

# Study of Concordia - The Lutheran Confession of Faith

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## The Unaltered Augsburg Confession

### Article XIX - The Cause of Sin



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#### Review/Summary:

The Augsburg Confession is the specific Lutheran confession of the Christian faith which we believe, teach, and confess in our churches according to God's Holy Word. It was written by Philip Melancthon in consultation with Luther and others and presented to the Diet of Augsburg on June 25, 1530 AD. The aim of the confession was to present as fully as possible the doctrinal articles of the Orthodox Christian faith, as taught in Scripture and the "Church catholic" (universal). Rome had charged Luther and "the Lutherans" of teaching heresy. The Lutherans presented their case before Emperor Charles V, and the confession was accepted making it "legal" to be Lutheran Christians because our teachings did not dissent from the Orthodox Christian teaching of Scripture.

It consists of 28 articles of which the first 21 deal with the "chief articles of faith"— most following the model of Thesis-Antithesis. That is each states the belief we hold and then states the false beliefs which are condemned (as heresy). The last 7 articles are the abuses which had been corrected by the Lutherans, showing why Rome was actually guilty of heresy and justifying the changes made by the Lutherans with regard to customs and ceremonies.

**Article I: Of God**— This article proceeds from the creeds (especially the Nicene council) and teaches that there are three persons in the God-head who are of the same essence and power and who are co-eternal.

**Article II: Of Original Sin**— All men are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence (desire for sin); and this disease, or vice of origin is truly sin.

**Article III: Of The Son of God**— Christ Jesus, true God and true man, suffered and died to reconcile the Father unto us and be a sacrifice for all sins of men. He sends the Holy Spirit.

**Article IV: Of Justification**— The righteousness of Christ is imputed to those who believe.

**Article V: Of The Ministry**— In order that we may be brought to faith in Jesus Christ the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted by God.

**Article VI: Of New Obedience**— Faith must bring forth good fruits/works.

**Article VII: Of The Church**— There is one holy Church. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments are rightly administered. It is enough for the true unity of the Church to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments (primary marks).

**Article VIII: What the Church Is**— Though the Church is the congregation of saints and true believers, nevertheless there are many hypocrites and evil persons in its midst. The sacraments and the Word are effectual by reason of the institution and command of Christ even if they be administered by evil men.

**Article IX: Of Baptism**— Baptism is necessary to salvation. Children are to be baptized and through baptism they are received into God's grace.

**Article X: Of The Lord's Supper**— The body and blood of Christ are truly present in, with, and under the bread and wine in the sacrament.

**Article XI: Of Confession**— Confession and private absolution ought to be retained in the Church, though enumeration of all sins is not necessary.

**Article XII: Of Repentance**— Repentance is necessary, and consists of contrition and faith.

**Article XIII: The Use of the Sacraments**— The sacraments are not only marks of professions among men, but signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, and are instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them

**Article XIV: Of Order in the Church**— No one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the sacraments unless he be regularly called.

**Article XV: Of Church Ceremonies**— Usages of ceremonies are profitable for good order and thus should be observed. Such observance, however, is not itself necessary unto salvation. Practices which are contrary to the Gospel should not be tolerated.

**Article XVI: Of Civil Government**— Lawful civil ordinances are good works of God, and it is right for Christians to accept civil office, to be judges, engage in just wars, serve as soldiers, make oath, etc.

**Article XVII: Of Christ's Return for Judgment**— At the end of the world Christ will appear for judgment and give to the godly and elect eternal life, but to ungodly men and the devils, torment without end.

**Article XVIII: Of Free Will**— Man has some liberty to choose in civil matters (horizontal righteousness), but he has no power without the Holy Spirit to work the righteousness of God (vertical righteousness), that is spiritual righteousness. Though nature is able in a manner to do outward work, such as to keep the hands from theft and murder (even in unregenerate man), yet nature cannot produce the inward motions such as the fear of God, trust in God, etc.

## Article XIX: The Cause of Sin

Note: The blame for sin rests solely with the devil and with us, not with God. Apart from God's mercy in Christ, there is no hope for the wicked. Years after the Augsburg Confession was written, in order to accentuate the depth of mankind's sinful condition, some Lutherans would imply that sin is of the very essence of people. (See pp. 530–31.) The result of this faulty teaching is that God becomes responsible for, indeed the Creator of, sin. Sin is a deep corruption of that which God created, and is entirely mankind's fault. (See also Ap XIX; SA III I.)

Our churches teach that although God creates and preserves nature, the cause of sin is located in the will of the wicked, that is, the devil and ungodly people. Without God's help, this will turns itself away from God, as Christ says, "When he lies, he speaks out of his own character" (John 8:44).

McCain, P. T. (Ed.). (2005). *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (p. 41). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

**\*\*Note\*\***

The Concordia Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord (published by CPH) uses the Latin Text of the Augsburg Confession. However, it is important to note that the Augsburg Confession was presented to Emperor Charles in written form in the Latin Text, but Chancellor Christian Beyer, the legal councillor of Frederick III, Elector of Saxony, read the text in German to the diet at Augsburg. Though there are no major differences between the Latin and German texts that alter meanings, it is important to note that sometimes the intent of an article can be better understood through the German text, as it was the native tongue of the German Lutherans. This article may be one such instance. So here is the German text for Article XIX—Of the Cause of Sin:

Concerning the cause of sin it is taught among us that although Almighty God has created and preserves all of nature, nevertheless the perverted will causes sin in all those who are evil and despise God. This, then, is the will of the devil and of all the ungodly. As soon as God withdrew his hand, it turned from God to malice, as Christ say (John 8:[44]): "When [the devil] lies, he speaks according to his own nature.

Kolb, R. and Wengert, T. (Ed.). (2000). *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (p. 52). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

## Reflection on Article XIX, The Cause Of Sin by George W. Forell

Even the most superficial readers of newspaper headlines would have to admit that we live in a troubled world. From the personal problems of sickness and boredom to the international tensions which result in armed conflict among nations we are everywhere confronted by questions to which we have no real answers.

Of course, a variety of answers have been suggested, but all seem pitifully inadequate. There are the faddists who tell us that health can be assured by means of certain odd “natural” foods or peculiar exercises. All problems, they suggest, could be solved if we were to adopt their particular diet. Some feel so strongly about this that they claim that the obvious defects in our society are the result of the chemicals introduced into our food and our water. They assert that not only our personal health but even our national security is threatened by the use of such chemicals.

While there may very well be some truth in the charges that insecticides and weed—killers are dangerous, it is hard to believe that our use of certain chemicals is the source of all evil, especially since it is apparent that evil was quite prevalent long before the invention of these modern devices.

Others tell us with equal sincerity that evil could be abolished if we would only change our economic system from one based on competition and the profit motive as basic incentives to one which would let the state be the universal employer and class loyalty the basic motive for work. Here again the solution looks unimpressive in view of the admitted existence of all kinds of evil in countries which have adopted such economic systems. Whatever else happened in China after 1945, evil did not disappear; otherwise the Red Guards would not have all this trouble uprooting it.

Still others claim that if only black men would rule, evil would fade away, since in the view of these prophets evil is directly related to “whiteness.” Apparently good is an aspect of skin pigmentation; the darker the skin, the better the man. This theory also lacks power to persuade in view of the way in which black people in power kill each other in certain parts of Africa, quite in line with the patterns established by those people we call “white.” Pigmentation is an aspect of our skin, not the seat of our conscience.

The list of phony solutions to the obvious predicament of man is endless, but as soon as they are described most people recognize their inadequacy. Evil is undeniably real, but the cause of evil eludes us.

It is the assertion of the Augsburg Confession that the cause of sin is the perverted human will. This is how it is stated: “It is taught among us that although almighty God has created and still preserves nature, yet sin is caused in all wicked men and despisers of God by the perverted will . . . as soon as God withdraws his support, the will turns away from God to evil.”

There are some young people who consider themselves very radical, who claim, “You cannot trust anybody over thirty.” The Augsburg Confession is far more radical. It says, “You cannot trust any man.” The people over thirty are not trustworthy—and neither are the people under thirty. According to the Augsburg Confession these young radicals are just plain sentimentalists.

The root of the trouble is not outside of men at all. It is not the economy or the political situation, the baseness of other races, the ingratitude of youth, or the insensitivity of the old. The problem lies with every man. White men are untrustworthy because they are sinful, not because they are white; the

same goes for black men. It is men who make capitalism and communism work badly, to the disadvantage of other men. According to the Augsburg Confession the problem of man is man. Any solution which evades this fact must of necessity fail.

But what is it that perverts the human will and makes it an instrument of evil? There are a number of very obvious causes. All men are unreasonably selfish; they prefer their own lesser good to the greater good of others. This makes them litter streets, evade income tax, break up homes, and do all sorts of obviously evil things. The boy who steps on the newly poured cement sidewalk in order to perpetuate his footprints expresses the same selfishness that makes his father repeat false rumors about a colleague started by the man who wants his job. The truck driver who endangers the life of everybody on the road by using pep-pills displays the same kind of basic selfishness that motivates the pretty young thing to make eyes at the married man in her office.

Men are full of unreasonable pride. The desire to feel superior poisons the relationship of the sexes, of generations, of races, and of nations. Men think they are superior to women. Every race considers itself better than other races, and every nation and tribe believes that it is by far the best. It is out of such foolish pride that the tensions between men are born and their relationship to each other perverted.

Men are full of idolatry. They worship false gods. Power, money, fame, pleasure are some idols that make men's life together almost impossible. Look at a disastrous conflict on any level and it will not be hard to discover some idolatry as the cause of the evil. The difference between conflicts in the family and among the nations is quantitatively vast, but qualitatively these conflicts are amazingly similar. In all cases they result from the perverted will. One of the insights of the Augsburg Confession is that it is not in the intellect but in the will of man that the root of the problem of evil is to be found. Evil starts in the heart of man, and in the heart of man it must, therefore, be overcome.

**Questions:**

*How does Article XIX on 'the Cause of Sin' relate to Article II on 'Original Sin'? What do they have in common? Why was it necessary to put Article XIX here? What more does it add?*

*The word "choice" is defined in several ways:*

- A) the act of choosing*
- B) The power to choose*
- C) The thing chosen*
- D) A variety to choose from*

*In common usage, the word choice often suggests the opportunity or privilege of choosing freely, without external pressure or force. Similar words offer more specific meanings:*

*Option - implies a power to choose that is specifically granted or guaranteed;*

*Alternative - implies a necessity to choose one and reject another possibility;*

*Selection - implies a wide variety of choice;*

*Decision - implies a thoughtful consideration of possibilities;*

*Election - implies an end or purpose which requires the exercise of judgement;*

*Preference - suggests the guidance of choice by one's judgement or predilections;*

*Will - is the personal wish or desire upon which a choice is made, or the ability to influence choices.*

*Why then would Lutherans insist on the Biblical language of "will" instead of choice, election, etc.?*

*According to James 1:12-16, what is the source of sin?*

*How does Galatians 5:16-26 reflect the nature of the will?*

*Based on Romans 3:10-11 and Article XIX, why are human beings not able able to save themselves by the power of their own free-will?*

*In terms of sin, is it fair to say, "The devil made me do it?"*



The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. (Genesis 6:5)

As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be at the coming of the Son of Man. (Matthew 24:37)

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander. (Matthew 15:19)

Adrian Blum

## Scripture Passages:

### James 1:12–16 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. <sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. <sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

<sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

### Galatians 5:16–26 (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. <sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

<sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

### Romans 3:10–12 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> as it is written: (Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3)

“None is righteous, no, not one;

<sup>11</sup> no one understands;  
no one seeks for God.

<sup>12</sup> All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;  
no one does good,  
not even one.”

## **Catechism Connection:**

The Sixth Petition

And lead us not into temptation.

*What does this mean?*

God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.

From An Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism (CPH 2017):

*Does God ever tempt us?*

God does not tempt us to sin. However, He does at times test our faith in order to bring us closer to Himself and strengthen our faith.

James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one.

John 6:5–6 Lifting up His eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward Him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.

James 1:2–3 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

Read Genesis 22:1–19, about how the Lord tested Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac; Judges 2:22, where God tested Israel to see if they would walk in the way of the Lord; and Matthew 15:21–28, about how Jesus tested the faith of the Canaanite woman.

How does God help us to resist [temptations and threats from the devil, world, and our sinful flesh]? He provides us with the Word of Christ, the Holy Spirit, Baptism, Absolution, the Lord's Supper, and the gift of prayer as armor and weapons.

Romans 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Ephesians 6:11, 17–18 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ... And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

Read Matthew 4:1–11, where Jesus repelled Satan with the Word of God, and 2 Corinthians 4:7–12, about how God's power can overcome our sins and weaknesses.

(From Luther's Large Catechism) "There is no help or comfort except to run here, take hold of the Lord's Prayer, and speak to God from the heart like this: 'Dear Father, You have asked me to pray. Don't let me fall because of temptations'" (LC III 110).

Luther, Martin. Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation - 2017 Edition. Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.