

The Formula of Concord (Epitome & Solid Declaration)



Authors of the Formula of Concord from L to R: David Chytraeus, Andrew Musculus, Nicholas Selnecker, Martin Chemnitz, Christopher Cornerus, Jacob Andreae.

Introduction

In the sight of God and of all Christendom, the entire Church of Christ, we want to testify to those now living and those who will come after us. This declaration presented here about all the controverted articles mentioned and explained above—and no other—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 and give an account of it. We will not speak or write anything contrary to this Confession, either publicly or privately. By the strength of God's grace, we intend to abide by it.

Therefore, after mature deliberation, we have, in the fear of God and by the calling on his name, attached our signatures with our own hands...

-Conclusion to the Formula of Concord.

Luther's Death and Aftermath

Even before Luther's death in February of 1546, conflicts were already beginning to swirl concerning what would become of the Reformation. There was a leadership vacuum, factions beginning to form, and threats from without that were all threatening to devour what the Lutheran Reformation had shed light on.

The years from 1546 to 1580 mark some of the most heroic, tragic, and uncertain times in the history of the Lutheran Church. It took the next generation of Lutherans to finish what the first generation of Lutherans had begun. It is a story worth telling and knowing.

In June of 1546, the Pope and Emperor Charles V, who was now an aging man, entered into a secret agreement to crush militarily the Lutheran Princes and to force Roman Catholic practices back onto Lutheran congregations. Charles V tried to hide this pact, but the Pope released a public decree on July 4th, 1546 essentially declaring war on the lands that had left the authority of the Papacy.

The Smalcald League, a group of Lutheran princes, quickly gathered to fend off the assault. Tragically, the military power of the Catholic armies proved too much. Some princes who had joined the league declared neutrality or even switched sides in the ensuing conflict. On April 24th, 1547, the Smalcald League was crushed in the Battle of Muhlberg. The key Princes and Electors were imprisoned



Figure 1: Elector John Frederick surrendering after the Battle of Muhlberg

and sentenced to death. Elector John Frederick, a close ally of Luther, was threatened with death repeatedly in prison but refused to recant.

Wittenberg itself, the place where Luther lived and taught fell without a fight on May 19th 1547. Charles V at one point stood over Luther's grave. His soldiers pleaded for Charles to exhume Luther and burn his corpse. In a rare show of mercy, Charles V replied. "I make war on the living, not on the dead." It was back

in 1521, 26 years prior, that Luther had made his “I will not recant” at the Diet of Worms before the Emperor.

With the Lutheran territories now conquered, and political protection evaporated for those who confessed the Augsburg Confession, the next question would become: What would happen to the Gospel now? Would it shatter into a billion pieces and be lost and would anyone stand up and make a stand in much of the way Luther had done a quarter century earlier.

Chaotic Interims

Charles V's orders were to kill anyone who would not submit to the Papacy and the Catholic Church. But he quickly realized that the ideas of the Reformation had taken root so deeply that the only way to fulfill the orders of the Pope and eliminate Lutheranism was to mass slaughter hundreds of thousands of people. Thankfully he was not willing to do this.

He instead proposed compromises which he hoped would bring both parties together. Some Lutherans agreed to this plan. While this on the surface seemed to be the best route, it led only to further factions and chaos that would continue to rip Germany apart.

On May 15th, 1548 Charles V issued a series of commands that became known as the Augsburg Interim. This was called an interim as a way of keeping the peace until the matter could be resolved by a General Church Council (The Council of Trent 1545-1583 was already underway.). Lutheran Ministers were forbidden from writing against the Interim.

The Augsburg Interim allowed Lutheran Clergy to marry and celebrate the sacrament by giving both the host and the wine to laity. But all Roman Catholic practices were to be brought back in, including the cult of the saints, indulgences, transubstantiation and to agree that we are justified by grace through faith. All Lutherans were commanded to agree to the authority of the Pope and receive Roman Bishops.

Funny enough, the Pope was not satisfied with these compromises and demanded more. This made many Lutherans realize that the Roman Catholic Church would not settle for compromises, and they were to expect persecution.

And they did. Charles enforced the Interim brutally. Cities that opposed the Interim were deprived of liberties and branded rebels. One city, Magdeburg resisted the armies of Charles the longest, were outlawed three times, and was never conquered. The citizens of Magdeburg sent Charles a message saying, "We are saved neither by an Interim, nor by an Exterim, but by the Word of God alone."

Pastors who refused the Interim were banished, with their goods plundered and families split up. Along the Rhine River, 400 Lutheran Pastors were exiled and killed for refusing to deny their faith. Their families were killed and reduced to begging as a result. Many Lutheran pastors fled to England.

In Northern Germany, resistance against the Interim was fierce. When 300 Lutheran pastors were gathered to sign their names to the Interim, with the Interim's author Agricola present. One old Lutheran pastor, named Leutinger



Figure 2: John Frederick with his scar from Battle

stood in front of them all and spoke for them all saying, "I love Agricola, and more than him I love my Elector; but my Lord Jesus Christ I love most." He took the Augsburg Interim and threw it into the fire. A layman, Margrave Hans, threw the pen away and said, "I shall never adopt this poisonous concoction, nor submit to any council. Rather sword

than pen; blood rather than ink!" From this we can see that both Pastors and Laymen were courageous enough to stand firm for what they saw as their faith in Christ.

Writing from Prison, Elector John Frederick inspired many by refusing to recant at the cost of the death sentence. He told faithful Lutheran pastors who were banished from Augsburg this: "Though the Emperor has banished you from the realm, he has not banished you from heaven. Surely God will find some other country where you may preach His Word."

John finally wrote Charles V saying to the effect that the faith he had learned and had treasured from the Scriptures and from Luther would never be something he would toss away. As a result, Charles had the Bible and Luther's writings removed from his cell. John Frederick then wrote that they were able to deprive him of his books, but they could never tear out of his heart what he had learned from them.

Leadership Vacuum & Factions

With Luther dead, and many of the Princes and Electors in jail or dead, the Lutherans began looking for leaders to stand up during this time of crisis. All eyes turned to Philip Melanchthon, who had been Luther's best friend and author of the Augsburg Confession and Apology. People began calling on him to publicly denounce the Augsburg Interim.

Sadly, Phillip sided with the demands of the Augsburg Interim. This betrayal caused further splinting and factioning among the Lutherans. Melanchthon and his supporters, which are known as the Philippists in the Formula of Concord, sought to make compromises with Rome, even on the point of justification not being by grace. Melanchthon's courage merely failed and he sought peace at the destruction of the truth.

In response to the Augsburg Interim, Melanchthon authored what was eventually called the Leipzig Interim. It was mocked as an interim to make people think of the Augsburg Interim and to also disagree with the compromises there.



Figure 3: Phillip Melanchthon

In the Leipzig Interim, Melanchthon hoped to agree to all of Rome's terms while still holding onto Justification by grace through faith, though the topic itself is never mentioned in the document. But sadly, because Phillip allowed the content of the faith to become Roman Catholic, the faith also became Roman Catholic as well. Substance dictates content.

At first, they thought they could agree on nonessential items, Adiaphora, but it was soon clear that Rome thought of them as anything but Adiaphora. Compromising would only lead to more compromises. If there was

going to be a theological leader, it would have to come from someone else. When Melancthon died in 1560, 14 years after Luther, the remnants of the Lutheran movement were still in shambles and embroidered in controversy. Crisis after crisis was mounting.

Those who sided with Melancthon were known as Phillipists and those who opposed him were called the Gnesio-Lutherans (Gnesio meaning genuine). These two factions make up the two sides in the Formula Concord. Saxony became the home for the Phillipists and Magdeburg, having never been conquered became the refuge for the Gnesio Lutherans. From 1548 to 1574 tensions and conflicts between the two camps ran high. Eventually, the Phillipists were overrun by Calvinists who twisted the Lutheran camp even further away. Even the Gnesio Lutherans, in an attempt to oppose the Calvinist Phillipists would fall off the horse on the other side. Something had to give.

Peace of Augsburg

Princes and Electors who had defected or remained neutral realized that the attempts to compromise were making matters worse and they realized that they were “Judas” of the Lutheran cause.

Many realized it was more politically good to champion the cause of Lutheranism, so the Elector of Augsburg began an uprising against Charles V and threw him out

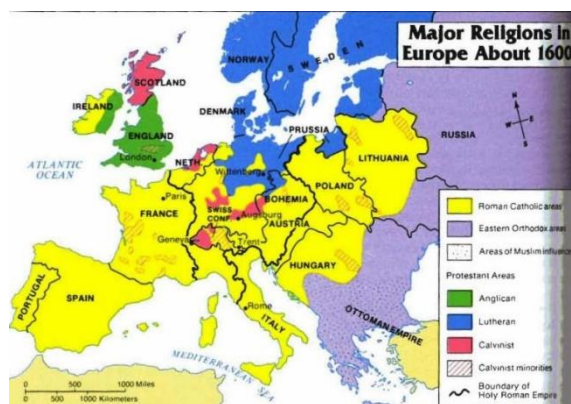


Figure 4: Blue Areas show areas of Lutheran Control

of Augsburg. The rebellion spread quickly, Charles V fled in panic and the Catholic theologians gathered at Trent stopped the Council and fled to their homes. In 1555, the Peace of Augsburg was signed. The treaty signed granted religious freedom to an extent. The rule was this, “He who rules, his the religion.” If the Prince was Roman Catholic, the territory was Catholic. If the

Prince was Lutheran, the territory was Lutheran.

Soon after this, Charles V would abdicate the throne, and would spend the last few years of his life in a Monastery in Spain, tired and worn from decades of political and theological fighting.

While open warfare came to an end, the theological battle was only just beginning.

Concord at Last

For decades, the Phillipists and the Gnesio-Lutherans were locked head to head in a theological battle. But soon, another group rose inbetween them. They themselves did not get involved in the controversies but their efforts and work eventually united Lutheranism. From them, prominent leaders like Jacob Andreae and Martin Chemnitz. Chemnitz as a boy had heard Luther preach and had sat in on a few lectures.

Chemnitz became the clear leader that the Lutherans had hoped for. In fact, a phrase was soon coined about Martin Chemnitz that went like this, “If the second Martin had not come, the first Martin would not have stood.” Chemnitz and his company sided mainly with the Gnesio Lutherans, but also worked hard to distance themselves from the personality conflicts that often bogged down debates. Against both camps, Chemnitz and others spoke out against where each side had failed.



Figure 5: Martin Chemnitz

The goal of uniting the Lutherans together came in 1573 when Rev. Jacob Andreae published six sermons that clearly cited the issues and the need to work through them. He proposed biblical solutions to the issues at hand. The popularity of these sermons skyrocketed among all Lutherans and convinced many that it was now time to find a way to come together.

Martin Chemnitz, who deserves his own story in this study, was a massive figure at this time for Lutherans. He was well read and well studied and respected by friends and foes alike. After Luther himself, Chemnitz is the most important figure in the history of the Lutheran Church for what he ended up accomplishing. He worked tirelessly to bring people together. He refused to compromise with error

and was diplomatic in his approach. As a young boy he had heard Luther lecture on Genesis, had read all of Melancthon's works, and during his years as a Librarian, he read all that there is to read on the Early Church Fathers. He was also pastoral in his approach, much like Luther before him.

In May of 1576, Chemnitz, along with 5 other theologians from the regions of Germany were called together to hammer out the differences and work out a theological document. In May of 1577, they produced the Formula of Concord. It was submitted to the Elector Augustus who approved it and signed it.

From 1577 to 1580 Chemnitz worked nonstop to promote the Formula of Concord and to convince and bring harmony to the Lutheran Church. What follows now is the content of this confession.

Formula of Concord

The Formula of Concord is actually two Documents as one. The first is the Epitome and the second is the Solid Declaration. Chemnitz knew that many laypeople would want to know what the issues were and what the solutions were, so the Epitome is the sparks notes version. It is brief, concise, and easy for beginners to the discussion to follow. The solid declaration follows the same arguments and discussion, but in a more complex and in depth way as the theologians and pastors argued.

Each Article in the Formula of Concord follows a clear and useful pattern. (1) First the controversy is stated with a summary of what each party confesses. (2) Then the affirmative statements are confessed on what is the truth. Sources range from Scripture as the primary source. Then secondary sources from the Augsburg Confession and Luther. Tertiary sources like church fathers and others are quoted. (3) Finally negative statements are laid out on false teaching. In this way, every argument is clear and concise.

Each article in the Formula of Concord is responding to a controversy that had split the Lutherans. Articles V and VI come from arguments from 1527-1556 about the use of God's law. Christ's decent into hell in Article IX comes from an argument in 1544. A controversy concerning Adiaphora in Article X is from 1548-1555. Christ's Righteousness is the topic in Article III from arguments from 1549-1566. A controversy over good works from 1551-1562 is covered in Article IV. Talking about how we work with God in our salvation, Synergism, is talked about in Article II and comes from 1555-1560. The Calvin infiltration of the Lutheran Church is uncovered from 1560-1574 in Articles VII and VIII. Finally, the controversy of Original Sin from 1560-1575 is discussed and resolved in Article I.

Articles

The Summary Content, Rule, and Norm

Epitome:

1. Read Paragraphs 1-2. “We believe, teach, and confess.” Get used to this line. How do we evaluate teaching? What is the source of authority of teaching in the Church?
2. Read paragraphs 3-5. What has the Church created to serve as pillars for this truth? What does a Symbol mean? (The Constitution is the Symbol of the United States). How are Symbols in the Church judged? What are our Symbols?
3. Read paragraphs 6-8. How do Confessions function as witnesses? Are they above or equal to Scripture? What is their purpose?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read paragraphs 1-5. The background is laid for the Formula of Concord. What is said about making a Confession of our Faith? What is the Confession that the Lutheran Church holds to as discussed in these articles?
2. Read paragraphs 6-10. Why is the Formula of Concord written?

3. Read the “Comprehensive Summary, Foundation, Rule and Norm” paragraphs 1-2. How is the Lutheran Church acting like the Ancient Church? How do we go about finding unity today? Where does it come from? Private Opinion or Public Testimony?

4. Read paragraphs 3-8. The sources of authority are listed and ranked. What are they?

5. Read paragraphs 9-13. Other sources of authority are listed as well. What are they? Why is it important to have body of doctrine and beliefs? What does this say about the Church who has gone before us?

6. Read paragraphs 14-20. Not only is it necessary to state what we believe. But also what we do not believe and also reject as evil and false. What is the source of division and strife in the church?

Article I: Original Sin

Epitome:

1. What is the status of the controversy with original sin?
2. What do we believe teach and confess concerning original sin?
3. What do we refute and reject about Original Sin?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read paragraphs 1-4. What is the argument between both sides?
2. Read paragraphs 5-15. What are the three main affirmative statements that we confess about Original sin? Note that the third point has 5 sub points.

3. Read paragraphs 16-32. One by one list out the false teachings. What is the problem with believing these? Notice how many of these false teachings are still popular among Christians today.

4. Read paragraphs 33-36. Here a presentation about what we believe about the corrupt nature is stated. What is Original Sin? Can we observe original sin with our eyes? Since we can't observe it, how do we know about it? Even with our corruption, are we still God's work?

5. Read paragraphs 37-42. Did God create Original Sin? Who did? Why does God allow Original Sin to continue in mankind? What must be distinguished in this article?

6. Read paragraphs 43-49. The Second, Third, and Fourth consider the implications and further areas this affects. How does God work our exposing Original Sin, destroying it, and making us new?

7. Read paragraphs 50-62. Here terms are defined. Write the meaning of each.

a. Nature:

b. Original Sin

c. Substantia

d. Accidens/accident

Article II: Free Will, or Human Powers

Epitome:

1. What is the status of the controversy with Free Will?
2. What do we believe teach and confess concerning Free Will?
3. What do we refute and reject about Free Will?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read paragraphs 1-4. Mankind's free will can be found in four conditions. What are those four conditions? What condition is argued about here? What does either side teach?
2. Read paragraphs 5-8. What do we teach about Free Will? Where do we find our proof for what we believe about Free Will?

3. Read paragraphs 9-16. What is the first proof against Man's Free Will in regards prior to conversion? Even after conversion, what do we need as believers?

4. Read paragraphs 17-24. What is the second proof that we confess about Man's will? Not only are we dead but also hostile. The old Adam in us, even after regeneration still opposes us.

5. Read paragraphs 25-47. As we go, note the sources of authority that are quoted. The Formula is also showing us how we should talk through our faith as well by doing this.

6. Read paragraphs 48-58. How are people converted? How does the Holy Spirit work?

7. Read paragraphs 59-73. Note how after we are converted, how does our will work with God? Think about two horses that pull a sleigh. One strong and one weak. (Seehafer's farm, new horse learning how to pull a sleigh).

8. Read paragraphs 74-83. Note as we go all that we reject concerning the powers of Free Will.

9. Read paragraphs 84-90. The term conversion is pinned down. How does God make effective our conversion?

Article III: The Righteousness of Faith Before God

Epitome:

1. What is the status of the controversy with Faith?
2. What do we believe teach and confess concerning Faith?
3. What do we refute and reject about Faith?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read paragraphs 1-5. What is the controversy? What does each side state concerning justification? What has caused this controversy?
2. Read paragraphs 6-17. What is justification? What is faith? Is faith a good work that we do?
3. Read paragraphs 18-27. What is regeneration? How else is regeneration described? What is the result of regeneration? How does love fit in?

4. Read paragraphs 28-35. How does sanctification fit in? How does this work in the Scriptures?

5. Read paragraphs 36-43. The exclusive terms are those qualifiers that Paul adds on when he talks of Justification. What are they? What do they imply? How do faith and works relate?

6. Read paragraphs 44-53. Read through the negative statements. As you do list each one. What are the implications for believing these lies?

7. Read paragraphs 54-58. Why does Jesus need to be both God and man? What happens if we reject either one?

8. Read paragraphs 59-67. More negative statements are listed out. Note each one and comment as we read.

Article IV: Good Works

Epitome:

1. What is the status of the controversy with Good Works?
2. What do we believe teach and confess concerning Good Works?
3. What do we refute and reject about Good Works?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read paragraphs 1-5. What is the controversy and what does each side argue?
2. Read paragraphs 6-13. Why do we do good works?
3. Read paragraphs 14-20. The real controversy in this article is the use of the terms. What should we mean by necessity, needful, and must?

Article V: The Law and the Gospel

Epitome:

1. What is the status of the controversy with Law and Gospel?
2. What do we believe teach and confess concerning Law and Gospel?
3. What do we refute and reject about Law and Gospel?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read paragraphs 1-2. What is the controversy? What is at stake?
2. Read paragraphs 3-15. What do we mean by Gospel? What do we mean by repentance? How can these terms be confused? A good reminder to always be clear in what we say.
3. Read paragraphs 16-22. Note what we believe, teach, and confess.

4. Read paragraphs 23-27. Here we see how to use Law and Gospel in the Church. How should we use them in our lives as Christians? What is their function?

Article VI: The Third Use of God's Law

Epitome:

1. What is the status of the controversy with The 3rd Use?
2. What do we believe teach and confess concerning The 3rd Use?
3. What do we refute and reject about the 3rd Use?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read paragraphs 1-3. The 3rd use of the Law is a secondary article detached from "Law and Gospel" Is there a third use of the law?
2. Read paragraphs 4-14. Why do believers still need the law in this life?
3. Read paragraphs 15-26. The law of God also prevents us from creating our own good works. Why are our imperfect keepings of the law still good before God? Finally. What is the lone condemnation?

Article VII: The Holy Supper of Christ

Epitome:

1. What is the status of the controversy with the Lord's Supper?
2. What do we believe teach and confess concerning the Lord's Supper?
3. What do we refute and reject about the Lord's Supper?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read paragraph 1. This article is not in dispute among the teachers of the Augsburg Confession, but adversaries are trying to take this teaching and distort it from there. What is this article arguing for?
2. Read paragraphs 2-8. Other denominations (sects) are trying to do what with the Augsburg Confession? What is the controversy?
3. Read paragraphs 9-16. What do the authoritative teachings proclaim?

9. Read paragraphs 59-65. Two types of eating Christ are described here. What do we mean and what do we not mean?

10. Read paragraphs 66-72. Who should partake of the Supper? Who is it for? What makes us worthy? What does our worthiness depend on? Ourselves? Or Christ?

11. Read paragraphs 73-78. What makes the Lord's Supper the Lord's Supper? Do men do it or does Christ?

12. Read paragraphs 79-90. We can speak here of consecrationism and receptionism. Note here that the Words of Institution must be spoken or sung before distribution. But also note that the Sacrament must be taken as Christ says for it to benefit.

13. Read paragraphs 91-97. This discusses why Jesus Christ is fully present in the meal and not just part of him. Christ is one person.

14. Read paragraphs 98-106. Note the thought of the virgin birth in the middle of paragraph 100. Luther here also talks about the three modes of where Christ's body is at. What do Luther mean when he says Spiritual?

15. Read paragraphs 107-128. List all the beliefs we condemn as false. Why are these important?

Article VIII: The Person of Christ

Epitome:

1. What is the status of the controversy with the Person of Christ?
2. What do we believe teach and confess concerning the Person of Christ?
3. What do we refute and reject about the Person of Christ?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read paragraphs 1-4. Linked to the previous article, what is the controversy here? Where did it come from?
2. Read paragraphs 5-15. What do we believe about the Person of Christ?
3. Read paragraphs 16-26. Note how we make distinctions but not divisions concerning the person of Christ. We are about this because we do not want a different Christ. There is only one.

4. Read paragraphs 27-35. The language here is using a lot from the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) which argued about the Personhood of Christ.

5. Read paragraphs 36-45. Luther and Zwingli argued about the Person of Christ. Zwingli took the heretical option, which he calls alloiosis, which meant that Christ's two natures were only figurative and nominal. This comes with great consequence. Why?

6. Read paragraphs 46-54. How should we talk about our Lord's union of natures?

7. Read paragraphs 55-60. What are the three arguments made to show that the whole person of Christ, God and man suffered and died for us?

8. Read Paragraphs 61-70. Here we are showing that we do not mingle either the Divine and Human natures of Jesus Christ and that what we confess is not new or deviating. How does God dwell in Jesus? What great analogy shows this?

9. Read paragraphs 71-87. What clarification and confession is made?

10. Read paragraphs 88-96. What do we condemn? Why does that matter?

Article IX: The Descent of Christ to Hell

Epitome:

1. What is the status of the controversy with the Descent into Hell?
2. What do we believe teach and confess concerning the Descent into Hell?
3. What do we refute and reject about the Descent into Hell?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read the article. It is the shortest. What is the path we take to understand Christ's descent into hell?

Article X: Church Practices

Epitome:

1. What is the status of the controversy with Church Practices?
2. What do we believe teach and confess concerning Church Practices?
3. What do we refute and reject about Church Practices?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read paragraphs 1-4. What is the controversy? What is an Adiaphora?
2. Read paragraphs 5-13. When is an Adiaphora not an Adiaphora? Just because it is neither commanded nor forbidden, does that mean we do not care? (Note it doesn't mean it is indifferent).
3. Read paragraphs 14-18. How is Adiaphora abused? Even today?

Article XI: God's Eternal Foreknowledge and Election

Epitome:

1. What is the status of the controversy with original sin?
2. What do we believe teach and confess concerning original sin?
3. What do we refute and reject about Original Sin?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read paragraphs 1-3. Is there a current disagreement? Why is this article then included? (Note that historically there would be, the early LCMS had to deal with it. In a way, the article on God's foreknowledge was foreknown to be a problem).
2. Read paragraphs 4-9. What do we believe about God's eternal foreknowledge? Why do we not try and plumb God's hidden wisdom? Will we find confidence?
3. Read paragraphs 10-24. What is at stake in this doctrine? What do we stand to gain or lose? Where do we find God's choice in me?

Article XII: Other Factions and Sects

Epitome:

1. What Articles cannot be tolerated in the Church from the Anabaptists concerning life in the Church?
2. What Articles cannot be tolerated in the Church from the Anabaptists concerning life in the Government?
3. What Articles cannot be tolerated in the Church from the Anabaptists concerning life in the Home?
4. What errors cannot be tolerated from the Schwenkfeldians?
5. What errors cannot be believed from the New Arians?
6. What errors cannot be believed from the Anti-Trinitarians?

Solid Declaration:

1. Read paragraphs 1-8. Why are sects called out?
2. Read paragraphs 9-27. List each false teaching out as we go. Why do these matter?
3. Read paragraphs 28-35. What false teachings are called out and condemned here?
4. Read paragraphs 36-40. What final errors are condemned and how does the Formula of Concord conclude?

Conclusion

The Formula of Concord, due to its content and clarity, resolved the conflict between the factions of Lutherans. Soon, Chemnitz and other key theologians went to work to bring together the Book of Concord. The teachings and documents covered the key teachings that were seen to be the Lutheran Confession of faith.

Finally, in the city of Dresden, on June 25th 1580, 50 years to the day since the Augsburg Confession were proclaimed in Augsburg, the Book of Concord was published. As a testament to the work of Chemnitz and the united front that was created, over 8,000 laypeople, pastors, theologians and city governments signed their names to the Book of Concord. The Book of Concord became the bedrock confession that defines Lutheran teaching.

For nearly 40 years, following the death of Luther, the Lutheran Reformation had balanced on the edge of a knife. Now, it was made whole again, in no small part to the countless men and women, pastors and laypeople, who had stood strong on the faith in Christ in a time when it was most needed. What Chemnitz had done was the capstone to the efforts that had been waged during all that time. Many who stood strong, like Moses, never got to see the entrance into the Promised Land, but greeted it from afar with their unwavering commitment to the freedom in Christ.

Following the publication of the Book of Concord, an era of peace and stability flourished in the Lutheran faith. A Golden Age as it were. From 1580-1730 Lutherans developed missions across the world in Ethiopia, North America, India, and more. Schools developed and flourished, and for over 150 years, Lutherans continued to advance the Gospel. All of this would change as the Christian sun began to set in Europe until a moment of crisis caused a group of Saxon Lutherans to immigrate to America, landing near St. Louis Missouri, and starting the seeds to what would eventually become the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. But that is a story for a different day.