

The Augsburg Confession

What Does It Mean to Be a Lutheran?

The Augsburg Confession in its religious setting:

- 13 years after Luther nailed the 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.
- 9 years after he was declared an outlaw by Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms.
- Other reformers had started to form their own movements.

The Augsburg Confession in its political setting:

- Germany was fragmented into small kingdoms.
- Charles' kingdom included Spain and portions of Germany (Austria).
- When Charles V declared Luther an outlaw he had bigger problems.
 - New to the throne.
 - Faced several external threats (Turk, France, Pope)
- Charles sacked Rome in 1527.
- He defeated the Francis I of France and concluded peace with him in 1529.

The Augsburg Confession in its geographic setting:

- Before leaving for Augsburg the Saxon Lutherans had prepared a defense of their reforms.
- When they arrived in Augsburg they found that Dr. John Eck (a Romanist) was circulating a series of 404 statements that slandered the Reformation. This made it necessary for the Lutherans to change their document from a defense of a few changed practices to a comprehensive confession of their faith.
- Lutherans from other areas wanted to be a part of the confession.
- Martin Luther could not be present, so Melancthon was the primary author.
- Charles V had the confession read on June 25, 1530 in the palace not in the council room so less people could be present.

Preface to the Emperor Charles V

1] Most Invincible Emperor, Caesar Augustus, Most Clement Lord: Inasmuch as Your Imperial Majesty has summoned a Diet of the Empire here at Augsburg to deliberate concerning measures against the Turk, that most atrocious, hereditary, and ancient enemy of the Christian name and religion, in what way, namely, effectually to withstand his furor and assaults by strong and lasting military provision; 2] and then also concerning dissensions in the matter of our holy religion and Christian Faith, that in this matter of religion the opinions and judgments of the parties might be heard in each other's presence; and considered and weighed 3] among ourselves in mutual charity, leniency, and kindness, in order that, after the removal and correction of such things as have been treated and understood in a different manner in the writings on either side, these matters may be settled and brought back to one simple truth and Christian concord, 4] that for the future one pure and true religion may be embraced and maintained by us, that as we all are under one Christ and do battle under Him, so we may be able also to live in unity and concord in the one Christian Church.

- What two matters are identified as the purpose of the diet at Augsburg?
- What clearly seems to have been the hope of the Lutherans?

And inasmuch as we, the undersigned Elector and 5] Princes, with others joined with us, have been called to the aforesaid Diet the same as the other Electors, Princes, and Estates, in obedient compliance with the Imperial mandate, we have promptly come to Augsburg, and—what we do not mean to say as boasting—we were among the first to be here.

6] Accordingly, since even here at Augsburg at the very beginning of the Diet, Your Imperial Majesty caused to be proposed to the Electors, Princes, and other Estates of the Empire, amongst other things, that the several Estates of the Empire, on the strength of the Imperial edict, should set forth and submit their opinions and judgments in the German and the Latin 7] language, and since on the ensuing Wednesday, answer was given to Your Imperial Majesty, after due deliberation, that we would submit the Articles of our Confession for our side on next Wednesday, therefore, in obedience to Your Imperial Majesty's 8] wishes, we offer, in this matter of religion, the Confession of our preachers and of ourselves, showing what manner of doctrine from the Holy Scriptures and the pure Word of God has been up to this time set forth in our lands, dukedoms, dominions, and cities, and taught in our churches.

- Who took responsibility for what was being taught?
- What lessons can we draw from that?

9] And if the other Electors, Princes, and Estates of the Empire will, according to the said Imperial proposition, present similar writings, to wit, in Latin and German, giving their opinions in this 10] matter of religion, we, with the Princes and friends aforesaid, here before Your Imperial Majesty, our most clement Lord are prepared to confer amicably concerning all possible ways and means, in order that we may come together, as far as this may be honorably done, and, the matter between us on both sides being peacefully discussed without offensive strife, the dissension, by God's help, may be done away and brought back to one true accordant 11] religion; for as we all are under one Christ and do battle under Him, we ought to confess the one Christ, after the tenor of Your Imperial Majesty's edict, and everything ought to be conducted according to the truth of God; and this it is what, with most fervent prayers, we entreat of God.

- What do the Lutherans make clear will be their standard for resolving the dissension?

12] However, as regards the rest of the Electors, Princes, and Estates, who constitute the other part, if no progress should be made, nor some result be attained by this treatment of the cause of religion after the manner in which Your Imperial Majesty has wisely held that it should be dealt with and treated namely, by such mutual presentation of writings and calm conferring together among ourselves, 13] we at least leave with you a clear testimony, that we here in no wise are holding back from anything that could bring about Christian concord,—such as could be effected with God and a good conscience,—as 14] also Your Imperial Majesty and, next, the other Electors and Estates of the Empire, and all who are moved by sincere love and zeal for religion, and who will give an impartial hearing to this matter, will graciously deign to take notice and to understand this from this Confession of ours and of our associates.

- What did the Lutherans promise to do at Augsburg?

15] Your Imperial Majesty also, not only once but often, graciously signified to the Electors Princes, and Estates of the Empire, and at the Diet of Spires held A.D. 1526, according to the form of Your Imperial instruction and commission given and prescribed, caused it to be stated and publicly proclaimed that 16] Your Majesty, in dealing with this matter of religion, for certain reasons which were alleged in Your Majesty's name, was not willing to decide and could not determine anything, but that Your Majesty would diligently use Your Majesty's office with the Roman Pontiff for the convening of a General Council. 17] The same matter was thus publicly set forth at greater length a year ago at the last Diet which met at Spires. 18] There Your Imperial Majesty, through His Highness Ferdinand, King of Bohemia and Hungary, our friend and clement Lord, as well as through the Orator and Imperial Commissioners caused this, among other things, to be submitted: that Your Imperial Majesty had taken notice of; and pondered, the resolution of Your Majesty's Representative in the Empire, and of the President and Imperial Counselors, and the Legates from other Estates convened at Ratisbon, 19] concerning the calling of a Council, and that your Imperial Majesty also judged it to be expedient to convene a Council; and that Your Imperial Majesty did not doubt the Roman Pontiff could be induced to 20] hold a General Council, because the matters to be adjusted between Your Imperial Majesty and the Roman Pontiff were nearing agreement and Christian reconciliation; therefore Your Imperial Majesty himself signified that he would endeavor to secure the said Chief Pontiff's consent for convening, together with your Imperial Majesty such General Council, to be published as soon as possible by letters that were to be sent out.

21] If the outcome, therefore, should be such that the differences between us and the other parties in the matter of religion should not be amicably and in charity settled, then here, before Your Imperial Majesty we make the offer in all obedience, in addition to what we have already done, that we will all appear and defend our cause in such a general, free Christian Council, for the convening of which there has always been accordant action and agreement of votes in all the Imperial Diets held during Your Majesty's reign, on the part of the Electors, Princes, and other Estates of the Empire. 22] To the assembly of this General Council, and at the same time to Your Imperial Majesty, we have, even before this, in due manner and form of law, addressed ourselves and made appeal in this matter, by far the greatest and gravest. To this 23] appeal, both to Your Imperial Majesty and to a Council, we still adhere; neither do we intend nor would it be possible

for us, to relinquish it by this or any other document, unless the matter between us and the other side, according to the tenor of the latest Imperial citation should be amicably and charitably settled, allayed, and brought to Christian concord; 24] and regarding this we even here solemnly and publicly testify.

- What additional path for reconciliation had the Lutherans been pushing for and would still use even if the diet at Augsburg failed?
- Agree or Disagree: The Lutherans wrote the way they did because they didn't want to anger Charles V.

Chief Articles of Faith

Article I: Of God

1] Our Churches, with common consent, do teach that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence and concerning the Three Persons, is true and to be believed without any doubting; 2] that is to say, there is one Divine Essence which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and 3] yet there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the term "person" 4] they use as the Fathers have used it, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself.

- Why do you think the Lutherans referenced the Council of Nicea and the church fathers?

5] They condemn all heresies which have sprung up against this article, as the Manichaeans, who assumed two principles, one Good and the other Evil: also the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and all such. 6] They condemn also the Samosatenes, old and new, who, contending that there is but one Person, sophistically and impiously argue that the Word and the Holy Ghost are not distinct Persons, but that "Word" signifies a spoken word, and "Spirit" signifies motion created in things.

- Manichaeans: Essentially made God and Satan equal opposites.
- Valentinians: Divided spiritual and physical. They generally viewed the physical as bad and the spiritual as good.
- Arians: Denied the full deity of Jesus and the trinity.
- Eunomians: Denied the deity of Jesus and the trinity (more extreme than Arians).
- Mohammedans: Jesus was just a human prophet.
- Samosatenes: Denied the trinity; taught that one God reveals himself in three ways.

Can you think of any groups today that hold to the same or similar errors?

Article II: Of Original Sin

1] Also they teach that since the fall of Adam all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with 2] concupiscence; and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Ghost.

- Agree or disagree: Sin is part of human nature.
- Concupiscence=wicked desire.
- Why does this article get “second billing”?

3] They condemn the Pelagians and others who deny that original depravity is sin, and who, to obscure the glory of Christ's merit and benefits, argue that man can be justified before God by his own strength and reason.

- How does a denial of original sin obscure the glory of Christ's merits?

Article III: Of the Son of God

1] Also they teach that the Word, that is, the Son of God, did assume the human nature in 2] the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably enjoined in one Person, one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and 3] buried, that He might reconcile the Father unto us, and be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.

4] He also descended into hell, and truly rose again the third day; afterward He ascended into heaven that He might sit on the right hand of the Father, and forever reign and have dominion over all creatures, and sanctify 5] them that believe in Him, by sending the Holy Ghost into their hearts, to rule, comfort, and quicken them, and to defend them against the devil and the power of sin.

6] The same Christ shall openly come again to judge the quick and the dead, etc., according to the Apostles' Creed.

- This article is very similar to the 2nd article of the Apostles' Creed. What does this article add?

Article IV: Of Justification

1] Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for 2] Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. 3] This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.

- What is the basis for justification?
- How is justification received?
- What do you think of this remark by Luther: "There is no difference between the Jew, the Papist, and the Turk"?

Article V: Of the Ministry

1] That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, 2] the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear 3] the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake.

4] They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works.

- Can you think of any modern examples of the Anabaptists?

Article VI: Of New Obedience

1] Also they teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will, but that we should not rely on those works to merit justification 2] before God. For remission of sins and justification is apprehended by faith, as also the voice of Christ attests: When ye shall have done all these things, say: We are unprofitable servants. Luke 17:10. The same is also taught by 3] the Fathers. For Ambrose says:

It is ordained of God that he who believes in Christ is saved, freely receiving remission of sins, without works, by faith alone.

- How are good works necessary if they are not necessary for salvation?