

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

Part 1 - What is it?

We need to talk:

- 1) What does it mean to be a Lutheran?
- 2) How do you know what your Church (denomination) teaches about ____?
- 3) What are some examples of “statements of belief” or “faith statements”?

I) Background to the Augsburg Confession

A) What is a “Confession”?

- 1) Basic meaning of the word
 - “Con” = with (con-cave, con-course, con-current), not to be confused with contra
 - “Fessio” = statement (usually a public proclamation)
 - Confess = publically state with / same-say as ____
- 2) Liturgical use of Confess / Confession
 - Confession of sin
 - * Saying the same as God’s Word; we have sinned / are sinners
 - Confession of faith
 - * Saying the same as God’s Word about who God is and what He’s done
 - * Credo (I beleive); Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian
 - * Many “creedal statements” in Scripture as well
 - **Romans 10:9**
 - **Deuteronomy 6:4**
 - **I Corinthians 15:3-7**
 - **Philippians 2:6-11**
- 3) Historical use
 - usually an autobiography / biography of a particular person’s faith journey
 - Confessions of St. Patrick is perhaps the oldest (around 395 AD)
 - Confession of St. Augustine is best known (around 424 AD)
- 4) Systematic use
 - Systematics is the theological field that takes all of what Scripture teaches about a particular topic and arranges it by topics (God’s name, marriage, Church, etc.)
 - The Small Catechism is this type of work
 - Sometimes improperly called “doctrine” (teaching)
 - there are a great many “Confessions” in this sense
 - * The Westminster Confession - Presbyterian
 - * The Helvetic Confession - Swiss Reformed
 - * The Geneva Confession - John Calvin 1536 (many Calvinists use this)
 - to be a “Confessional” church body means to adhere to one of these confessions
 - For LCMS it is ALL the works contained in the Book of Concord, of which the *Unaltered* Augsburg Confession is chief

B) A new Diet - what is a diet

- 1) Also called a *reichstag*, though that term took new meaning in WWII
- 2) An assembly of the Holy Roman Emperor and the princes / electors of the region
- 3) As “Holy” and “Roman” Emperor, there would always be a Papal legate as well
- 4) Decided matters of war, economics / taxation, religion, governance, and “high” crimes
- 5) Best known to LCMS is the Diet of Worms in 1521 (“Here I stand” speech)

C) A note about excommunicato

- 1) Literally means “Don’t talk to this person” / cut off from communication
- 2) Made one inelligable to receive the rites and ceremonies of the Church
 - * Could not get married, children could not be baptized, no Lord’s Supper, etc.
 - * Cut off from recieving God’s grace or forgiveness (until penance / restoration)
 - * Could not simply go to the next church down the block and join up
- 3) Had economic consequences
 - * You do not trade / do business with those who you can’t even talk to
 - * Cannot employ those who are under the “greater ban” (excommunicated)
- 4) A matter of life and death
 - * As the State enforced the decisions of the Church, this made one an “outlaw”
 - * To be “outside the law” meant you got none of the law’s / State’s protections
 - * Any person could kill an excommunicato at will (and usually rewarded)

D) Diets preceding Augsburg

- 1) Worms 1521 - Luther told to recant, he refused
- 2) Speyer I 1526
 - * Princes told to crush all who followed this “apostate monk”; they refused
 - * *Qui regio, quia religio* - as the ruler, so the religion
 - the Princes / electors could decide what religion is practiced in their territories
 - * Most of northern Germany (a few southern cities) went Lutheran
 - * In force only until a general assembly could be convened by the Pope
- 3) Speyer II 1529
 - * Lutheranism spreading, Pope still hasn’t called a general assembly / council
 - * Charles V “stacked the deck” with Catholic princes
 - * Overturned decree of Speyer I (all must worship in Roman style / Roman teachings)
 - * Led the princes to issue a *Protesto* (along with other Reformed) = Protestant
- 4) In October 1529 Charles V has had enough
 - * Turks are at the gates of Vienna and he needs a unified empire to repel them
 - * Wallachia and Hungary have fallen to Islamic forces
 - * Called for all princes to meet in Augsburg April 1530 to settle this matter

E) Writings leading up to the Augsburg Confession (proto-Augustanae)

- 1) Small and Large Catechisms 1529 (small for children, large for adults)
- 2) Marburg Articles of 1529
 - * Charles V used military force to crush protestants in Switzerland (Zwinglian)
 - * If he can do it there, there’s nothing stopping him from doing it in Saxony
 - * Philip of Hesse tried to form a political / military alliance with Swiss reformed
 - * Luther opposed sch an alliance while doctrinal divisions remained

3) Torgau Articles, March 1530

- * Elector John of Torgau called for Luther to write up the main grievances to be presented before His Majesty at Augsburg
- * Luther and Philip Melancthon came up with 15 articles (items) that needed to be resolved for Lutherans and Catholics to come together for the sake of defense
- * These 15 items were: human doctrines and ordinances, marriage of priests, both kinds in the Mass, mandatory / sacramental confession, power of bishops, ordination, monastic vows, invocation of the saints, singing in German, faith and works, Office of the Keys (how is sin forgiven), excommunication, marriage, and private masses.
- * These articles would help Melancthon shape the Augsburg Confession and many of these issues would be incorporated into the AC

4) The Schwabach Articles 1529

- * Written by Melancthon and Luther (and some other Wittenburg theologians)
- * Primarily dealt with the Eucharist, original sin, faith (how we get faith), and works
- * Written to show the difference between Lutheran and Zwinglian (Swiss) reformed

F) Who wrote the Augsburg Confession

- 1) Philip Melancthon began work on it when he arrived in Augsburg in April 1530
- 2) Luther could not attend as he was still excommunicated and “a wanted man”
- 3) Luther was nearby and communicated daily by letter
- 4) Wrote it in both Latin (which was read) and German (written for the princes)
 - * It took him just 1 week to write this
- 5) The Lutheran princes assembled all signed their names to it
- 6) This was then presented to the Emperor on June 25, 1530
- 7) A year later, Luther and Melancthon would write the Apology (explanation)

G) Understanding the language (certain terms we don’t often use)

- 1) Heathen - having no god or old, pagan gods / goddesses (never disappeared)
- 2) Turk - one who follows Islam, especially the militant Ottoman Turks
- 3) Anabaptists - a sect who denied the efficacy of infant baptism and proscribed the practice of “believer’s baptism” as the only true baptism
- 4) Roman - referring to the Catholic church, its leadership, and / or practices
- 5) Greeks - Greek and other Eastern Orthodox church bodies
- 6) Articles - topics for discussion
- 7) Donatists - a heretical sect that taught the efficacy of the Sacraments depended on the holiness / purity of the priest performing them.

H) Content

- 1) Articles 1-20 primarily speak to the doctrines settled at Nicea in 325-326
- 2) Articles 21-28 deal with various abuses that entered the church through the centuries
- 3) MOST of the first portion there is little disagreement on with Rome

For next week: Read through articles I-IV; these were “the big ones” in 1530

AUGSBURG CONFESSION 2

Who is your god?

Let's talk about it:

- 1) In English grammar, how important is a / the “definitive article”?
 - e.g. THE son of God vs. A son of God
 - Capitalization also gives a clue
- 2) Are human beings intrinsically good, bad, or neutral?
- 3) What are some key teachings by which a Church stands or falls?

II) The Basics

A) Who is God (Article I)

- 1) What is universalism and its forerunner pantheism?
 - How is this practiced today?
- 2) What quasi-Christian denominations exist today? (Non-Trinitarian Churches)
- 3) What is the ancient (and modern) heresy of *Modalism*?
- 4) What is the ancient (and modern) heresy of *Partialism*?
- 5) How would you explain the Trinity?
- 6) Why was and is this a chief point of doctrine?
- 7) When God is “dethroned” as Creator, what problems / abuses follow?

B) The nature of Man - Article II

- 1) Compare **Genesis 1:18** and **Genesis 1:31**.
- 2) Why would God make a creature that could defy His will?
- 3) How would you define “sin”?
- 4) If Eve took the fruit and ate, why do we call it Adam’s sin?
- 5) What is *concupiscence*?
- 6) How do we get rid of this disease?
- 7) Is there such a thing as “a good man”? (See **Mark 10:18**)

C) The person and work of the Christ - Article III

- 1) What are some beliefs about who Jesus is / was?
- 2) What was the chief source of disagreement among Christians before Nicea 325 AD
- 3) Why is it important to believe Jesus was “conceived by the Holy Spirit”?
- 4) Why is important to believe He was “born of the Virgin Mary”?
- 5) What was the point of the Incarnation?
- 6) How does Jesus *sanctify* us?
- 7) What is the Christian’s hope? (See **Revelation 22:17, 20**)

D) Justification - Article IV

- 1) Why is *this* considered the chief article of Christian faith?
- 2) What is salvation? (What does it mean to be saved?)
- 3) What does it mean to “justify”?
- 4) What are some other methods of justification being taught today?
- 5) What is *satisfaction*? (Other than what Mic Jagger can’t get none of)
- 6) What is *atonement*?
- 7) Since we can’t justify ourselves, should we try to keep God’s Law (**Romans 6:1**)

Closing Prayer: **O Holy Spirit, You direct the Church in every age. Guide us in our generation to be bold in our witness to the Gospel and faithful and clear in our confession of the faith entrusted to us, freely and joyfully sharing the Good News of our Lord, Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with You and the Father, ever one God, world without end. Amen.**

For next week: What is the Church? Articles V - VIII

AUGSBURG CONFESSION 3

One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church

Articles V - VIII

We need to talk:

- 1) What are some of the ways the word “Church” might be used?
- 2) *Must* Christians do good works? Why / why not?
- 3) What are the “marks of the Church”? How do you know if it’s a Church or something else?

III) Church and ministry (C.F.W. Walther wrote a whole book on this)

A) The Office of the Ministry - Article V

- 1) What does it mean to be an “officer” or an “official”?
- 2) What is a minister?
- 3) What does the term “pastor” mean?
- 4) What is the pastor’s “job description” according to article V?
- 5) Who is responsible for bringing people to faith and maintaining said faith? (**John 3:8**)
- 6) What is the legacy of the Anabaptists? (Not to be confused with Baptist denomination)
- 7) Is preaching to be exhortative, explicative, didactic, or something else?

B) Faith and Works - Article VI

- 1) What is an *antinomian*?
- 2) How do you know if an activity counts as a “good work”?
- 3) Why is the fruiting / garden analogy so often used? (Gal. 5:22-23, Luke 3:8 et alia)
- 4) How does **Luke 17:10** show us how to view our good works?
- 5) Did all (or at least most) the Church Fathers (pre-450 AD) hold this same view?
- 6) How do some churches today overemphasize works?
- 7) How do some churches today under-emphasize good works?

C) The Church - Article VII

- 1) What is the “Magna Carta”?
 - How is this term used colloquially?
- 2) Why is this article called the “Magna Carta of Lutheranism”?
- 3) What makes the Church the Church?
- 4) Would those who preach a different Gospel (social justice, prosperity, etc) be considered part of the Church Universal?
- 5) What is the role of human traditions, rites, and ceremonies?
- 6) What does **Matthew 15:9** tell us about these rules taught by men?
- 7) How does Paul sum up the basis of Church unity?

D) The Hidden Church - Article VIII

- 1) What is a hypocrite?
- 2) How do you know what someone believes?
- 3) Who were the Donatists?
- 4) How does **Matthew 13:24-30** help us understand **Matthew 25:31-46**?
- 5) What makes Word and Sacrament effective?
- 6) What does this tell us about pastoral perfection?
- 7) Should pastors be held to “a higher standard” of morality and lifestyle?

For next week: The Sacraments

Read through Articles IX - XIII

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

Part IV - The Sacraments

Let's talk about it:

- 1) What is a Sacrament?
- 2) How many do Lutherans have?
 - Why do other churches have up to 7?
- 3) Look up the phrase: *ex opere operata*. What does this mean?

IV. The sacraments

A) Baptism - Article IX

- 1) Do you know your baptismal date?
- 2) Do you know who your godparents (or sponsors) were / are?
- 3) What is "Believer's baptism"?
 - which denominations practice this?
 - what fundamental misunderstanding(s) does it convey?
- 4) Why do we baptize infants?
- 5) What, then, is Confirmation?
- 6) Can one be saved without baptism? See **Mark 16:16**
- 7) What do we gain through baptism?

B) The Lord's Supper - Article X

- 1) Why is this the most divisive point of doctrine between denominations?
- 2) What is the root cause of this division?
- 3) What is *transubstantiation*?
- 4) What does it mean that "the body and blood of Christ are truly present"?
- 5) Why did Christ institute this sacrament? See **Matthew 26:26-28**
- 6) At one time Christians were charged with cannibalism. Does this charge "stick"?
- 7) Why don't Lutherans have an explanation as to "how" Christ is present?

C) Confession - Article XI

- 1) Why is confession and absolution sometimes called the third sacrament?
- 2) Do Lutherans practice private confession and absolution?
- 3) When did this practice fall out of favor among our churches?

- 4) Do we need to recount and confess every sin we have committed?
 - daily confession was adopted for just this reason
- 5) What happens to those sins we cannot recall or do not confess?
- 6) Define the following terms (liturgical / church usage of them)
 - Attrition:
 - Contrition:
 - Confession:
 - Absolution:
- 7) We often put corporate confession at the beginning of service (start worship with a “clean slate” so to speak), but where else would it make sense to put this rite?

D) Repentance: Article XII

- 1) What is the most basic meaning of the word “repent”?
- 2) How did Luther begin his 95 Theses? (Google thesis 1)
- 3) How did this become corrupted over the centuries before Luther?
- 4) How could the Roman “penance system” be a good thing?
- 5) Is repentance necessary for salvation?
- 6) What were some of the other errors about repentance that crept into the Church?
- 7) How do we practice repentance today?

E) The Use of the Sacraments - Article XIII

- 1) How often should the Lord’s Supper be offered? Why?
- 2) How are the sacraments (esp. Lord’s Supper) testimonies to men? **I Cor. 11:26**
- 3) How are the sacraments testimonies of God’s love for us?
- 4) How do the sacraments awaken and strengthen faith?
- 5) What is required to receive the benefits of the sacraments?
- 6) What is the “power source” for the sacraments?
- 7) What is the limitation of Zoom worship for Lutherans (though not others)?

For next week: Church and State - Articles XIV to XVII