

A SUMMARY STUDY OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION &THE APOLOGY TO THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

This study is divided into five units. Print this page to print all five units, or click on the unit you wish to view to see it on screen.

UNIT ONE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

I. TURMOIL AT THE DEATH OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER

(Feb. 18, 1546 at 3:00 AM)

A. Common Roman Catholic writings and art had depicted Luther as a devil with horns, a seven-headed dragon and various other representations of evil.

1. To counter some of this portrayal, an artist, Lucas Fortnagel, was summoned later the day of Luther's death to execute a deathbed brush-drawing of Luther so that the world would know that he died with a countenance of peace on his face.
2. Luther may have died at peace with God and with himself, but peace was a term that could hardly be used to describe the state of "Lutheranism" as a result of his death.

B. To be frank, after Luther's death there was little hope that the Reformation would survive at all.

1. Pope Paul III was mobilizing the forces of the papacy to face the ecclesiastical crisis that the Reformation had prompted.
 - a. The Pope made an important decision to approve Ignatius of Loyola's plan to use the Jesuit order to regain the educational edge that had been lost to Protestantism.
 - b. For the first time since the Fourth Lateran Council (1251), the Church of Rome initiated the Councils of Trent in 1545.
 - c. Roman Catholic doctrine was firmly upheld and anathemas were issued against all who would embrace the Protestant/Lutheran view.

- d. It was at the Councils of Trent that the determination was made to accept both Scripture and ecclesiastic tradition with “equal reverence”, and declared that, “...the Holy Mother Church”, alone could interpret Scripture and not any Christian as Luther had asserted.
2. The Pope had a strong ally in the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V.
 - a. Charles was on the cusp of a decisive military victory: In July of 1546 civil war erupted between the politico-military alliance of the Protestant estates and the emperor and his allies.
 - 1.) The important victory of Charles against the Schmalkaldic League led by Elector John Frederick of Saxony was the product of treachery at the hands of the Protestant Duke Maurice of Saxony, who became known as, “Judas of Meissen”.
 - 2.) At the very last moment, Maurice crossed over to the emperor’s side betraying his cousin John Frederick, and the battle of Muhlberg was won by the emperor’s forces.
 - b. Now Charles V was at the height of his power when the Diet of Augsburg (1548) was called.
 - 1.) At the Diet Charles was able (due to his military victory), to force the Protestants to accept the “Interim”, a religious dictate aimed at stifling the Reformation that was supposed to remain in force until a church council made a binding decision on reform.
 - 2.) This was a crushing blow to the robust Reformation in the cities. Resistance was quickly eliminated and entire Protestant populations were driven from their homes.
 - 3.) The Protestant imperial city of Constance dared to reject the Interim and the emperor responded by stripping it of its status as a free city and reimposing Catholicism by force.
 - c. On May 19, 1547, fifteen months after Luther’s death, Wittenberg surrendered, Elector John Frederick lost his office and most of his territory.
 3. Duke Maurice (now duke of Saxony as a result of his treason to the Protestant cause), once again proved untrustworthy, but this time to the forces of the emperor.

- a. In 1552 Maurice turned against the emperor, defeating him militarily and forcing him to flee Innsbruck.
- b. This victory virtually ensured the continuation of the Reformation!
- c. In 1555, the Religious Peace of Augsburg established the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*: the ruler of the territory chooses the religion which the subjects are bound to follow.
- d. The Peace of Augsburg was, in reality, not a victory for Protestant forces, but a territorial concession and compromise among princes that ultimately led to the beginning of the Thirty Years War in 1618, finally ending in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia, which divided Germany into still existing Catholic and Protestant areas.

II. THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION (1530) AND THE APOLOGY TO THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION (1531) GIVE RESOUNDING EVIDENCE TO THE SURVIVAL OF THE REFORMATION.

A. These documents were hammered out in the midst of on-going political and religious conflict between the forces of the Reformation led by Luther, and the papal forces led by Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor.

1. They are the foundation statements of what constitutes the Christian (Lutheran) faith.
2. They are contained in the ***Book of Concord (1580)***, which contains the chief statements of faith for all Lutherans. They are:
 - a. The Three Chief Symbols (The Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed)
 - b. The Augsburg Confession (1530)
 - c. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531)
 - d. The Smalcald Articles (1537)
 - e. The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (1537)
 - f. The Small Catechism (1529)
 - g. The Large Catechism (1529)
 - h. The Formula of Concord (1577)

3. It is to these documents that every Lutheran Pastor must vow acceptance and faithfulness at his ordination: ***The Lutheran Agenda:***

“Do you believe in the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice? R: I do.

Do you accept the three Ecumenical Creeds, namely, the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds, as faithful testimonies to the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and do you reject all the errors which they condemn? R: I do.

Do you believe that the Unaltered Augsburg Confession is a true exposition of the Word of God and a correct exhibition of the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; that the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Small and Large Catechisms of Martin Luther, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Authority and Primacy of the Pope, and the Formula of Concord – as these are contained in the *Book of Concord* – are also in agreement with this one scriptural faith? R: I do.

Do you solemnly promise that you will perform the duties of your office in accordance with these Confessions, or Symbols, and that all your teaching and your administration of the sacraments will be in conformity with the Holy Scriptures and with the aforementioned Symbols? R: I do.

4. It is these documents that make Lutherans, Lutheran! Without them we fall into either the errors of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, or Reformed Protestantism!

- B. On June 25, 1530, a layman, Dr. Christian Beyer, read the German version of the Augsburg Confession, (there was also a Latin version), before the assembled emperor, rulers, and churchmen gathered in that city...At the conclusion of that reading, Dr. Beyer said:**

“Most gracious Emperor, this is a Confession which, with the grace and help of God, will prevail even against the gates of hell.” – This was truly the birthday of the Lutheran Church!

III. ARTICLE I: The Doctrine of God – One Essence, Three Persons.

- A. In order to explain clearly what the Reformation faith was, it was also essential to explain what it was not.**

1. Why would defining from both a positive and a negative definition be helpful?

2. Can you think of other (non-theological) areas where this might work well?
3. Why do you think the Reformers would begin defining themselves and their faith beginning with the doctrine of God, instead of the three great “sola’s” of the Reformation, (Grace alone, Faith alone, and Scripture alone?)

B. Look at the positive definition first: *“We unanimously hold and teach, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Nicea, that there is one divine essence, which is called and which is truly God, and that there are three persons in this one divine essence, equal in power and alike eternal: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. All three are one divine essence, eternal, without division, without end, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, one creator and preserver of all things visible and invisible. The word “person” is to be understood as the Fathers employed the term in this connection, not as a part or a property of another, but as that which exists of itself.”*

1. Why don’t the Reformers immediately appeal to the Scriptures themselves for proof of the doctrine of God, but to the Council of Nicea (381 AD) and to the “Fathers”?
 - a. What sources of authority did Rome acknowledge at this time?
 - b. What is the way in which we, today, ought to regard the role of the early Church Councils, like the Council of Nicea?
 - c. Also, in what light should the “Fathers” be regarded as we examine the Scriptures and seek to understand them?
2. What does this confession regarding the nature of God do for the forthcoming presentation of the teaching of the Reformation faith?
 - a. Should we approach the teaching of the Scriptures as though no one before us had ever seen them before?
 - 1.) What would be the benefit of that approach?
 - 2.) What would be the danger of that approach?
 - b. Does every generation “start” the Church all over again?
 - c. Why do we recite the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed, (and on rare occasion), the Athanasian Creed?

- d. Why don't we publicly confess the findings of the later "ecumenical" councils of Constantinople II (553 AD), Constantinople III (680 AD), or Nicea II (787 AD)?

C. Now let us look at the negative definitions:

1. The AC confesses that we do not hold the view of God that is held by:
 - a. **Manichaeans:** Asserted that there were two gods – one good and one evil and the role of Jesus was to overcome the forces of darkness by means of strict asceticism. They held to elements of Gnosticism, Zoroastrianism and mingled elements of Christianity to form a blend of true heresy.
 - b. **Valentinianism:** Claimed a mixture of Greek polytheism and Christianity in which the God of the Old Testament was seen as a Demiurge, who took an emission of matter caused by Sophia's fall into passion and disgrace and from it formed the world.
 - c. **Arians:** Believed that the Son of God (Logos), was not eternal but was begotten of the Father to be the primary one who creates with matter (since God could not be associated with matter.) Therefore, the Son is not of the same essence with the Father and is subordinate to the Father. The Son, therefore, is not "true God."
 - d. **Eunomians:** An off-shoot of Arianism which denied the divinity of the nature and will of Christ.
 - e. **Mohammedans** (Muslims): Muslims teach that God is a single, solitary being who is utterly removed and cannot be personally known by humans. Jesus was prophet of God, but the greatest and last prophet was Mohammed.
 - f. **Paul of Samosata:** Attempted to preserve monotheism by claiming: "The Son is not God, nor is he the Word or Wisdom of God. Furthermore, the Son exists only after the incarnation, after the moment in which Christ is begotten in the womb of Mary by the Holy Ghost. This distinction between Word and the Son, however, would not have sufficed to condemn Paul as a heretic...Where Paul did open himself to attack was in denying that the Word was anything more than the unspoken and immanent reason of God."¹¹
2. In setting out that the Reformers were **not** included in the above heresies of the first few centuries of the faith, they were placing

themselves squarely in the company of the faithful orthodoxy of the Early Church.

3. Is the doctrine of God an issue of contention between Rome and the Reformers?

D. Please notice how God is described...by His attributes!

1. **Eternal:** Has no beginning and no end.
2. **Undivided:** There are three distinct persons, but only one divine essence.
3. **Omnipotent:** Infinite, unlimited power.
4. **Omniscient or wise:** Knowing all things and even the probability of all things that may or may not be, (knowledge of contingencies.)
5. **Utterly good:** It is impossible for God to exhibit any kind of evil either in act or in the conception of an evil thought. To do so would be a violation of His very nature.

E. God is also described by what He does:

1. **He is Creator:** No one and nothing else can make this claim. God is the source of all that exists and is the author of matter itself.
2. **He is Preserver:** Life in any form, could not continue to exist for a single instant were it not for the activity of God to preserve that which He has created.

¹¹ Gonzales, Justo, L., *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 1, Abingdon Press, Nashville and New York, 1970, p. 147.

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UNIT TWO: Original Sin, The Son of God and Justification

IV. ARTICLE II: Original Sin – The Fallen Estate of Humanity.

A. Original sin is the direct result of the fall of all humankind as it actually occurred when our first parents, Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation of Satan as he appeared to them in the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent.

1. “Sin is nonconformity to the divine Law which is given to man as a norm; and this norm pertains both to man’s condition and to his individual internal or external actions.”²
 - a. Please note: Sin is not merely what we do or fail to do, it is much deeper than that, because sin is our natural condition into which we are conceived and born.
 - b. Do not for a minute fall into the trap which human reason draws in order to excuse sin or make it less than what it really is: It is a grave error to say that only conscious and deliberate action against God’s will constitutes sin. According to Scripture, the evil condition in which man is born and which he cannot change is sin.”³
2. What does the Word of God say?
 - a. Ephesians 2:3
 - b. I John 3:4

B. The Augsburg Confession says:

“It is also taught among us that since the fall of Adam all men who are born according to the course of nature are conceived and born in sin. That is, all men are full of evil lust and inclinations from their mother’s womb and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God. Moreover, this inborn sickness and hereditary sins is truly sin and condemns to the eternal wrath of God all those who are not born through Baptism and the Holy Spirit. Rejected in this connection are the Pelagians and others who deny that original sin is sin, for they hold that natural man is made righteous by his own powers, thus disparaging the sufferings and merit of Christ.”⁴

1. Please note the stated time of origin for our personal condition of “sinner” and “lost” person: Conception!
 - a. It is at the time of conception when an eternal soul is received and therefore, that soul also has an eternal destiny.

- b. Many insist that this is NOT the case, but rather humans are born either good or neutral toward God.
2. Many of the fundamentalist denominations insist that children have no sin and are not held accountable until an unspecified “age of accountability”, (of which the Scriptures do not ever speak.)
 - a. It would appear that subscribers to this false doctrine must be mightily puzzled by the selfish, self-centered of their children, even as infants.
 - b. Think of the tragedy of the many millions of unbaptized children who may well believe by the grace of God’s Word proclaimed to them by godly parents, but who have not been brought to the fount of regeneration, this precious means of grace called baptism. Baptism is the ONLY means of grace available to infants, since the Word is limited at this time of a person’s life.
 - c. Again this is a man-centered theology in that it is presumed that man, has within himself, the ability to come to understand spiritual truth, when in fact he cannot and therefore does not.
3. To deny the inherent condition of original sin in all its terrible fullness also involves a denial of the doctrine of “grace alone” for salvation.
 - a. John 3:18
 - b. I Corinthians 2:14
 - c. II Corinthians 4:1-4
 - d. Ephesians 2:1-5
 - e. Romans 5:6-11
4. Since the curse of Original Sin is so overwhelming of man’s ability to desire, fear or believe in God; to lessen its curse is to lessen the grace that overcomes it!
5. Likewise, there is no other adequate explanation for the steadfast propensity of humans over the entire length of our history to always hate, always control, always war, always be subject to broken relationships, always sin!
6. Inadequate rationale for man’s propensity toward evil have been given:
 - a. Secular Humanism: All evil in the world is environmentally caused, therefore, make the environment better.

- b. Marxism/Leninism: All evil in the world is caused by inequitable distribution of wealth, therefore, distribute the wealth equitably.
- c. New Age/Eastern Mysticism: All evil in the world is caused by man's failure to understand his divine essence, therefore, visualize your divinity.
- d. Islam: All evil is caused by man's unwillingness to behave in accordance with Allah's will, therefore, change your life and conform to Allah's will.

C. Negatively, the AC refers to, "...the Pelagians and others.." who also deny the reality of Original Sin.

- 1. First, Palagius (360 – 420 A.D.), taught, "...that man's nature was not totally depraved as a result of the Fall, but that it is still in its original state of moral indifference, and depends on the individual will to develop the moral germ of his nature and be saved."¹
- 2. Remembering that the specific "audience" for the Augsburg Confession was the Roman Catholic Church, this reference to Palagius takes on special meaning:
 - a. Roman Catholic theology teaches Adam's fall into sin did not totally corrupt the nature of man, but only wounded it. Now human nature has he propensity toward concupiscence, (an inclination to sin.)²
 - b. Therefore, it was essential to set forth the correct understanding of original sin so as to contrast the truth with falsity.

V. ARTICLE III: THE SON OF GOD

A. This is the affirmation of orthodoxy which we share with all who acknowledge Scripture and the Apostles' & Nicene Creed:

"It is also taught among us that God the Son became man, born of the virgin Mary, and that the two natures, divine and human, are so inseparably united in one person that there is one Christ, true God and true man, who was truly born, suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried in order to be a sacrifice not only for original sin but also for all other sins (emphasis mine), and to propitiate God's wrath. The same Christ also descended into hell, truly rose from the dead on the third day, ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God, that he may eternally rule and have dominion over all creatures, that through the Holy Spirit he may sanctify, purify, strengthen, and comfort all who believe in him, that he may bestow on them life and every grace and blessing, and that he may protect and defend them against the devil and against sin. The same Lord Christ will return openly to judge the living and the dead, as stated in the Apostles' Creed."²

1. Here again, the ties to the apostolic fathers and the ecumenical creeds are made.
2. Here again, the orthodoxy of the Lutheran faith is connected with the *Una Sancta*, or the one holy Church, for here is direct connection with the Council of Nicea and the orthodox conclusions of the great Christological controversies of the first three centuries of the faith.

B. There is one “zinger” here with reference to the underlined portion of Article III.

1. This follows from what we discussed under Article II, Original Sin.
2. What has Christ done?
 - a. He has been a sacrifice not only for the removal of the status of original sin, but also, “...for all other sins”. This Rome steadfastly refused to accept.
 - b. Rather, Roman Catholicism insists that actual sins must be “paid for” through the “sacrament” of Penance or in Purgatory.

VI. ARTICLE IV: JUSTIFICATION

A. Here is the touchstone of the Reformation! Here is the reason for the Reformation!

1. How one stands justified before the Almighty God is the single, central issue that faced Luther and still faces us!
 - a. On the one hand, the Roman Church still requires penance and Purgatory in order to “make up” or “pay” for actual sins.
 - b. On the other hand the Calvinists/Fundamentalist denominations insist on a cooperative act of human will in order to “decide” for Jesus.
 - c. Only the Lutheran faith insists that nothing can be added or taken away from that which Christ has done for us on the cross.
2. All denominations stand or fall with respect to how they view justification!

B. It has been reported in the media that there is now a healing of the 482 year rift in the Church.

1. Claims in the media have been made that the Roman Catholic Church as essentially “capitulated” on the issue of justification by faith alone, and not by works.

- a. If this is being accurately reported, then we should all rejoice!
 - b. A full copy of the text of the agreement has yet to be received and our synod has not yet reacted to it for that reason.
 - c. Additionally, agreement is as agreement does: If the Roman Catholic Church has really adopted justification by faith alone and not works, then the meaning of the “sacrament” of Penance must be changed.
2. If it is true, then there are many other issues that still remain between Roman Catholicism and orthodox Lutheranism:
- a. The primacy of the office of the Papacy.
 - b. The doctrine of Purgatory.
 - c. The elevation of Mary to a status of non-sinner, who was bodily assumed into heaven.
 - d. The meaning of the Holy Eucharist.
 - e. The veneration of saints, praying to saints, the exclusion of the justified laity as saints.
 - f. The theology of indulgences of all kinds.
 - g. The meaning and effect of Holy Baptism, and the like.
3. Let us continue to pray that we shall indeed work toward and see a greater and greater degree of harmony as we work to truly resolve doctrine on the basis of the Scriptures.

C. The Augsburg Confession says:

“It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sins is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, As Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5.”

1. To faith cannot be added: Good works, a cooperation of human will or decision, nor any “prevenient” grace for if this is done, then grace is not grace.
2. Rome had always insisted that good works had to be added to faith in order to be justified. “If anyone says that the ungodly is justified by faith alone in

such a way that he understands that nothing else is required which cooperates toward obtaining the grace of justification and that it is in no way necessary for him to be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.”

3. Lutherans have always taught that the attempted addition of anything, (any human contribution) to justification completely destroys the Gospel.
 - a. To attempt to contribute towards one’s justification is to either end in despair because it becomes evident that our sins are still great despite our best efforts, or
 - b. Results in self-righteous delusion that such sins have indeed been overcome by human effort.
 - c. Grace, in order to be grace, cannot possibly be attributed to humans, but can only originate from God who alone can offer grace.

² Pieper, Francis, D.D., Christian Dogmatics, Vol. 1, p. 528, Concordia Publishing House, 1950.

³ Ibid.

⁴ The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Trans., Theodore G. Tappert, et. al., Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1959, p. 29

⁵ Lutheran Cyclopedia, Erwin Lueker, ed., Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1975, p. 611.

⁶ The Catechism of the Catholic Church, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Imprimi Potest), Doubleday Publishing Company, New York, New York, 1995, p. 114.

⁷ Chemnitz, Martin, Examination of the Council of Trent, Pt.I, translated by Fred Kramer, Concordia Publishing House, 1971, p.

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Unit 3: “The Office of the Ministry, The New Obedience & The Church”

I. Article V: The Office of the Ministry:

- A. **The Office of the Ministry has been badly abused in several ways over the centuries with many people and bodies totally ignoring the Scriptural teaching on this critical office in the Church.**

1. Some have said that there is no office at all and that pastors are unnecessary to the life of the Church.
2. Others have elevated the Office of the Ministry more highly than it ought to be making of it a “higher spiritual estate” than that of the laity.

B. In response to both of these extremes, the Augsburg Confession says:

“To obtain such faith, [by grace through faith in Christ], God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the Sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this. Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that the Holy Spirit comes to us through our own preparations, thoughts and works without the external word of the Gospel.”

1. If you remember your Small Catechism, you’ll recall that the essence of the Office of the Holy Ministry is the preach of the Word of God in all its truth and purity and the administration of the Sacraments according to Christ’s institution.
2. The Office of the Ministry also incorporates the office of the pastor a divinely appointed man who does the public proclamation of the Word and the public administration of the Sacraments on behalf of the congregation.
 - a. It is essential that pastors be appointed in every congregation. (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-2)
 - b. They are not “optional equipment”, but occupy the on-going ministry of Christ among God’s people, acting by authority of the divine call of God to these positions of servanthood.

C. But what about the Priesthood of all believers?

1. The Office of the Ministry does not stand in opposition to the Priesthood of all believers.

“The office of the public ministry rather presupposes the spiritual priesthood of all believers; for, on the one hand, the called ministers of the Word must themselves be spiritual priests, or true believers,(I Tim. 3:2-7; Titus 1:5-9), and on the other, they publicly, that is, in the name of the believers who have called them, administer the duties and privileges which all Christians have as spiritual priests.”^[1]

2. The Office of the Ministry differs from the priesthood of all believers in the following ways:

- a. All believers are to know and to profess the divine truth, but the official teachers of the Church must possess a preeminent knowledge of divine truth and a special aptitude to teach. (I Tim. 3:1-7; 5:22; Titus 1:5-11)
 - b. While Holy Scripture teaches that all believers are charged with the duties and enjoy the privileges of the Office of the Keys, it expressly declares, on the one hand, that God gives to the Church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the work of the ministry, (Eph. 4:11-12; I Cor. 12:28; Acts 20:28), and on the other, that not all believers are apostles, prophets, teachers, (I Cor. 12:29; Jas. 3:1.)
 - c. While the Holy Scripture teaches that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is given to every Christian person, (I Cor. 12:4-12) and that all Christians have abundant honor, it also says that the official teachers of the Church be especially esteemed as such as speak the Word of God, (Heb. 13:7), that he who preaches the Gospel should live of the Gospel, (I Cor. 9:14); that he who is taught in the Word should communicate unto him that teaches in all good things, (Gal. 6:6-7); that the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine, (I Tim. 5:17-18); that believer should know them that labor among them and are over them and watch over their souls as they that must give account, (Heb. 13:17.)
 - d. Finally, St. Paul wrote: “Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God,” (I Cor. 4:1), he referred not only to himself, but also to Apollos, (I Cor. 4:6), and his other fellow laborers in the Word, (I Cor. 3:21)
3. Therefore, we rightly distinguish between believers as spiritual priests and believes as called ministers of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries.^[2]

D. The condemnation of the Anabaptists:

1. **Anabaptists:** “The term itself designates the opposition of this group to the prevailing practice among the Lutheran and Roman Catholics of infant baptism and their own insistence upon adult immersion...The more radical element stressed the importance of the inner word rather than the external word of the Scriptures. Denying such doctrines as the total depravity of man, original sin, election, and eternal damnation, they held that man possesses freedom of the will and is capable of a direct and mystic communication with God.”^[3]

II. Article VI: The New Obedience:

- A. The role of good works in the life of a Christian is one of naturally giving thanks to God for the blessings He has bestowed upon us.**
- B. The Augsburg Confession says:**

“It is taught among us that such faith should produce good fruits and good works and that we must do all such good works as God has commanded, but we should do them for God’s sake and not place our trust in them as if thereby to merit favor before God. For we receive forgiveness of sin and righteousness through faith in Christ, as Christ himself says, ‘So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, “We are unworthy servants”” (Luke 17:10). The Fathers also teach thus, for Ambrose says, ‘It is ordained of God that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved, and he shall have forgiveness of sins, not through works but through faith alone without merit.”

III. Article VII: The Church:

- A. Some have defined the Church as any body of believers gathered together in the name of Christ, but the Scriptures are more specific and describe the Church more in terms of what it does.**
- B. The Augsburg Confession says:**

“It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. It is as Paul says in Eph. 4:4-5, ‘There is one body and one Spirit just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.’”

IV. Article VII: What the Church Is:

- A. This article deals not so much with a definition of the church, but that the church is not dependent on the character of its public servants.**

- 1. The Augsburg Confession says:

“Again, although the Christian church, properly speaking, is nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints, yet because in this life many false Christians, hypocrites, and even open sinners remain among the godly, the sacraments are efficacious even if the priests who administer them are wicked men, for as Christ himself indicated, ‘The Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat’ (Matt. 23:2). Accordingly the Donatists and all other who hold contrary views are condemned.”

2. **Donatism** was an early fourth century, northern African heresy which taught that if the church was to be the true church, it, of necessity had to be persecuted and if a church were not suffering persecution, such a church was not a true church. In this instance, the voluntary martyrdom of believers was encouraged. Additionally, if someone deserving excommunication were serving as a pastor, then the sacraments that person had administered were considered invalid.

B. This was an important reference with respect to the differences between Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism because they denied the validity of the sacraments performed by Lutheran pastors.

1. The Roman church taught, (and still does), that the sacraments are not valid unless performed by a priest.
 - a. Hence, marriages between non-Roman Catholic and Roman Catholic couples are considered illegitimate in the eyes of the Roman church.
 - b. Baptisms, properly performed, by non-Catholic ministers are recognized as valid.
2. This theology gave rise to the development of Roman Catholic dogma that, “There is no salvation outside of Holy Mother Church.” This was partially rescinded by Vatican Council II.

^[1] Mueller, John Theodore, *Christian Dogmatics: A Handbook of Doctrinal Theology*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri 1955, p. 564.

^[2] Ibid, p. 565.

^[3] Harrison, Everett F., editor in chief, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988, p. 40.

Unit 4: Baptism, The Holy Supper of our Lord, Confession, Repentance, and the Use of the Sacraments

I. ARTICLE IX: Baptism:

A. Baptism has always been considered to be the entry rite into the Church.

1. St. Hippolytus of Rome (c 220 AD) wrote:

“And they shall baptize the little children first. And if they can answer for themselves, let them answer. But if they cannot, let their parents answer or someone from their family.”^[1]

2. The Didache (c. 60-70 AD)

“Regarding baptism. Baptize as follows...baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in running water. But if you have no running water, baptize in other water; and if you cannot in cold, then in warm. But if you have neither, pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”^[2]

B. With respect to the historical context of the Reformation, it was the view of Roman Catholicism that baptism only forgave the condition of Original Sin and not the actual sins committed by a person.

C. The Augsburg Confession addresses baptism by declaring:

“It is taught among us that Baptism is necessary and that grace is offered through it. Children, too should be baptized, for in Baptism they are committed to God and become acceptable to him. On this account the Anabaptists who teach that infant Baptism is not right are rejected.”^[3]

1. The rationale is clear: Baptism is God’s act of conversion and forgiveness in which the individual becomes acceptable to God.
2. Secondly, baptism cannot be limited to Original Sin alone since the baptizee is said to be acceptable to God and actual sins, if left outstanding, would disqualify a person from being acceptable.
3. In this one short statement, the matter of full forgiveness of sins, and infant baptism are affirmed.

D. The negative referenced to the Anabaptists again speaks to a group that denied the validity of infant baptism despite the entire tradition and practice of both the Roman and Easter Orthodox Churches for the entire history of the Church.

1. The Anabaptists were, and still are, convinced that the action in baptism belonged to man and not to God.
2. Lutherans find themselves in harmony with both tradition and Scripture in this.

II. ARTICLE X: The Holy Supper of Our Lord

A. Rome has continued to teach that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion and are no longer bread and wine, but only body and blood.

1. Fear of spillage of the blood of Christ them prompted Rome to withdraw the cup from the laity and utilize patens under the giving of the bread.
2. Additionally, unused bread and wine are kept in “tabernacles” in the front of Roman churches and are revered by those entering the church through genuflection.

B. The Augsburg Confession says:

“It is taught among us that the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the Supper of our Lord under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received. The contrary doctrine is therefore rejected.”^[4]

1. Here, as in the Scriptures, neither the bread nor the wine nor the body nor blood are denied as being present.
2. Specifically, also, the distributing and receiving are connected with the validity of the supper.
3. Finally, the “contrary doctrine” is denied.

III. CONFESSION:

A. The Roman position regarding confession is that:

1. It is required.
2. Absolution (forgiveness), is conditional upon the completion of a prescribed penance.
3. Forgiveness may be withheld, even if the penitent is repentant.

B. If a person is excommunicated under Rome, then that ban remains in place until the church removes it regardless of the possible repentance of the individual.

1. As far as Rome is concerned, Martin Luther is still condemned to hell.
2. Essentially, forgiveness is mediated through the church and not between the individual and God.

C. The practice of private confession is upheld by the Augsburg Confession:

“It is taught among us that private absolution should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse. However, in confession it is not necessary to enumerate all trespasses and sins, for this is impossible. Psalm 19:12, “Who can discern his errors?”^[5]

1. While private confession does occur to this day, sadly, for many it has fallen into disuse among us.

IV. REPENTANCE:

A. Here Lutherans uphold the clear teaching of Scripture that repentance, in it’s full sense, embraces more than mere contrition.

1. First, repentance begins with contrition for sins committed.
2. Second, repentance embraces faith which believes that forgiveness for sin is in place.
3. Third, the life of sin must bear the fruits of repentance with an amended life.

B. Specifically rejected is the notion that was held in third century Rome that once a person was baptized, they could no longer sin, and if they did, they could not be restored to faith.

1. These were known as **Novationists**.
2. The Augsburg Confession insists that all repentant sinners should receive absolution for their sins.
3. Additionally, it is denied that forgiveness of sins can be merited through satisfactions made by man.
4. Rome still teaches:

“Sacramental satisfaction is the voluntary acceptance on the part of a penitent of the sacrifice (penance, alms, or other means), which is necessary to expiate the temporal punishment due to sin.”^[6]

V. THE USE OF THE SACRAMENTS:

A. The Augsburg Confession Says:

“It is taught among us that the sacraments were instituted not only to be signs by which people might be identified outwardly as Christians, but that they are signs and testimonies of God’s will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith. For this reason they require faith, and they are rightly used when they are received in faith and for the purpose of strengthening faith”^[7]

1. Rome has taught that participation in the Sacraments is a meritorious act which contributes toward the forgiveness of some sins.
2. Reformed bodies insist that no forgiveness of sins is conveyed through receiving of either baptism or the Lord’s Supper, but that these are only outward signs of faith representing the forgiveness that is ours in Christ.

B. In contrast, the Lutheran faith teaches that faith is necessary to receive the benefits promised of the Sacraments and that the mere participation in the action is not enough.

1. The Roman doctrine of *ex opere operato*, (the sacrament brings about justification by its own action without faith on the part of the recipient), is denied
2. Again the contrast is made that it is God’s act of forgiveness, not man’s act of obedience to an “ordinance” or a meritorious service rendered to God.

VI. ORDER IN THE CHURCH:

A. The Augsburg Confession says:

“It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call.”^[8]

1. The Office of the Ministry or Pastoral Office is the divinely established office for the **public** proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments, and should not be done by others.
 - a. It is the call of God, (issued through the congregation), that authorizes a person to perform the functions of the public ministry.
 - b. Theologies which deny or discount this office do so in opposition to the clear Word of God regarding this matter. (See “Office of the Ministry” in unit # 3.)

2. Worship services are to be conducted by the pastor of a congregation unless special circumstances (illness, vacation, regional/national church meetings, etc.), necessitate other arrangements.
 - a. Other arrangements must be arranged by the congregation through its Pastor, the Board of Elders, and if necessary, the Voter's Assembly.
 - b. If everyone does their own worship, and/or celebrates their own Sacraments, it becomes divisive to the church, and not in accord with either the Scriptures or the Confessions.
3. Congregational life is **corporate**, not "everyone do his/her own thing".

B. That which unifies the congregation is that which is to be sought after, and that which leads to division in the body is that which is to be avoided.

VII. CHURCH USAGES:

A. The relationship between Scriptural requirements and tradition are not an "either/or" choice.

1. Traditions which uphold the Scriptural teachings are a good and God pleasing thing.

^[1] *Readings in Church History*, Colman J. Barry, OSB, Vol. I, Newman Press, Paramus, N.J., 1960, p. 50.

^[2] *Ibid*, p. 26

^[3] Tappert, Theodore G., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, p. 33.

^[4] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

^[5] *Ibid.*

^[6] Broderick, Robert C., Editor, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1987, p. 542.

^[7] *Op. Cit.*, p. 35.

^[8] *Ibid.*, p. 36

Unit 5: A Summary of Articles

I. Article XVIII: Freedom of the Will

A. The condition of the fallen will of man is a matter of some dispute among various denominations today and seriously effects how salvation is acquired.

1. Rome teaches that:

“Through human acts man progresses toward his destiny, and the prerequisite is that these actions be recognized as good or bad...the process of human activity draws man toward his eternal goal of perfect happiness with God.”^[1]

2. The reformed often teach that post-fall man continues to have free will to chose ungodliness or godliness and therefore, can choose to believe in God in cooperation with his fallen human will.

3. To the contrary of both positions, the Augsburg Confession declares:

“It is also taught among us that man possess some measure of freedom of the will which enables him to live an outwardly honorable life and to make choices among the things that reason comprehends. But without the grace, help and activity of the Holy Spirit man is not capable of making himself acceptable to God, of fearing God and believing in God with his whole heart, or of expelling inborn evil lusts from his heart. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who is given through the Word of God, for Paul says in I Cor. 2:14, “Natural man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God.”^[2]

B. What is the significance for salvation?

1. One's view of the human will determines whether or not salvation is of God or of man's effort or cooperation.
2. If salvation is acquired by means of good human acts or by cooperation of human will (i.e., making a decision for Christ), then salvation is in part the act of man.
3. If salvation is apprehended by faith in the merits of Christ alone in such a way that the faith itself is a gift from God, then salvation is of God alone.

II. XXIV: THE MASS

A. The Roman Church had frequently leveled the charge against the Lutherans that they had abolished the Mass, but this was most certainly not true. What we have done is preserved that in the Mass which was biblical and disregarded that which is not.

1. Mass: *"The Sacrifice of the Mass is really the holy and living representation and at the same time the unbloody and efficacious oblation [an offering of a sacrifice] to God.) of the Lord's Passion and that blood-stained sacrifice which was offered for us on the cross. We may establish that the Eucharist is a true sacrifice and a representation of Our Lord's sacrifice which was offered for us on the cross."*^[3]
2. The term "Mass" is a shortening of the Latin, "*Ite missa est*", which means, "You are dismissed." This phrase is a formula for dismissal at the end of worship.
3. Finally, through use over the centuries, Mass simply became synonymous with a worship service.

B. Lutheran objections to the Mass of Luther's time were:

1. Communion only under one kind. (The serving of only the host and the withholding of the cup from the communicants.)
2. The celebration of the Eucharist by a solitary priest as a private devotion.
3. The understanding of the Mass as the making of a sacrifice for sin for both the living and the dead.
4. The buying and selling of Masses.^[4]

C. The Augsburg Confession says:

"Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. Actually, the Mass is retained among us and is celebrated with the greatest of reverence. Almost all the customary ceremonies are also retained, except that German hymns are interspersed

here and there among the parts sung in Latin. These are added for the instruction of the people, for ceremonies are needed especially in order that the unlearned may be taught. Paul prescribed that in church a language should be used which is understood by the people. The people are accustomed to receive the sacrament together, in so far as they are fit to do so. This likewise increases the reverence and devotion of public worship, for none are admitted unless they are first hear and examined. The people are also admonished concerning the value and use of the sacrament and the great consolation it offers to anxious consciences, that they may learn to believe in God and ask for and expect whatever is good from God. Such worship pleases God, and such use of the sacrament nourishes devotion to God. Accordingly it does not appear that the Mass is observed with more devotion among our adversaries than among us.”^[5]

III. VARIOUS OTHER ARTICLES SUMMARIZED:

- A. **Article XVI: Civil Governments:** This article deals with the permission we have in Christ to serve as civil magistrates, officials, soldiers, judges, etc. Especially noted and condemned are those that say that one must forfeit the title “Christian” if one participates in civil government in such ways.
- B. **Article XVII: The Return of Christ to Judgment:** Here are condemned those who teach:
- a. The Anabaptists who hold that the devil and condemned men will not suffer eternal pain and torment.
 - b. Those who believe that before the resurrection of the dead, saints and godly men will possess a worldly kingdom and annihilate all the godless. (This is the meaner version of Millennialism!)
- C. **Article XIX: The Cause of Sin:** That the human will is in bondage to sin and unless there is the direct intervention of God, in Christ, the will turns away from God to evil.
- D. **Article XX: Faith and Good Works:** Denies that faith and works combine to achieve salvation. Stress is given that our works cannot reconcile us with God or obtain grace for us, for this happens only through faith.
- “It is also taught among us that good works should and must be done, not that we are to rely on them to earn grace but that we may do God’s will and glorify him. It is always faith alone that apprehends grace and forgiveness of sin. When through faith the Holy Spirit is given, the heart is moved to do good works. Before that, when it is without the Holy Spirit, the heart is too weak.”^[6]*
- E. **Article XXI: The Cult of Saints:** While honoring those saints which have gone before us as wonderful examples of Christian faith and good works, they should not be invoked to help us since God alone hears our prayers.

- F. **Article XXII: Both Kinds in the Sacrament:** Both the bread and the wine, (body and blood) are to be received by all those communing, since Christ says of the chalice, “Drink of it all of you.” (Mt. 26:27) These words do not only apply to priests since St. Paul writes to the Corinthian congregation to receive both kinds, as do Cyprian, Jerome, and even Pope Gelasius instructed.
- G. **Article XXIII: The Marriage of Priests:** Marriage is the best and scriptural way to avoid immorality among the priesthood, and very few have the gift of living in celibacy. Enforced celibacy breeds more immorality than marriage.
- H. **Article XXV: Confession:**

“Confession has not been abolished by the preachers on our side. The custom has been retained among us of not administering the sacrament to those who have not previously been examined and absolved. At the same time the people are carefully instructed concerning the consolation of the Word of absolution so that they may esteem absolution as a great and precious thing. It is not the voice or word of the man who speaks it, but it is the Word of God, who forgives sin, for it is spoken in God’s stead and by God’s command... Concerning confession we teach that no one should be compelled to recount sins in detail, for this is impossible.”^[7]

- I. **Article XXVI: The Distinction of Foods:** The practice of fasting for reason of making satisfaction for sins or of insisting on condemnation for who refrain from such fasting is condemned. It is the elevation of human tradition over the Scriptures and require more than the Word of God requires.
- J. **Article XXVII: Monastic Vows:** The claim that monastic vows are equal to baptismal vows is to be condemned, as are claims that monastic life earns the forgiveness of sin, and justification before God. **Monastics** do not occupy a higher spiritual estate than any others.
- K. **Article XXVIII: The Power of Bishops:** The power of the Bishops and the power of the government cannot be confused without leading to wars, tumults and uprisings. We believe and teach that the power of the Office of the Keys is the command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments. The power of Bishops does not include a divine right to exercise earthly political rule over people.

“Therefore, the two authorities, the spiritual and the temporal, are not to be mingled or confused, for the spiritual power has its commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. Hence it should not invade the function of the other, should not mine obedience to government, should not make or prescribe to the temporal power laws concerning worldly matters.”^[8]

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. **The Augsburg Confession Concludes:**

“These are the chief articles that are regarded as controversial. Although we could have mentioned many more abuses and wrongs, to avoid prolixity [So wordy as to be tiresome; verbose] and undue length we have indicated only the principal ones. The others can readily be weighed in the light of these. In the past there have been grave complaints about indulgences, pilgrimages, and misuse of the ban. Parish ministers also had endless quarrels with monks about the hearing of confessions, about burials, about sermons on special occasions, and about countless other matters. All these things we have discreetly passed over for the common good in order that the chief points at issue may better be perceived.

It must not be thought that anything has been said or introduced out of hatred or for the purpose of injuring anybody, but we have related only matters which we have considered it necessary to adduce and mention in order that it may be made very clear that we have introduced nothing, either in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Holy Scripture or the universal Christian church. For it is manifest and evident (to speak without boasting) that we have diligently and with God’s help prevented any new and godless teaching from creeping into our churches and gaining the upper hand in them. In keeping with the summons, we have desired to present the above articles as a declaration of our confession and the teaching of our preachers. If anyone should consider that it is lacking in some respect, we are ready to present further information of the basis of the divine Holy Scripture.

Your Imperial Majesty’s most obedient servants:

John, duke of Saxony, elector

George, margrave of Brandenburg

Ernest, duke of Luneburg

Philip, landgrave of Hesse

John Frederick, duke of Saxony

Francis, duke of Luneburg

Wolfgang, prince of Anhalt

Mayor and council of Nuremberg

Mayor and council of Reutlingen^[9]