

Study of Concordia - The Lutheran Confessions of Faith

The Unaltered Augsburg Confession



Immanuel Constitution:

Article I: Preamble

According to the Word of God (Cor. 14:40, Col. 2:5) all things in a Christian congregation shall be done decently, and in compliance with this Word of God our forefathers have established rules for the regulation of Christian congregations. Now we a number of Lutherans living in the above named vicinity, have formed a congregation and do int he following paragraphs lay down the order according which all affairs of this congregation external as well as internal shall be disposed.

Article II: Name

The name of our church and congregation shall be: Immanuel Lutheran Congregation of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession (U.A.C.) at West Point, Jackson County, Illinois.

Article III: Confessional Standards

Our congregation accepts and acknowledged all canonical books of he Old and New Testament as the revealed Word of God, and all the Symbolical books of the Lutheran Church as the form and norm taken from the Word of God, according to which all doctrines in our church and religious controversies, which may arise, shall be decided and adjudged. These symbolical books are:

The Unaltered Augsburg Confession,
The Apology of the Augsburg Confession,
The Smalcald Articles,
Dr. Luther's Large and Small Catechism,
The Formula of Concord,
The three Ecumenical Creeds (The Apostolic, The Nicene, and the Athanasian)

Article IV: Membership

The membership of the congregation includes the following:

A. Baptized Membership

B. Communicant Membership

Communicant members are those who:

1. Are baptized in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
2. Accept all canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the only divine rule and standard of faith and life.
3. While he may be deficient in knowledge of all the Lutheran Symbols, is familiar at least with the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism and professes his acceptance thereof...

St. Paul's Constitution:

Article I: Name

The name of this congregation shall be St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession (U.A.C.), of Steeleville, Illinois.

Article II: Doctrinal Standard

This congregation accepts and acknowledges all the canonical books of the Old and New Testament as the inspired Word of God, which is the only rule and norm of our faith and life. We also acknowledge and confess all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord, to-wit:

- a. The three Ecumenical Creeds, the Apostolic, the Nicene, the Athanasian;
- b. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession;
- c. The Apology of the same;
- d. The Smalcald Articles;
- e. Luther's Large Catechism;
- f. Luther's Small Catechism;
- g. The Formula of Concord.

We accept and acknowledge these confessional writings as the unadulterated exposition of the doctrine of the Word of God. All doctrine in this congregation is to be in accordance with these confessional writings and no strange, contrary doctrine shall be tolerated.

Article III: Congregational Membership:

Qualifications: No one can become or remain a member of, much less hold an office in our congregation, nor enjoy the rights or privileges of a member unless he:

- a. Be baptized;
- b. Declare his adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and New Testament as the only divine rule and norm of faith and life;
- c. Be familiar at least with Luther's Small Catechism and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and declare his acceptance thereof;...

con·fes·sion

kən'feSHən/
noun

Origin



late Middle English: via Old French from Latin *confessio(n-)*, from *confiteri* 'acknowledge' ("to same say").

Read 1 John 1:5-10

What is a "Lutheran Symbol"

The word symbol is used in different ways. It may mean a sign, token, banner, watchword, confession, or creed. When we speak of the Christian symbols we mean the confessions or creeds by which the Christians are known. A symbol is then a confession of Christian doctrine. Throughout the whole history of the Church its symbols have been regarded as a rule of faith or a rule of truth.

Necessity:

The symbols are the Church what the flag is to the country. They set forth in a brief statements what the Church “stand for.” A symbol expresses what the Church has found to be the teachings of the Word of God. It is therefore a statement of the teachings of the Word of God. Thus the aim of the symbols is to represent what the church believes, teaches, and confesses based on the Word of God.

There are two reasons why symbols are necessary. In the first place the Church must know the truth as taught by the Word of God, and it must teach it to its members. Only as the Church zealously holds to the whole truth of the Word of God and teaches it fearlessly, can it maintain itself over against false teachings that would seek to lead astray.

In the second place a symbol is necessary as a bond of unity and cooperation between those who are members of the Church. Widely divergent conceptions of what the Word of God teaches make it impossible to work together successfully. Different points of view on fundamental questions will affect the practical work in many ways. If we believe that the Bible is inspired our attitude to and use of the Word of God will be different from what it will be if we do not believe that the Bible is inspired. (ie. LCMS Lutherans confess that Scripture *is* the Word of the God. ELCA Lutherans confess that Scripture *contains* the Word of God, but must be interpreted in light of present culture and context.) A symbol (as all doctrine) is therefore a necessary platform for practical work.

Character and Scope:

A symbol is a summary of the teaching of the Word of God. It consists, therefore, mainly of statements of facts and teachings. A symbol does not explain, it simply states the truth. Its interest is to give a clear, brief presentation of the truth and guard against false teachings.

The symbols do not cover every detail of the Christian faith. They give the fundamental teachings or the “great principles.” The symbols are a result of historical development. From time to time doctrinal questions arose and pressed for solution and after much prayer, study, and discussion the Church embodied its findings in a symbol. This explains why we have several symbols adopted at different times.

Luther’s Small Catechism:

Luther’s Small Catechism is a special symbol of our Church (along with the Augsburg Confession). In its six chief parts it presents “in a simple way” the doctrinal truths, the fundamental principles, and the historical facts upon which our religious and moral life rests, and explains the meaning and application of these truths, principles, and facts. It gives the “Way of Salvation” in the briefest and most clear form. It contains all the essential parts of our Christian faith.

Rev. Dr. Bente in his preface to the Book of Concord on the Lutheran Symbols:

Wherever the Lutheran Church has ignored, failed to teach, and forgotten her symbols (or rejected all or some of them) there she has always fallen as easy prey to her enemies and has ceased to exist. But wherever she held fast to her God-given crown, esteemed and studied her Confessions, and actually made them a norm and standard of her entire life and practice, there the Lutheran Church flourished, and confounded all her enemies.”

The Historical Background of the Augsburg Confession:

The Augsburg Confession, also known as the Augustana from its Latin name, *Confessio Augustana*, is the primary confession of faith of the Lutheran Church and one of the most important documents of the Lutheran Reformation. The Augsburg Confession was written in both German and Latin and was presented by a number of German rulers and free-cities at the Diet of Augsburg on 25 June 1530.

Brief Overview:

On January 21, 1530, Emperor Charles V called for a general assembly—an imperial diet—to be held in Augsburg, Germany. Convened to deal with the threat of the Turks to the empire and the Lutheran – Roman Catholic disagreement that was dividing the Church, the assembly was held later that year.

For the assembly, the Lutherans prepared a confession of what they believed and taught on the basis of Holy Scripture. Using previously drafted documents and the guidance of Dr. Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, a lawyer, professor, friend, and colleague of Luther, wrote the Augsburg Confession in both German and Latin.

Dr. Luther did not attend the assembly in Augsburg because he was under the imperial ban. That ban declared he could be killed on sight by anyone. Thus, Luther stayed safely in a castle at Coburg under the protection of the Elector of Saxony.

On behalf of the Lutherans, on June 25, 1530, a layman, Dr. Christian Beyer, read the German version of the Lutheran confession before the assembled emperor, rulers, and churchmen. At the conclusion of his presentation, Chancellor Beyer said to Emperor Charles V, “Most gracious Emperor, this is a Confession which, with the grace and help of God, will prevail even against the gates of hell.” That day in Augsburg was truly the birthday of the Lutheran Church.

Note: It is of interest to know that the symbol of the Anglican Church, the so-called “Thirty-Nine Articles,” is based largely on the Augsburg Confession.

Longer Overview:

The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V had called on the Princes and Free Territories in Germany to explain their religious convictions in an attempt to restore religious and political unity in the Holy Roman Empire and rally support against the Turkish invasion. It is the fourth document contained in the Lutheran *Book of Concord*.

On 21 January 1530, Emperor Charles V issued letters from Bologna, inviting the Imperial Diet to meet in Augsburg on 8 April for the purpose of discussing and deciding various important questions. Although the writ of invitation was couched in very peaceful language, it was received with suspicion by some of the Protestants. Landgrave Philip of Hesse hesitated to attend the diet, but the Elector John of Saxony, who received the writ 11 March, on 14 March directed Martin Luther, Justus Jonas, Johannes Bugenhagen and Philipp Melanchthon to meet in Torgau, where he was, and present a summary of the Lutheran faith to be laid before the Holy Roman Emperor at the diet.

This summary has received the name of the "Torgau Articles". On 3 April, the elector and reformers started from Torgau, and reached Coburg on 23 April. There, Luther was left behind because he was an outlaw according to the Diet of Worms. The rest reached Augsburg on 2 May. On the journey, Melanchthon worked on an "apology", using the Torgau articles, and sent his draft to Luther at Coburg on 11 May, who approved it. Several alterations were suggested to Melanchthon in his conferences with Jonas, the Saxon chancellor Christian Beyer, the conciliatory Christopher von Stadion, bishop of Augsburg, and the imperial secretary Alfonso de Valdes.

On 23 June, the final form of the text was adopted in the presence of the Elector John of Saxony, the Landgrave Philip of Hesse, the Margrave George of Brandenburg, the Dukes Ernest and Francis of Lüneburg, the representatives of Nuremberg and Reutlingen, and other counselors, besides twelve theologians. After the reading, the confession was signed by the Elector John of Saxony, Margrave George of Brandenburg, Duke Ernest of Lüneburg, the Landgrave Philip of Hesse, the Prince

Wolfgang of Anhalt, the representatives of Nuremberg and Reutlingen, and probably also the electoral prince John Frederick and Duke Francis of Lüneburg.

During the diet, the cities of Weißenburg in Bayern, Heilbronn, Kempten, and Windesheim also expressed their concurrence with the confession. The emperor had ordered the confession to be presented to him at the next session, 24 June. When the Protestant princes asked that it be read in public, their petition was refused, and efforts were made to prevent the public reading of the document altogether. The Protestant princes declared that they would not part with the confession until its reading should be allowed.

25 June was then fixed for the day of its presentation. In order to exclude the people, the little chapel of the episcopal palace was appointed in place of the spacious city hall, where the meetings of the diet were held. The two Saxon chancellors Christian Beyer and Gregor Bruck, the former with the plain German copy, the other in traditional Latin language, against the wish of the emperor stepped into the middle of the assembly. The reading of the German version of the text by Christian Beyer lasted two hours and was so distinct that every word could be heard outside. The reading being over, the copies were handed to the emperor. The German copy he gave to the imperial chancellor, the Elector of Mainz. The Latin copy he took away. Neither of the copies is now extant.

The first official publication was edited by Philipp Melancthon, a professor at the University of Wittenberg and a close colleague and friend of Martin Luther.

Outline

The 28 articles

The Augsburg Confession consists of 28 articles presented by Lutheran princes and representatives of "free cities" at the Diet of Augsburg that set forward what the Lutherans believed, taught and confessed in positive (theses) and negative (antitheses) statements. The theses are 21 Chief Articles of Faith describing the normative principles of Christian faith held by the Lutherans; the antitheses are seven statements describing what they viewed as abuses of the Christian faith present in the Roman church.

Preface to Emperor Charles V

Theses:

I. God

II. Original Sin

III. The Son of God

IV. Justification

V. The Ministry

VI. New Obedience

VII. The Church

VIII. What the Church Is

IX. Baptism

X. The Lord's Supper

XI. Confession

XII. Repentance

XIII. The Use of the Sacraments

XIV. Order in the Church

XV. Church Ceremonies

XVI. Civil Government

XVII. Christ's Return for Judgment

XVIII. Free Will

XIX. The Cause of Sin

XX. Good Works

XXI. Worship of the Saints

A Summary of the Conflict

A Review of the Various Abuses That Have
Been Corrected

XXV. Confession

Antitheses:

XXVI. The Distinction of Meats

XXII. Both Kinds in the Sacrament

XXVII. Monastic Vows

XXIII. The Marriage of Priests

XXVIII. Church Authority

XXIV. The Mass

Conclusion

The Altered Augsburg Confession:

(Latin *Confessio Augustana Variata*) It 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 Melanchthon 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.

The Augsburg Confession

Preface

To Emperor Charles V

¹ Most invincible Emperor, Caesar Augustus, most clement Lord: Your Imperial Majesty has summoned a meeting of the Empire here at Augsburg to consider taking action against the Turk, discussing how best to stand effectively against his fury and attacks by means of military force. The Turk is the most atrocious and ancient hereditary enemy of the Christian name and religion. ² This meeting is also to consider disagreements in our holy religion, the Christian faith, by hearing everyone's opinions and judgments in each other's presence. They are to be considered and evaluated among ourselves in mutual charity, mercy, and kindness. ³ After the removal and correction of things that either side has understood differently, these matters may be settled and brought back to one simple truth and Christian concord. ⁴ Then we may embrace and maintain the future of one pure and true religion under one Christ, doing battle under Him [Psalm 24:8], living in unity and concord in the one Christian Church.

⁵ We, the undersigned elector and princes, have been called to this gathering along with other electors, princes, and estates in obedient compliance with the Imperial mandate. Therefore, we have

promptly come to Augsburg. We do not mean to boast when we say this, but we were among the first to be here.

⁶ At the very beginning of the meeting in Augsburg, Your Imperial Majesty made a proposal to the electors, princes, and other estates of the Empire. Among other things, you asked that the several estates of the Empire—on the strength of the Imperial edicts submit their explanations, opinions, and judgments in German and Latin. ⁷ On the following Wednesday, we informed Your Imperial Majesty that after due deliberation we would present the articles of our Confession in one week. ⁸ Therefore, concerning this religious matter, we offer this Confession. It is ours and our preachers'. It shows, from the Holy Scriptures and God's pure Word, what has been up to this time presented in our lands, dukedoms, dominions, and cities, and taught in our churches.

⁹ In keeping with your edict, the other electors, princes, and estates of the Empire may present similar writings, in Latin and German, giving their opinions in this religious matter. ¹⁰ We, and those princes previously mentioned, are prepared to discuss, in a friendly manner, all possible ways and means by which we may come together. We will do this in the presence of your Imperial Majesty, our most clement Lord. In this way, dissensions may be put away without offensive conflict. This can be done honorably, with God's help, so that we may be brought back to agreement and concord. ¹¹ As your edict shows, we are all under one Christ and do battle under Him [Exodus 15:3]. We ought to confess the one Christ and do everything according to God's truth. With the most fervent prayers, this is what we ask of God.

¹² However, regarding the rest of the electors, princes, and estates, who form the other side: no progress may be made, nor any result achieved by this treatment of religious matters, as Your Imperial Majesty has wisely determined that it should be dealt with and treated, by mutual presentation of writings and calm conferring together among ourselves. ¹³ We will at least leave with you a clear testimony. We are not holding back from anything that could bring about Christian concord, such as could be effected with God and a good conscience. ¹⁴ Your Imperial Majesty—and the other electors and estates of the Empire, and all moved by sincere love and zeal for religion, who will give an impartial hearing to this matter—please graciously offer to take notice of this and to understand this from our Confession.

¹⁵ Your Imperial Majesty, has—not once but often—graciously pointed something out to the electors, princes, and estates of the Empire. At the meeting of Speyer (1526), according to the form of Your Imperial instruction and commission, this point was given and prescribed. Your Imperial Majesty caused it to be stated and publicly proclaimed that Your Majesty—¹⁶ in dealing with this religious matter, for certain reasons that 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 publicly set forth at greater length a year ago at the last meeting of the Empire, at Speyer. 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 the following to be submitted among other things: concerning the calling of a council, Your Imperial Majesty had taken notice of and has pondered, the resolution of (a) Your Majesty's Representative in the Empire, and of (b) the President and Imperial Counselors, and (c) the Legates from other Estates convened at Ratisbon. ¹⁹ Your Imperial Majesty also judged that it was helpful to convene a Council. Your Imperial Majesty did not doubt that the Roman pontiff could be persuaded to hold a General Council. For the matters between Your Imperial Majesty and the Roman pontiff were nearing agreement and Christian reconciliation. ²⁰ Your Imperial Majesty himself pointed out that he would work to secure the said chief pontiff's consent for convening a General Council, together with your Imperial Majesty, to be announced as soon as possible by letters that were to be sent out.

²¹ Therefore, if the outcome should be that the differences between us and the other parties in this religious matter should not be settled with friendliness and charity, then here, before Your Imperial Majesty, we obediently offer, in addition to what we have already done, to appear and defend our cause in such a general, free Christian Council. There has always been harmonious action and

agreement among the electors, princes, and other estates to hold a Council, in all the Imperial Meetings held during Your Majesty's reign. ²² Even before this time, we have appealed this great and grave matter, to the assembly of this General Council, and to your Imperial Majesty, in an appropriate manner. ²³ We still stand by this appeal, both to your Imperial Majesty and to a Council. We have no intention to abandon our appeal, with this or any other document. This would not be possible, unless the matter between us and the other side is settled with friendliness and charity, resolved and brought to Christian harmony, according to the latest Imperial Citation. ²⁴ In regard to this appeal we solemnly and publicly testify here.



John the Steadfast of Saxony (1468–1532)

John the Steadfast, brother of Frederick the Wise and father of John Frederick the Magnanimous, was the leader of the Lutheran princes and cities who gathered for the Diet of Augsburg. He well deserved to be called "Steadfast." He boldly confessed the truth of God's Word and risked everything rather than compromise and lose the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Gregory Brück (1485–1557)

Courageous Lutheran layman, counselor and aid to Frederick the Wise. He wrote the preface and the conclusion of the Augsburg Confession. He stood with Christian Beyer as he publicly read the Augsburg Confession (June 25, 1530). Then Brück handed the German and Latin copies to the Emperor.



McCain, P. T. (Ed.). (2005). [*Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*](#) (pp. 26–30). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.