

# Study of Concordia - The Lutheran Confession of Faith

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The Unaltered Augsburg Confession

Week 9 - Articles IX, X - The Means of Grace, Part I



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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 Baptism

Note: The Bible teaches that Baptism is a gift of God's grace by which He applies the benefits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection to us personally. Because all people are conceived and born in sin, we all need salvation. Because Baptism is God's way of bringing us salvation, infants should also be baptized. During the Reformation, as now, some Christian groups turned Baptism from God's saving activity into an act of Christian obedience. This view of Baptism arises from the denial of original sin and a semi-Pelagian view of salvation, whereby faith becomes the good work we contribute. This article concentrates on what God gives in this Sacrament. (See also Ap IX; SA III V; LC IV.)

<sup>1</sup> Concerning Baptism, our churches teach that Baptism is necessary for salvation [Mark 16:16] and that God's grace is offered through Baptism [Titus 3:4–7]. <sup>2</sup> They teach that children are to be baptized [Acts 2:38–39]. Being offered to God through Baptism, they are received into God's grace.

<sup>3</sup> Our churches condemn the Anabaptists, who reject the Baptism of children, and say that children are saved without Baptism.

## Article X The Lord's Supper

Note: By the time the Augsburg Confession was written, deep divisions had arisen among the various reformers concerning the Lord's Supper. The Lutherans were very careful to distance themselves from those who reject that the body and blood of Christ are in fact truly present in His Supper and distributed to all those who eat and drink.

Transubstantiation, consubstantiation, or any other human speculation asks the wrong question: *how* is Christ present? Lutheranism has no theory or philosophical explanation of how Christ is present. Rather, Lutherans insist on answering the *what* of the Lord's Supper. We believe, teach, and confess that of the bread, Christ said, "This is My body," and of the wine, "This is My blood." These are given and shed "for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:26–28). We reject any teaching that is contrary to our Lord's Word. (See also Ap X; SA III VI; LC V; FC Ep VII and SD VII.)

<sup>1</sup> Our churches teach that the body and blood of Christ are truly present and distributed to those who eat the Lord's Supper [1 Corinthians 10:16]. <sup>2</sup> They reject those who teach otherwise.

### **Outline of the Article:**

#### IX. Baptism

- A. Baptism is necessary. (1)
- B. It is a means of grace. (1)
- C. Children should be baptized. (2)
- D. The Anabaptists are condemned. (3)

#### X. The Lord's Supper

- A. The true body and blood of Christ are present under the form of bread and wine. (1)
- B. They are distributed *and* received. (2)
- C. The contrary doctrine is rejected (The Sacramentarians). (2)

Note: In his 1540 version of the Confession (the Variata, or altered edition), Melancthon wrote: "Of the Lord's Supper they teach that together with the bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ are truly tendered to those who eat in the Lord's Supper." He also dropped the condemnatory clause.

## Terms Defined:

Salvation— God’s deliverance of humans from the power and effects of sin and the Fall through the work of Jesus Christ so that creation in general and humans in particular can enjoy the fullness of life intended for what God has made.

Sacraments— The Word and promise of God given with a physical sign (a natural element). For Lutherans, something is called a sacrament only if it was commanded by Christ and conveys His grace and forgiveness.

Anabaptists— Often referred to by the Lutheran reformers as “enthusiasts,” the Anabaptists were the most radical wing of the Reformation. They stressed a personal conversion experience apart from any external means. Many modern Christian denominations were influenced by the Anabaptist tradition, including: Amish/Mennonite, Pentecostal, Baptist, American Evangelical/[Most] Non-Denominational, Assemblies of God, etc.

Consubstantiation— The doctrine of consubstantiation is often held in contrast to the doctrine of transubstantiation. While some Lutherans use the term "consubstantiation" to describe their doctrine, many reject it as not accurately reflecting the eucharistic doctrine of Martin Luther, the sacramental union. They reject the concept of consubstantiation because it replaces what they believe to be the biblical doctrine with a philosophical construct and because it implies that the body and blood are physically present in the same way as the bread and wine, rather than being present in an "mysterious", supernatural way.

Memorialism— Originating with Ulrich Zwingli, a view of the Lord’s Supper that sees the rite as symbolic, as representing (or memorializing) Christ’s self-giving on the cross (together with his last supper with the disciples).

In contrast to the idea of the “real presence” taught by both the medieval Roman theologians and by Luther, memorialists believe that Christ’s presence is not localized in the communion elements but within the gathered community of believers. Memorialists consider the word “is” in Christ’s words, “This is my body... This is my blood” to be figurative, or only in a “spiritual sense” (Calvin-Reformed), so that it means “signifies” or “represents.” Hence by this phrase they mean Jesus was not referring literally to his physical body and blood but was indicating that the physical elements are merely symbols of his life that would be given for them.

## Human-Centered vs. God-Centered

### ↑ What is the Direction of Action? ↓

Is worship something we do for God, or something God does for us? What about Liturgy, Sacraments, faith, repentance, and all things ‘spiritually significant’ in what “the Church is/does” (Article VIII)?

Among religious traditions, there have always been two very different ways of thinking about faith.

One view describes faith (and anything spiritually significant) in terms of what human beings do for God. The other view finds the center of faith in what God does for us.

The difference between these two views shapes the way that different Christian denominations speak of the sacraments, either as ‘Ordinances’ (commands to obey) or as ‘the Means of Grace’ (signs through which God acts). It is not simply in the practice of Baptism or the Lord’s Supper that Christians differ, but in the fundamental way we understand what is happening in the Sacraments and everything that the Church does. Many of the disagreements among Christians are disagreements over the direction of action.

**Questions:**

*What are the three distinguishing marks that a rite must meet to be a sacrament?*

*What does the word “necessary” mean? (Evaluate in how the Small Catechism talks of Baptism)*

*What happens if Baptism is treated not as a promise (a divine saving act) but as a law (a human condition to be fulfilled)? What is the result?*

*Read Psalm 51:5 and Acts 2:38-39. How do these passages relate to whom Baptism is meant for? How do these passages condemn the teachings of Anabaptists who say children do not need to be baptized?*

*Is there a difference between referring to the sacrament of the altar as “The Lord’s Supper” or “Holy Communion”?*

*If Christ has already earned our forgiveness on the cross and we are already forgiven as Christians, then why do we need the Lord’s Supper? Should we take it often? Why or why not? (Acts 2:42, 1 Cor 11:20,26)*

*Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.*

*How does Christ command us to remember Him (verse 25)? What does remembrance mean here?*

*What is the difference between saying ‘this is me’ and ‘this represents me’?*

*Does the unbeliever who receives the consecrated bread and wine also receive the body and blood of Jesus?*

*What does “unworthily” mean? How does one receive the Lord’s Supper in a worthy manner?*

*What does this Scripture passage teach us about the practice of Closed Communion?*

### **Scripture Passages Cited:**

Psalm 51:5 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Acts 2:38–39 (ESV)

<sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Acts 2:42 (ESV)

<sup>42</sup> And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

1 Corinthians 11:17–34 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. <sup>18</sup> For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, <sup>19</sup> for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. <sup>20</sup> When you come together, it is not the Lord’s supper that you eat. <sup>21</sup> For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. <sup>22</sup> What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” <sup>25</sup> In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

<sup>27</sup> Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. <sup>30</sup> That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. <sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

<sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— <sup>34</sup> if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

**Altered Augsburg Confession** (Lat. *Variata*) is a later version of the Lutheran Augsburg Confession that includes substantial differences with regard to holy communion and the presence of Christ in bread and wine. Philipp Melancthon made several changes to the original Augsburg Confession in the years following its 1530 publication. Most of the changes were about the language of the confession. In 1540 and 1542, he rewrote some parts of the confession in order to reconcile it with the views of Calvinists. John Calvin himself did sign the 1540 version of the confession.

The most important difference between the *Variata* and the Augsburg Confession is in the theology of Real Presence. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession states:

- "Concerning the Lord's Supper, they teach that the body and blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed (communicated) to those that eat in the Lord's Supper. And they disapprove of those that teach otherwise."

Altered Augsburg Confession states:

- "Concerning the Lord's Supper, they teach that 'with' bread and wine are truly exhibited the body and blood of Christ to those that eat in the Lord's Supper."

Lutheran churches often specify that they agree to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as opposed to the altered version.

# Admission to the Lord's Supper:

## The Practice of Closed Communion

Why do we practice **closed communion**, inviting only Lutheran Church -Missouri Synod (LC-MS) members and members of sister churches to the altar? Many find this offensive. Please read why the common table-practice of "*if you want it, come and get it*" is not god-pleasing and actually more offensive. First consider two aspects of closed communion: concern *that none commune unworthily* (1 Cor. 11:27), and concern *that communicants confess the same true faith*.



**Our Lord desires that all who commune eat and drink worthily**, that is, for blessing. When the Lord's Supper is offered a pastor is called to guard you against unworthy eating and drinking. Jesus never said, "*to each his own*"; for the Church is not autonomous individuals. It is the *body* of Christ. To look after the many members of Christ's body God calls pastors as stewards (1 Cor. 4:1). Pastors look after the spiritual welfare of the body of Christ. He needs speak with those wanting to commune. "*For we do not intend to admit to the sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come.*" (Luther's Large Catechism, V, 2) Pastoral care means waiting to commune until you talk to the pastor; and it may mean taking time to study Christian doctrine so that you may eat and drink worthily. This is for your good, not harm.

Another reason we practice closed communion is **partaking visibly declares a common confession**. *Faith is not just an individual thing*. Christian faith is a *common* trust in our LORD and His teaching. We join a gathering of Christians because we agree with what they confess. But in our sin-struck world there are many church bodies that significantly differ in doctrines about Christ, salvation, the Lord's Supper, etc... These differences cannot be ignored since there is *one Lord, one faith, one baptism* (Eph. 4:5). By communing with a church body other than your own you visibly say you agree with their confession of faith. When you take the Lord's Supper you declare, "I belong here. I agree with what these people believe!" But if your church body and ours disagree, then communing together either says "I don't care what these people believe" or "what God's word means does not matter". Surely, you do not want to deny your faith or ask this church to compromise what we believe.

These are two aspects explaining why the LC-MS practices closed communion. For more explanation **read on:**

### What are the Biblical Practices of Holy Communion?

For centuries Christian churches were agreed on certain **Biblical practices of table fellowship**. The LC-MS follows the teaching of Scripture and the practice of the ancient church in admission to the Lord's Supper. **Closed communion** follows the Biblical and historic practice of table fellowship.

*What this does not mean:*

Closed communion **is not** sectarian, It does not claim that only one Christian church is worthy of the Lord's Supper. We desire that everyone who should partake would commune frequently. We do not want to create divisions in the Church or exclude believers from the gifts of God.

*What does this mean?*

Closed communion is unfortunate but necessary because not all desiring to commune are prepared to receive Christ's body and blood. Also, there are serious doctrinal divisions in the Church that cannot be ignored. (Communing does not create unity of faith but acknowledges a confessional unity that already exists.) Further, every church body and every pastor is held responsible to obey Scripture regarding the Lord's Supper. For example, we are charged: *Therefore, whoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.* (I Corinthians 11:27-29)

No godly pastor desires judgment to fall on members of his congregation or on guests. No godly church body fails to take our Lord's word seriously. No godly communicant fails to examine himself or herself. For **Christ gives his body and blood that you receive forgiveness, life, and salvation.** He does not desire it become a source of judgment. What then determines if someone is a worthy communicant, and what determines when Christians may commune with a congregation other than their own?

How do I know if I should commune?

#### WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR SHARING IN THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Ask yourself **two kinds of questions:**

1) Consider what has to do with **the person alone.** 2) Consider what has to do with **the confession of the church body** to which you belong.

1) REGARDING THE PERSON: Who should commune?

It does not matter how "good" or "spiritual" you are, what you've done for the Lord, or how much of the Bible you know. Rather, these four things are necessary for a person to rightly commune:

A) **Faith that Christ's death was for you** is necessary. Do you believe Jesus Christ died for your sins? Then you are prepared. If someone does not believe the words which Christ speaks about His Supper, "for you" and "for the forgiveness of sins," he should not commune.

B) **Faith that Christ's words mean what they say** is necessary. When Jesus said "This is my body," he spoke literally, not figuratively. Christ himself is actually present bodily in the Lord's Supper. If someone does not discern that which is blessed is the body and blood of Christ, he should not commune. (*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ?* [I Cor. 10:16])

C) **Willingness to forgive** is necessary. In other words, if someone would commune knowing he willfully harbors un-forgiveness toward another; he eats and drinks unworthily. (*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*)

D) **Willingness to confess and turn from sin** is necessary. A communicant who knowingly and willfully continues in sin eats and drinks judgment. However, all those who desire grace and forgiveness and intend to amend with the help of God should commune. The Lord's Supper is not for those who do not need it. It is for those who know they need mercy and forgiveness, and believe God will indeed receive them on the merits of Christ. It is "for you."

## 2) REGARDING THE COMMUNICANT AS CONFESSOR:

Who should commune?

**The communicant is a “public confessor.”** This neglected doctrine in our day of relative, individualistic, and valueless values goes against the spirit of the age. Yet, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul teaches that receiving Communion is an act of proclamation. It declares the Lord’s death *and the meaning of His death*. (I Cor. 11:17-34). To partake of the Lord’s Supper is not only communion with Christ it is also public confession. For this reason agreement in doctrine is expected in order to share in the Lord’s Supper.

For example, before taking Communion we confess our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed to affirm one common faith. In contrast, when someone belongs to a *church body* that rejects given doctrines of Scripture, communing with those who believe differently mocks the proclamation that we share a common faith. **Communing together means agreement in doctrine.** If someone belongs to church body ‘A’ which teaches one doctrine, who then communes at church body ‘B’ which says the other teaches false doctrine, to commune would mean either:

1) Doctrine is meaningless, and God really does not mean what Scripture says; Or 2) Believing some true and some false doctrine is not dangerous to the Christian; Or 3) Church membership is meaningless because there is nothing certain to confess; Or 4) Scripture’s teaching about altar and pulpit fellowship based on unity of doctrine is nonsense.

“But I’m a Christian and should commune!” you say to yourself. Yes, but who can see your faith or the faith of those around you? We only know each other by what we confess. A common confession is the only visible unity that the church knows (AC VII). To visibly affirm contrary doctrines is visible disunity in the church (I Tim 6:2bff., II Tim 4:1ff.) Disunity has no part in table fellowship. And since Communion is in an act of proclamation and public confession, Christians do not represent only themselves when it comes to sharing in the Lord’s Supper. If they belong to a church body ‘A’ they represent the confession of church body ‘A’. To then take the Lord’s Supper at church body ‘B’ is hypocritical when it comes to doctrine. (Eph. 4:5)

For this reason, to commune here it is necessary to be a member of the LC-MS, a sister congregation, or go through a period of doctrinal instruction. This is not harsh or unloving. It is what we believe Scripture teaches about fellowship in the Lord’s Supper. It is meant for your benefit.

## WHAT ABOUT EXCEPTIONS?

One might ask, are there no exceptions? On one hand, doctrine must be kept pure. On the other hand, life can be very messy. Believers can find themselves in church bodies where they disagree in part with taught doctrine and practices flowing from doctrine. For example, perhaps someone believes the doctrine of the LC-MS and not the church body he attends. Perhaps this person attends such a church for reasons like: there are no churches in traveling distance which confess the body and blood of Christ. Or, perhaps the local LC-MS congregation has departed from the Synod’s profession of faith. What does such a person do who is seeking spiritual nourishment in the Lord’s Supper? Instances like these become cases for pastoral discretion. The pastor, who bears responsibility for whom he permits to commune, may make exceptions. This does not mean the church in practice gives up closed communion for open communion, making everything an exception. But it allows for a pastor to care for souls. This is one reason why visitors are asked to speak with the pastor if they wish to commune.

**And we want everyone to receive the benefits promised in the Lord's Supper**, namely forgiveness, life, and salvation. The person who communes in faith receives these gifts. No wonder people are unhappy if they cannot commune. (Experiencing the cost of human divisions over God's Word is not pleasant.) At the same time, even if you are not permitted to commune on this occasion, our Lord gives forgiveness, life and salvation also by means of water and the Word and through hearing that same Word. Your faith will be strengthened through hearing the Scriptures spoken and preached. And don't hesitate to ask the pastor for instruction so that you may be admitted to the Lord's Table in this place.

Therefore, we ask any visitor who desires to and can commune with us, to talk with the pastor of this congregation. Every godly pastor desires all who should share in the Lord's Table to do so; in a salutary manner, in a way that helps but does not harm. He desires this because the Lord's Supper is one of the ways that God gives us what he promises: forgiveness, life and salvation.

The peace of the Lord be with you.

This brochure summarizes the LCMS document: *Admission to the Lord's Supper*, CTCR, November, 1999.