

Study of Concordia - The Lutheran Confession of Faith

The Unaltered Augsburg Confession

Week 4 - Article III



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 The Son of God

¹ Our churches teach that the Word, that is, the Son of God [John 1:14], assumed the human nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. ² So there are two natures—the divine and the human—inseparably joined in one person. There is one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried. ³ He did this to reconcile the Father to us and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of mankind [John 1:29].

⁴ He also descended into hell, and truly rose again on the third day. Afterward, He ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. There He forever reigns and has dominion over all creatures. ⁵ He sanctifies those who believe in Him, by sending the Holy Spirit into their hearts to rule, comfort, and make them alive. He defends them against the devil and the power of sin.

⁶ The same Christ will openly come again to judge the living and the dead, and so forth, according to the Apostles' Creed.

Note: The Augsburg Confession teaches the historic, biblical doctrine of Christ. Many early controversies about Christ's human and divine natures were resolved through careful study of God's Word, and are reflected in the Nicene Creed. Article III echoes that creed—our Lord Jesus Christ is one person having two natures: truly God and truly man. This is another mystery of the Christian faith that we receive with thanks, bowing before Christ in humble adoration. His incarnation in the womb of His virgin mother, Mary, was for our salvation. He is, and remains, for all eternity the God-man, the One who appeased, or propitiated, God's wrath against our sin and won for us eternal life. Even now He is present with us through His appointed means of grace—the Gospel and the Sacraments. He comes to strengthen, sustain, and support us, and to bring us safely to our heavenly home. (See also Ap III; SA II I; FC Ep VIII and SD VIII.)

McCain, P. T. (Ed.). (2005). [*Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*](#) (p. 32). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Outline of the Article:

- III. The Son of God
 - A. God the Son became man. (1)
 - B. The two natures are inseparably united in one person. (1,2)
 - C. One Christ was sacrificed for original sin and all other sins. (2,3)
 - D. Christ is exalted and will come again. (6)

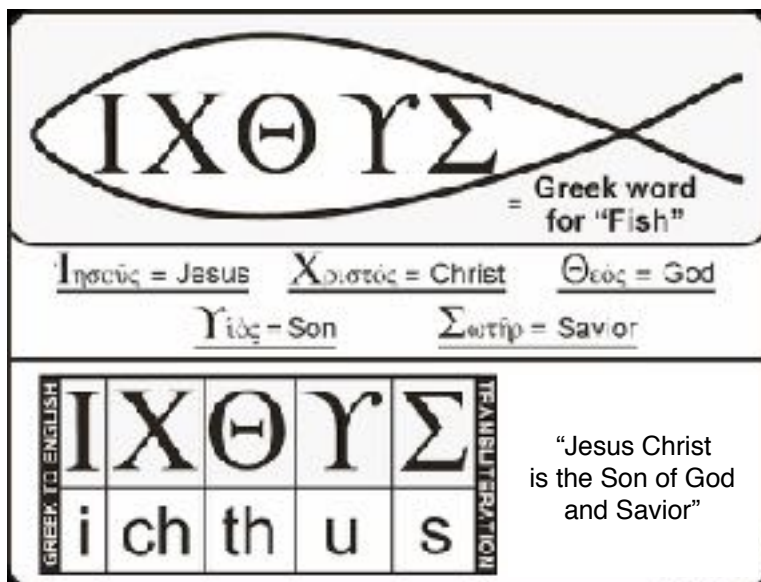
Terms Defined:

Reconcile— A change in relationship or attitude from enmity to peace; the cessation of hostility in attitude or action. Reconciliation is a central doctrine of Christianity. Specifically, in Christ God reconciled the sinful, hostile world to himself by Christ's taking upon himself the cost/penalty of our hostility and enmity (sin), thereby setting the world free to restored union with God (2 Cor 5:19). The foundational assumption of the gospel is that only God can bear and remove the consequences of human enmity toward God and the resulting separation from God; therefore God alone can effect this change in relationship.

Sanctify— “to be set apart for a holy purpose”; common use “to be made holy.”

The Ichthus Confession:

The first appearances of the ichthus symbol in Christian art and literature date to the 2nd century AD. In the early Church the simple outline of a fish became a Christian confession and identification sign. In Koine Greek (the language of the New Testament) the five letters of the word for “fish” helped believers to remember the truth of the Gospel. It was a very early creed or confession.



Questions:

Why is the Christian religion Christ-centered?

What is missing from this article?

Thankfully, for all the theological disagreements of the 16th century, there was no argument about the person of Jesus Christ. Such agreement had been gradually attained in the early church only after considerable debate about the meaning of the New Testament's affirmations and descriptions of Jesus as a genuine man and also the very Son of God himself. The creeds were formed to handle issues of the Trinity (as discussed in Article I), but also in relation to the person and work of Christ. These efforts were not a matter of theological or academic curiosity only. The early church quickly realized that the Gospel itself was at stake in the clear confession of Christ.

The Gospel of John is a good example of this importance. Read John 1:1-18 and John 21:24-25.

Why do we believe that Jesus Christ is true God?

Read John 5:30-47. To what witnesses (testimony) did Jesus refer in order to prove that He came from God and was God's Son? (Hint: There are 5 witnesses)

How do we know that Jesus Christ was true man?

What is the relationship between the two natures in Christ?

From the Athanasian Creed:

But it is also necessary for everlasting salvation that one faithfully believe the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it is the right faith that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is at the same time both God and man.

He is God, begotten from the substance of the Father before all ages; and He is man, born from the substance of His mother in this age:

perfect God and perfect man, composed of a rational soul and human flesh;

equal to the Father with respect to His divinity, less than the Father with respect to His humanity.

Although He is God and man, He is not two, but one Christ:

one, however, not by the conversion of the divinity into flesh but by the assumption of the humanity into God;

one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.

For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ,

who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again on the third day from the dead,

ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, from whence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

(McCain, P. T. (Ed.). (2005). *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (pp. 17–18). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.)

What is the importance of including this Article of faith—what we believe, teach, and confess about the Son of God—in the Augsburg Confession?

Scripture Passages Cited:

John 1:1–18 (ESV)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) ”

¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

John 21:24–25 (ESV)

²⁴ This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

²⁵ Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

John 5:30–47 (ESV)

Witnesses to Jesus

³⁰ “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³¹ If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. ³² There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. ³³ You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴ Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵ He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. ³⁶ But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, ³⁸ and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. ³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. ⁴¹ I do not receive glory from people. ⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. ⁴³ I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? ⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”