this was actually the powder keg that lit the reformation. It was the attack on the Penance system that led to the Reformation getting underway.

Under the Papal system, repentance could be bought and sold with indulgences. Some which acted as a get out of jail free card or gave other benefits should the land you lived in be under papal discipline. Repentance here is defined as the total movement (broadly) which includes recognizing the reality of sin as revealed by God's Word, and turning to God in faith for his mercy.

Repentance can also be defined narrowly, as just the act of feeling contrition over sin and falling under God's judgment, with faith being as holding onto the promise of the Gospel.

Repentance is also not just a one time thing, but the way of life for the Christian. This article strikes a blow to the entire Roman Catholic system.

Lutheran see Repentance as living out death and resurrection.

What is rejected. Again here are the Anabaptists who believe in once saved always saved and who also believe that they can become perfect in this life.

Novatians: Named for a man named Novatian (200-258 AD) who refused to readmit those who had lapsed from the faith during persecution.

The next two rejections fly in the face of Rome. Lutheran threw this grenade knowing it was going to get messy. We reject those who do not teach that forgiveness of sins come through faith but to merit grace through satisfaction/penance. Basically forgiveness becomes a carrot at the end of the stick.

Notes:



## **XIII. The Use of the Sacraments**

Now that the Sacraments have been discussed, we next need to look at how they are to be used. God promises to work through these means, but they are not magic spells. They do not work just because they are done. They work for those who have faith. Faith is needed in the Sacraments.

In this article, the Sacraments are not mankind's to use as we see fit. They are signs (marks) of God's will toward us.

The Sacraments are to be used for that purpose. This is why we do not firehose people at a parade to baptize them. Those who deny the Sacraments should not use them. They do not work for its own sake. Ex opera Operato. Baptism and the Lord's Supper do not work just because you do them. But if you believe what is being done in them. This will begin to hit on the RCC teaching of the Sacrifice of the Mass, or Corpus Christi Processions.

Notes:

## **XIV. Order in the Church**

Lutherans put distance between themselves and the radical reformers. Their leaders were not people who took authority or status because they felt like it. They had proper channels and good order in the congregation. Like Rome, they had a system, or a polity, for getting things done. Here in particular, who is to handle the Word and Sacraments that have been outlined from Articles IX-XIII.

The Lutherans noted that all Pastors are to be rightly called, or rite vocatus. This is not about ritual, but about being called to serve the church by the proper public channels. We see this with Jesus in Mark's Gospel when he denies demons to proclaim who he is and then installs the 12 apostles to do it.

To be properly called is in the hands of the Church at large to figure out. For us in the LCMS, to be rite vocatus, you must have three things: to be examined, called, and ordained. If you do not have any one of these things, it is improper to preach, teach, or give the Sacraments.

Notes:

## **XV. Church Ceremonies**

Articles 15 & 16 of the Augsburg Confession reflect the two dimensions of our life in the State and in the Church. It might be better translated to say “Church Orders/Rites” for Article 15 and “Civil Order” for Article 16.

Here in this article, the Confession makes a defense that was being leveled against the Lutherans by saying that Lutheran Services were ditching rites and ceremonies and doing whatever they wanted.

Here they state otherwise that for the sake of good order and peace the same rites should be retained that can be retained that do not burden consciousness and detract from the Gospel.

Examples of this are celebrating Holy Days like Easter, Ascension, The Lord’s Day etc. Even the time and day of services. To aim for good order we should have them, but it is no sin to not have them. Included here also are the Lectionary, Church Year, vestments for clergy, candles, nativities, etc.

Notes:

## **XVI. Civil Government**

Article 16 clarifies what Lutherans teach concerning being part of temporal affairs, such as serving as a soldier, or even an executioner. Can Christians have jobs in the state and serve even wicked men? The answer is yes and even could be argued they must!

Another charge of slander against Lutherans said that they taught, along with the Anabaptists, that it was bad to be apart of this life. Some positions even taught that having families and even marriage for “holier” lives. Note here that the Anabaptist position and the Catholic position are the same.

Here, Lutherans teach that it is a good work to participate in the State. To serve in positions of state and to do them well is to support God’s order and institution with the exception of when they sin. The state needs good Christians who have a good conscious and ear for God’s Word.

Notes:

## **XVII. Christ's Return for Judgment**

This Article brings us to the end of the story logic that the AC has been following. Here we arrive at the end of everything. The coming again of Jesus Christ.

Here this article teaches and affirms that we confess that Jesus Christ will come again. He will raise the dead, consummate his kingdom, and restore the earth. The godly will be granted eternal life. The ungodly will be sent to hell for eternity.

Rejected are opinions that began to crop up in earnest in the radical reformers. Some like the Anabaptists taught that there would be a limited duration of suffering and torment and that either the ungodly would be welcomed into heaven (Universalism) after a time of punishment (think of hell as purgatory in that sense) or that hell would burn them up until they don't exist anymore.

Other ideas that are condemned are the thoughts that a kingdom would be established before Christ could return and therefore Christians needed to start it. In 1530, Thomas Muntzer called for the slaughter of the ungodly (usually the authorities and Catholics and for the lower classes to rise up in rebellion). Note Acts 1:6.

In our time are other thoughts and opinions that still persevere to this day. Here are some other thoughts:

Premillennialism: This is the most vocal of the views. This view was started by John Darby and made popular in America in the Scofield Reference Bible. This view understands different epochs where God works differently (dispensationalism) for different eras. (Note also the 7 C's of the Creation Museum). In OT people were saved by following the law. Before the OT, they were saved by visions and experiences. In the NT they are saved by Jesus, for example.

This view believes that Jesus will return secretly and rapture believers. After the world wonders what happened to the Christians, the Jews will search the Scriptures and come to faith in Christ and reach out to the Gentiles while God lets loose the 7-year tribulation.

At the end of the 7 years evil will fight against the newfound Christians but Jesus will come, bind Satan, and destroy the attack. This will usher in a new

dispensation where Jesus will reign visibly on an earthly kingdom for 1000 years in Jerusalem, and at the end will unbind Satan for one final fight and bring about the end.

Here we note the chaotic-ness of this view, along with Jesus returning several times. This is because of a too literal view of Revelation 20:1-6.

Postmillennialism: Not common since the devastation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with 2 World Wars and a Cold War and Depressions. This holds that the world would be getting better and better until the church ushers in a Golden age where we rule the world. Some people who believed certain dates for this in the south even began to arm themselves to help suppress the wicked.

Finally after 1000 years a rebellion would occur and a falling away would take place. As this final battle commences, Jesus would then return and overthrow evil once and for all. Note here how the idea of the enlightenment and evolution caused this teaching to take hold until of course the 20<sup>th</sup> century rolled around.

Amillennialism: This is the view of Lutherans and also most Christians throughout the age. The name means “No millennium” There will be no 1000 years of reigning by Christ is a physical kingdom like we have for America, etc. Rather the 1000 years is symbolic of the total time that Christ has given to the Church to do her mission. The number 1000 is merely used to describe the whole time it takes for Jesus to return since we do not know the Day or the Hour.

Notes:



## **XVIII. Free Will**

Free Will is always a subject of debate in the Church and was in the Reformation era too. In our day, Free Will turns into a Theodicy (an attempt to justify God) and explain the fall into sin.

Here we ask what is the condition of mankind outside of Christ? Due to Original Sin, we are not disposed toward God. Our wills are corrupted and under bondage. In fact, our wills hate God and have turned away from him. We are “dead” toward God as Ephesians 2 tells us. We have no will that can turn toward God or fear and love him as we should. The Gospel then is how God converts our wills. God must change our will to be open to him. This is done through the Holy Spirit which the natural man cannot receive but only the new man in Christ that God has made.

Here this article describes the ability that we have. With respect to God, there is no free will. With respect to the world and civil righteousness, there is ability. So with things below we are free, and with things above us we are not. For that we need God’s revelation and indwelling of the Spirit that makes us alive to God through Jesus Christ.

Here we might take time to discuss the Two Kinds of Righteousness. (2KR)

Again the Pelagians are condemned. Those who say we can work out our salvation without God or just with a little nudging from God.

Notes:

## **XVIX. The Cause of Sin**

Where does evil come from? What is the source of evil? The confessions answer that evil does not come from God. He has not created evil. Evil comes from us and the devil. We are the authors of evil and death. It is the corruption of God's good creation and the higher the good the harder the fall.

God does maintain this nature now. To eradicate it outside of Jesus is to exterminate us. So God upholds our fallen nature now and works our salvation through his Son.

Without God, our will (see the previous article) turns away from God. This predisposition toward sin is the cause of our actual sins (as opposed to original sin). We could say, "we sin because we are sinners." Our actual sins are a manifestation of Original Sin.

Notes:

## XX. Good Works

This rather lengthy article shows where a lot of discussion and clarification needs to be made.

Often the discussion and accusation is made against Lutherans that because we teach that our Good Deeds do not merit us salvation that we therefore are against Good works.

But we are not. Here we teach that our Good works are a fruit of our salvation by grace through faith and not the cause of our salvation.

Still to this day, Rome will insist that grace is needed for salvation, but it is not the only thing needed for our salvation. For this our contribution is necessary. Even in some small way people must do something to save themselves. Even in our day, the call that you must have faith is insisting that you must do something, "have faith," that must be generated on your end, and not as a gift of God.

Good works are also defined. In Luther's day, works are defined as living a holy life, often in a monastery. But Good works are defined as what God has defined in his law.

So what role do good works play in our life? Simply this: "Good works are necessary." Paragraph 27. There is no grace offered because of them, they are merely God's will and therefore what is expected of us. For if salvation were a payment for our good deeds, then it would not be grace or a gift that Jesus Christ has won.

Noted here especially how good works are defined not just as the Second Table of the Law (Commandments 4-10) but also the First Table of the Law (Commandments 1-3)

Notes:

## **XXI. The Worship of the Saints**

How should we approach the saints? How should we treat and talk about them? Should they even be mentioned at all?

Lutherans do have a spot for the saints. Their lives should be remembered simply because of the example that they set for us. So a king should take example of King David who waged just wars for the sake of godly efforts. Here the Lutherans tip their hand to one of the issues that called them to Augsburg: to achieve unity in the face of Muslim invasion of Europe. They wanted to let the Emperor know they supported him.

But the saints should not be used that conflict with Jesus being the one mediator. So praying to them, invoking them, or using them in any way that we should turn to Christ or interferes with him as the one Mediator.

Notes:

## **Interlude: Summary of Conflict/A Review of Abuses Corrected.**

At this point the Augsburg Confession concludes the main body of teaching. Articles 1-21 present to us the core teachings of our faith and the clarification of key doctrinal standards.

Here we see that the goal has been to present that the Lutheran Confession is in line with the whole Church, past and present. Rather the charges of Lutherans trying to do their own thing have been slanderous and treacherous. Instead, the Lutherans have wanted to clear things up.

Going forward now in the Confession, Lutherans are using the rest of the articles to present their view on the various abuses and changes that have been made. They will show that they are not out of line and have been the topic of discussion for fixing for generations. Articles 22-28 now present how the Church should handle and move forward with key topics in their day.

Notes:

## **XXII. Both Kinds in the Sacrament**

The first abuse that is listed is that the laity receive the Cup. (Individual Cups did not exist until the 1900's). They begin by discussing why this practice may have started. It is often taught that the laity only need the body since the body contains blood (notice how this affects the Word of Christ in the Institution). Modern Scholarship even suggests how the wine would sometimes be collected or later spit into vials for potions or other superstitious reasons. It was also stated that the Priest did it on behalf of everyone. (But why give them the bread then?)

Despite the reason, the Lutherans note that this goes against what Jesus said to do and creates two classes of Christians. It is shown from early Church history that the laity all received the cup and that a recent invention started this. (13<sup>th</sup> century, Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 AD removed the cup from the laity)

Because of this abuse, Lutherans reject the Corpus Christi procession, which is called the procession of the host. In fact, on Jun 16<sup>th</sup>, when the diet of Augsburg commenced, the Lutheran princes did not attend the Corpus Christi procession.

Notes:

## **XXIII. The Marriage of the Priests**

In the West, forced priest celibacy was highly recommended prior to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. But beginning at the First Lateran Council in 1123 it was decreed that this was now mandatory. Many priests were even forced to divorce if they wanted to remain a priest. This caused an uproar and in 1139 another council convened to discuss it again and the celibacy of priests was reaffirmed.

The main problem in this article is commanding something that fights against what God has built into nature. The idea of forced celibacy is contrary to Scripture, St. Paul even citing that forbidding marriage is a teaching of demons.

The Confessions cite the historical practice that many priests and leaders of the Church were married, St. Peter being among them! Also, because the world is getting older and human nature is decaying, vice is sure to enter into the world among the church leadership in terms of sexual sins. So marriage is commended because it is God pleasing way of life and helps suppress sin.

Notes:

## **XXIV. The Mass**

Lutherans had been falsely accused of throwing away the Mass. Here Lutherans retain the Roman Catholic Mass, with edits to better teach the people such as common language. We would call this the Divine Service nowadays. Lutherans had no intention of innovation, but instead to call upon the 1000's of years of worship and practice, shaped by theology, that had promoted Christ and taught people.

Mass here is to be understood as the whole service and the rites that promote good order and teaching. Lutherans had dismissed private Masses, since service is for all the people of God, and much abuse had crept in for the sponsorship of private masses.

Lutherans even point to evidence that their services are more devout, reverent, and teach the people the wisdom and knowledge of Christ.

Notes:

## XXV. Confession

Confession here is what we know of as Private Confession and Absolution. Another charge against the Lutherans was that they got rid of that practice. But they did not.

They only got rid of the mandates to force people into Confession, but also maintain that if someone does not go to Confession, this is proof that they are not Christians and despise the Gospel. (See Luther's "a Brief Exhortation to Confession. Pg. 649)

Here we understand that Christ gave the keys to the Church to exercise by forgiving people's sins. The problem going forward is that preachers never taught people to confess their sins nor for them to see the benefit of it, but only held out the threat and the coercion. Now the people must be taught why they need it and to see their condition to desire it. Psalm 42:1 tells of the deer that pants for water, so too do we desire what God gives.

Also noting that the listing of all sins is impossible. It is enough to confess all that we know and feel in our hearts.

Notes:

## XXVI. The Distinction of Meats

Weird as it may seem and also straight out of the pages of Acts and Galatians is the topic of food. A leftover thought from this is the Friday Fish Fry and the Lent fast of eating meat during Friday's of Lent.

In the Medieval Church, more days and regulations were given year-round concerning eating meats. Some of these restrictions were practical, to curb the consumption of limited products. But others were good religious practices that took on a life of their own.

The chief problem here was that refraining from certain foods, especially meat, was seen to be salvific. Not eating meat on Friday earned a person the forgiveness of sins, or special standing or favor with God. Though this sounds weird today, there are still strains of this with diet and healthy living that at times rises to the same standards of pompous attitudes.

With this in mind, the Lutheran position does not want to fall off the horse on the other end in this article as well. Bodily discipline and fasting are good habits that Christians are expected to do for the sake of good order and bodily discipline, nothing more. But also, true disciplines and crosses are listed, not just man made ones.

Notes:

## **XXVII. Monastic Vows**

This penultimate article has in mind how justification plays out in life and one of those consequences is the life of the monasteries.

Early on, Monasteries were groupings of Christians who wanted to avoid being complacent with the world and very soon became places of spiritual growth and support for providing pastors and theologians for the church. The system of colleges and universities have their roots in the rise of the monasteries.

Here this article will ask that the monasteries go back to this. That they be places where pastors and theologians for the church are produced and made ready for life in the church.

By the time of the reformation, the monasteries were plagued with abuse, bureaucracy, and corruption. Monasteries were seen as places to avoid the callings that God had given or denied that creation and vocation could only be served in the church.

This article helps greatly in understanding the Lutheran teaching of vocation. That all callings by God are good and not just callings in the Church.

Notes:

## **XXVIII. Church Authority**

This final article of the Augsburg Confession levels at the power that is given to the Church or the Bishops. In Luther's Day, Bishops were often both agents of the state and the church. Abuses became rampant and numerous. It was known at times that Bishops would raise armies to conquer territory to expand their Bishopric and depose rulers. This article brings about the needed reforms that Scripture has given to both the Church and the State. What does the Power of the State have? What is the power of the Church? How are they enforced and bound to us?

This is where we get the idea of the Left Hand and Right Hand. They both are God's ways of ruling the world but through vastly different ways. The state has power over the body. The Church has power over the mind/conscious. The state has the power of the sword. The Church has the power of the Word.

The authority that Jesus Christ has given to the Church is the authority of the Gospel and to spread the Word of God. Conscience is bound to such authority where the Word has granted it. Bishops and leaders of the church and all Christians are bound to this by matter of love and communion.

Notes:

## Conclusion

With this, we come to the end of our Confession of faith as presented in the Augsburg Confession.

As the conclusion remarks, this is not all that could be said. But it is enough (satisfies) for the present need concerning beliefs, reforms, and debates that we at hand.

In fact, much more abuses could have been stated and more articles attached. (See Power and Primacy of the Pope, for example). Other articles mentioned are indulgences, pilgrimages, and the abuse of excommunication.

And if more should be stated, more could be had still today.

We should note then that this is not exhaustive. Beliefs today that are challenged, such as the inerrancy of the Scriptures was something that every Christian on the planet in 1530 held to and so not mentioned but assumed in every article.

But going forward with articles not expressed in the AC, theology will be done in Lutheran circles with the style and substance that the Augsburg Confession gives. Precedence on the Scripture alone, and showing that this is the regular fidei of the Church (something always taught and believed).

Notes: