

# A Study of the Augsburg Confession

## How Do You Know If You Are a Lutheran?

by Rev. Paul A. Bartz

### Introduction

A confession of faith like **the Augsburg Confession** (also known as the *Augustana*, and frequently abbreviated AC) is the Church's response to God who has spoken to us. Such confessions are prompted by the Holy Spirit. Confessions, therefore, are above all teachers of the Church and they belong to the Church. Nor are confessions statements of what we believe and teach in addition to Scripture. Rather, they are under Scripture and simply summarize what Scripture teaches about a particular topic.

Therefore a faithful pastor and truly Lutheran congregation's subscription to a confession like the Augsburg Confession is **unconditional**. Such pastors and congregations (and synods) subscribe to the Augsburg Confession not *in as much* as it agrees with Scripture, but *because* they are convinced it does agree with Scripture.

The articles of the Augsburg Confession are short because the Emperor has granted the Lutherans time to present it as a favor. Therefore each article does not fully define all details or take us to the limits of the particular teaching covered. It would be a grave error to approach the statements of each article in such a way that you tried to determine the greatest latitude possible under that article. This approach would be contrary to the spirit of the original confessors.

The reason for the vitality of the Reformation can be seen in the Confession's preface. Note, for instance, the paragraph which begins, *If the other electors, princes, and estates also submit a similar written writings*. The Confessors clearly expected that a child of God, listening to Scripture, would see the truth of their doctrinal points. When God's Holy Spirit works through God's Word in a believer, they will be won over to the truth.

Is there a Biblical basis for writing confessions of faith and presenting them to others? While some churches answer this question with a *No*, Lutherans (and others), find the principle of confessions of faith clearly spelled out in Scripture. Search out this principle in Matthew 10:32-33; 16:15-18; Romans 10:9; 1 Timothy 6:12 and 1 Peter 3:15.

### Article I - God

This article of faith was not in dispute. However, the Confessors included this article because Dr. Eck had accused the Lutherans of being anti-Trinitarian. So the Lutherans needed to affirm that they held to the universal Christian teaching of the Trinity. In addition, the doctrine of God has always been the classic starting point for the study or systematic treatment of doctrine.

Manichaeans - They taught that there are two substances in the universe, one intrinsically good, the other intrinsically evil. The material is the evil, the spiritual is the good. Since Christ was perfect,

they reasoned that Christ could not have had a physical body, but was just a phantom.

**Valentinians** - Valentinus (died 150 AD), said that Christ had a *heavenly, spiritual body*, which alone was worthy of Him. Christ passed through Mary as water passes through a canal, without assuming from Mary a human nature.

**Arians** - Arius taught that the Son of God is of *like substance* to the Father, rather than of the *same substance* as the Father. The Nicene Creed is the Church's direct response to Arius' heresy.

**Eunomians** - Taught that the Son of God was of a *different substance* than the Father.

**Mohammedans** - Also called the Turks, today we refer to them as the Muslims. They are anti-Trinitarian and believe that Christ was merely a man who was chosen by God to be a prophet.

**Samosatenes** - They believed that Christ was just a man, chosen by God, and specially endowed by the Holy Spirit. (*This is the view of much of modern liberal theology today.*)

Article I makes clear that a belief that God is God by any name is an inadequate belief in both God and Jesus Christ. The last paragraph *specifically rejects* views held today by groups like the Unitarians, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, United Church of Christ and the animal lodges and Masons.

## Article II - Original Sin

It is clear in this article that these Lutherans believed and confessed that Adam's fall was a real, historical event, that has consequences even in our lives. This is necessary if you are to present the true Gospel.

How is the teaching of original sin presented in Psalm 51:5?

Who was the second Adam, according to Romans 5:16-21, and what are the consequences of His actions in our lives?

**Pelagians** - The Pelagians said that the term *original sin* does not appear in the Bible. They also taught that since sin must be voluntary, and therefore infants cannot be accountable for sin before God. They admitted *original depravity* but denied that it is sin - teaching that it was a mere weakness which one might well overcome. As a result, they taught that man could receive God's grace by doing good. This teaching ended up denying the deity of Jesus Christ.

Modern (and not-so-modern) ideas rejected by this article:

- Man is only inclined to do evil
- Man is basically good
- *Every day in every way we're getting better and better.*
- That education alone can eliminate crime or evil behavior
- That we can gain any favor in God's eyes by doing good deeds

This article teaches a dilemma which human reason cannot accept, although it is clearly taught in

the Bible. (*Each statement below must be true to make the last, bold statement true*):

- by being conceived and born, we actually sin
- by doing we sin
- by not doing we sin
- **Only in Christ can this be corrected.**

The Roman Catholics rejected this article because they say that baptism not only washes away original sin (*which it does*), but that it also washes away all sinful inclinations. How does Romans 7:14-25 show that the Roman Catholic position is not Scriptural?

What are the implications of the Confession's teaching concerning original sin for infant baptism?

### Article III - The Son of God

This article says that Christ:

- is true God
- is true man - born of a virgin
- is one Person
- has 2 natures - God and man, inseparably joined
- was sacrificed for our sins
- really died
- truly and physically rose from the dead
- descended into hell
- rules the universe
- continues and maintains His church
- protects against a *very real* Satan
- will return to judge all who have ever lived

Ideas implicitly rejected by Article III:

- Christ only *appeared to be* human
- Christ was *only* a gifted teacher sent from God
- Christ was *only* human, but with a generous gift of the Holy Spirit
- That Jesus was *not* born of a true virgin
- That Christ did not *physically* rise from the dead
- That Christ is not equal with God
- That the combination of His two natures produced a third type of being

Most of these errors were the result of teachers who tried to understand how Christ could have two natures, being completely and fully God, and yet completely and fully man. These teachers were unwilling to admit that our minds cannot understand such a great mystery.

This article, and even more so, the next article (*Justification*), clashes with the Roman Catholic teaching that penance is a sacrament. Their teaching about penance indirectly claims that the work of Christ was not enough to save us. His work only did enough to enable us to save ourselves. In the

end this leaves us with a Redeemer Who can't redeem us.

Besides also rejecting Unitarian teachings about Christ, this article also rejects those who accept Calvin's teaching about Christ's work (i.e., primarily some Episcopal churches, Congregationalists, some Baptists and Evangelicals). Calvin taught that God could have forgiven our sins without Christ's atonement. Nevertheless, He chose to tie our forgiveness to Christ. This, in effect, makes Christ's atonement for us a hollow and potentially futile act on His part. Scripture teaches that the Second Adam was *necessary* to establish man's relationship with God.

What does Colossians 2:9-10 tell us about Jesus?

Some today say that the man, Jesus, took the Godhead into Himself. What is wrong with this explanation, according to Philippians 2:6-7?

All this being true, how could Jesus say what He said at the very end of John 14:28?

#### Article IV - Justification

This is the primary article of the Reformation. To sum it up: We can only be saved by being righteous (*perfectly holy*). We can never be perfectly holy by our own doing. Therefore we can never be saved on our own. By faith (which is God-given), in Jesus Christ we are made righteous, and therefore saved. The Scriptural foundation upon which the Lutheran teaching on justification is most clearly expressed in Romans 3:21-26; 4:5 (cited in the article itself), and Ephesians 2:8-9.

While justification takes place entirely without our efforts, for what purpose have been been justified, according to Ephesians 2:10?

The Roman Catholic's first response to the Augsburg Confession is called *the Confutation*. In the Confutation the Roman Catholics wrote:

It is entirely contrary to Holy Scripture to deny that our works are meritorious. Nevertheless, all Catholics confess that of themselves our works have no merit but that God's grace makes them worthy of eternal life. Their [the Lutheran princes], ascription of justification to faith alone is diametrically opposed to the truth of the Gospel by which works are not excluded. Their frequent ascription of justification to faith is not admitted since it pertains to grace and love.

The Lutheran response to this is found in the *Apology* (defense) of the *Augsburg Confession*.

The Roman Catholics responded to the Lutheran defense of this teaching of justification in adopting the following canons (Church laws), at the Council of Trent:

- Canon IX:

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*.

*Anathema* means (roughly) "*damned to hell with no hope of salvation.*"

- Canon X:

If anyone says that men are justified without the righteousness of Christ, by which He has merited for us to be justified, or that they are formally just through it; let him be anathema.

- Canon XI:

If anyone says that a man is justified either solely by the imputation of Christ's righteousness or solely by the remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and charity which is poured out into their hearts by the Holy Spirit and stays with them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the favor of God; let him be anathema.

- Canon XII:

If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than trust in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this trust alone by which we are justified; let him be anathema.

- Canon XXIV:

If anyone says that the received righteousness is not preserved and also not increased before God by good works but that the works are only the fruit and signs of the justification obtained, not also a cause of its increase; let him be anathema.

The reformers repeated that it is impossible to be saved if this article is rejected. That's not because of the power of what they wrote, but because this article says only what Scripture says about the essential Gospel. According to the first sentence of the article, how are we saved?

Ideas rejected by the Fourth Article:

- That there is any other way to salvation than through faith in Christ and His work on your behalf.
- That *good people* will be saved.
- That an honest and sincere attempt at religion, no matter what the religion, will merit salvation.
- That God counts anyone's *good deeds* or *good works* for the sake of the goodness of those deeds.

Who does Isaiah 53:4-5 refer to?  
What event is referred to here in these verses?

2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that Christ was made sin. Where did this sin come from?

According to 1 John 1:7, what did Christ use to reconcile the world to God?

According to Galatians 3:6, how do we receive the righteousness Christ has won for us?

According to Psalm 53:2-3 who is in need of what Christ has won for us on the cross?

## Article V - The Office of the Ministry (Means of Grace)

While originally entitled *The Office of the Ministry*, this article is about the means of grace. That's because the means of grace are closely connected to the office of the ministry, since the pastor is the steward of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1, where the NIV's *secret things* is literally *mysteries* in the Greek). The point of this article is to affirm that God does not work in the church without means. It aims to confess how we do receive the justifying faith that is talked about in article IV.

The article also names the means by which God works in His church:

1. The Word of God
2. The Lord's Supper
3. Holy Baptism

While all three of these are called **Means of Grace**, only two, *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*, are *sacraments*. The Holy Spirit instructs us and works faith in us through the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

While this power is inherent in the Word itself, the power of the Lord's Supper and Baptism as means of grace lie in God's command and promises about the sacraments. In other words, their power lies also in God's Word. This article does not rule out that God can and does still work miracles. But we are never given any instruction, increase in faith or other spiritual gifts without *the means* God has provided. In fact, what does Jesus say of those who seek signs and miracles in Matthew 12:39?

Why do the reformers condemn the Anabaptists in the last paragraph of this article?

Besides being contrary to Scripture what are the other dangers of such teaching?

Ideas rejected by Article V:

- The signs and the *new instruction* aspect of the charismatic movement (*virtually identical to the Anabaptists mentioned in the article*).
- That there can be any relationship with God apart from the Word and sacraments.
- That we can achieve closeness to God by our own actions.

## Article VI - The New Obedience

This article discusses the distinction between the three *Uses of the Law*: **1.** the curb; **2.** the mirror, and **3.** the guide. It affirms that the third use of the law applies to Christians because we have been saved, not so that we can be saved. Some today, even within the Lutheran church today deny this third use of the law. What is confessed here is that our works have no merit before God for salvation, yet they are a spontaneous result of faith. We seek to cultivate such good works as

Scripture describes out of a God-worked faith because we love God and have been joined to Christ by faith.

Such good works can only come from one who is already justified by faith in Christ. Many Bible-believing churches practice this quite Scripturally. But as a formal doctrinal stress and approach, it is almost unique to the Lutheran church. Today some Lutherans have tended to make this teaching almost non-existent in practice by combining the third use of the law with the second or simply calling it a Christian ethic while denying a specific third use of the law.

Based on what we learned in our study of Article IV on justification and what Article VI teaches about good works, Biblically evaluate the following statement: *Pastor, I know Dad was never a church-going person and that he wouldn't even talk to you, but he lived by the golden rule and I'm sure he is in heaven now.*

We are saved by faith alone. Relate what Jesus teaches in John 5:22-30 with what Article VI on the new obedience teaches.

It is critical for the Christian faith to understand the relation between works and faith. What does Titus 1:15 have to say about a prohibition against eating meat (for example) on Fridays?

Should a Christian who is convinced that eating meat on Fridays is a sin be forced to do so, according to Romans 14:23? Why?

## Article VII - The Church

When the Pope excommunicated Martin Luther, all those who followed Luther became excommunicated. The Roman Catholic church taught that there is no salvation outside the Roman Catholic church. This is still their official position. This meant that under Roman Catholic teaching, the Lutherans had no church, no sacraments, and no pastors. That's why the Lutheran confessors spent several articles witnessing what Scripture has to say on the matter and in the process showing that according to Scripture, they were part of the Christian Church as God defines it.

Despite social forecasts that the Christian church will disappear from the earth, the confessors state, with Christ, that the Church will remain forever (Matthew 16:18). Even as the church in Europe was dying, it was growing in America. Now, as the church is dying in America, it is growing in Africa.

This article also confesses the **Marks of the Church**. The marks of the Church are those things which identify a true Church. What are the marks of the Church identified by the confessors in this article?

While the sacraments must be observed according to their institution, which would mandate uniform practice, man made ceremonies do not have to be uniform among the churches. However, in keeping with the confessors' phrase, **the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it**, man made ceremonies must remain consistent with the Word of God. What are some examples of such man made ceremonies?

The Donatists, mentioned in this article, were 4th century Christians who denied the validity of the ministry of anyone who apostatized under persecution. Anyone who had been baptized by someone

who had apostatized had to be re-baptized and the Lord's Supper they had served was considered invalid. The Donatists would never accept anyone who repented of their apostasy.

How does our Lord define the church in Matthew 18:20?

## Article VIII - What the Church Is

This article deals with the who, what and where of the church. Luther wrote, *Thank God, a seven-year-old child knows that the Church is the assembly of all believers in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.* Luther and this article speak of the universal Church. However, this article also recognizes that in the visible, earthly church, there are also unbelievers and false Christians.

The universal (*catholic* with a small *c*) church, is invisible in the sense that we can't really know who is a genuine believer and who isn't. This we are not to judge, unless a person's actions require the Church to act (see 1 Corinthians 5:1-5). The other side of this coin is that a congregation can be shown to be Christian if the Marks of the Church are present. Congregations of like confessions band together outwardly to work for larger goals. In doing so, they do not condemn as unsaved those of other confessional stances. Rather, they witness the truth of God's Word to them while following Biblical injunctions regarding conscience and separation from errorists (Romans 16:17).

But this necessary distinction does not negate the fact that all believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are members of the same universal Church. By definition, the universal Church is already one in Lord, faith and Baptism, which is what our Lord prayed for in John 17:20-21. There is no need for the ecumenical movement. Unity comes when Christians of differing beliefs are willing to sit down and allow Scripture and nothing else decide their differences.

Why do Christians separate themselves from others who refuse to recognize their error, according to Romans 16:17-18 and 2 Thessalonians 2:15?

The Judaizers had infiltrated the Galatian church. They taught that while Jesus was indeed the Savior, Gentile Christians also had to continue to follow Jewish ceremonial law which required, for example, circumcision. By adopting their beliefs, what does Paul say that the Galatian church had actually done, according to Galatians 1:6-9?

How do these verses show that Paul is emphatic about this?

What are we to do when false teaching is presented by an individual or church, according to 2 Timothy 2:16-19?

In the first century it was common for Christians who were traveling to carry a letter from their pastor attesting to their Christian faith. When they stopped in a town, they would often have a list of Christians in that town who could put them up for the night. What does John say that someone actually does when they welcome someone who teaches false doctrine into their home in 2 John 7-11?

What is our obligation toward those who teach things contrary to the Bible, according to 2 Timothy 2:23-26?

## Article IX - Baptism

The Lutherans discovered that the Bible never makes the distinction concerning which sins that Baptism forgives that Roman Catholic theology did (and does). Roman Catholic theology taught that Baptism forgives only original sin. But every time the Bible talks about Baptism giving forgiveness, it lists no exceptions. As a result, the Lutherans taught that Baptism forgives all sins.

However, the Lutherans agreed with Roman Catholic theologians that infants need to be Baptized. The Anabaptists rejected infant Baptism, teaching that children must first reach the *age of accountability* and then confess their sin and accept Christ. On this point their theology was virtually identical to modern Baptists and most Calvinists. How might the Biblical teaching on original sin (which we studied earlier), be used to convince a person who rejects infant baptism of the truth?

How might Acts 2:38-39 be used to convince a person who rejects infant baptism of the truth?

## Article X - The Holy Supper of Our Lord

The Roman Catholic church taught (and still teaches), that the bread and wine of the Holy Supper are actually *changed into* the Lord's body and blood, and as a result there is no longer any bread and wine present. The Lutherans recognized that our Lord's words acknowledged that bread and wine are still present, along with His body and blood. Which of our Lord's words in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 make it evident that the bread and wine are still present, along with His body and blood in the Sacrament?

How does 1 Corinthians 10:16 show that the Apostles taught that both bread and wine and our Lord's body and blood are present in the sacrament?

The other, competing doctrine about the Lord's Supper was that the Lord's Body and blood are only symbolically present in the Holy Supper. This idea was first promoted by Zwingli, and later by Calvin who systematized Zwingli's beliefs. Both had been Roman Catholic priests, but became influenced by Luther's writings. Unfortunately, they also believed Scriptural truths had to be determined by human reason. So, since we see and taste bread and wine in the Supper, and there is no evidence of any body or blood present, our Lord's words must be taken symbolically. Besides, they said, Jesus is physically in heaven, so He cannot be in the Supper, too. Luther himself debated Zwingli on this subject in 1529. During the debate Luther wrote the word *is* in the dust on the table, saying that this little word, spoken by our Lord, can never be erased by human reason. The word *is* as in *This is My body* can never mean merely *represents*. Their debate was so heated, and Luther felt the matter of the Lord's Supper to be so important that when they finished, Luther refused to shake hands with Zwingli.

To this day, faithful Lutherans do not elevate or break the bread as a confessional statement against the Roman Catholic position and the position that Christ's body and blood are only symbolically present. Roman Catholics elevate the bread, reverencing the very body of Christ. Breaking the bread when the breaking of bread is mentioned in the words of institution suggests that the Holy Supper is merely a symbolic act.

The Lutherans also rejected the idea that we chew and digest the body of Christ in the Sacrament as

rationalistic. The Reformed name for such gross chewing of the flesh of Jesus was "*Capernaitic*", in reference to Capernaum, where Jesus taught about the Bread of Life. Luther described our eating in the Sacrament as *sacramental eating and drinking* which is very different from purely physical eating and drinking.

The Confutation stated: *The tenth article gives no offense in its words*. That is because the true presence of Christ's body and blood are confessed without going into the nature of that presence.

## Article XI - Confession

This article is nothing more than about being honest with ourselves and God. Confession, as practiced among Lutherans is not simply admitting our guilt. It is more than this. Confession also means hearing the absolution, for when we confess our sins and a fellow Christian, usually the pastor, pronounces absolution on us, we are hearing the very words of Christ Himself. Third, confession also means turning from that sin to our Savior. Which two parts of confession are spoken of in Acts 5:31?

Note, too, that the Lutheran confessors state, **however, it is not necessary to enumerate all trespasses and sins**, . This is with reference to confession of sins to the pastor. The 4th Lateran Council (1215) has required this. But as the Lutherans pointed out from Psalm 19:12, we cannot possibly know all our sins. Thus, about confession, the Catechism teaches that before men, we need only confess the sins we know and feel in our heart, but before God we confess guilt for all possible sins, even those of which we are not aware.

### **The Confutation said of this article:**

In the eleventh article their acknowledgment that private absolution with confession should be retained in the church is accepted. Nevertheless, two things must be required of them in this connection. First, that they demand an annual observance of confession by their subjects according to the canon concerning penance and remission and the custom of the universal church. Second, that through their preachers they cause their subjects to be faithfully admonished before confession that although they cannot state all their sins individually, nevertheless, a diligent examination of their conscience being made, they make an entire confession of their offenses - that is to say, of all that come to mind in such an investigation. With reference to the rest, which have been forgotten or escaped our mind, it is lawful to make a general confession.

Lutherans retained confession because of passages like Matthew 16:19 where the church is given the power of locking and unlocking heaven. See also John 20:23. Private confession to the pastor was standard practice among the Lutherans at this time and for some time afterwards. It was still the normal practice 150 years ago when the LC-MS was founded. By the middle 20th century in America, private confession had deteriorated to a simple personal announcement of communion attendance a day or two before communion was celebrated. Today even this practice had fallen into disuse.

Luther also saw confession to be a good way for the pastor to get to know his people and their needs. Though not strictly counseling in the secular sense, Luther saw private confession as a time for pastoral counsel where there is need:

There is comfort in the fact that if anyone has an evil conscience, or some other desire or need, and would like advice, he may ask for it here [in confession]. For God's Word is present, which comforts us and strengthens us in faith and in addition, instructs us and teaches us what we lack, and also gives us advice in time of need.

There are three forms of confession which are practiced today. There is personal confession, where a believer comes before God in prayer, seeking forgiveness. In private confession the penitent comes to the pastor or a fellow Christian to confess some particular sin(s) that troubles him and then receives absolution. Public confession is when the entire assembled congregation confesses their sins and together receive the absolution from the pastor.

What are some of the advantages of personal confession?

*Disadvantages?*

What are some of the advantages of private confession?

*Disadvantages?*

What are some of the advantages of public confession?

*Disadvantages?*

## Article XII - Repentance

This article, especially in the Latin, makes a sharp distinction between Roman Catholic penance and the steps involved in true repentance. These sharper meanings appear in the English where the article describes true repentance as including terror and sorrow on account of sin, belief in the Gospel and acceptance of absolution. The final *Rejected* which rejects the idea that forgiveness requires satisfactions made by the penitent is a clear rejection of Roman Catholic penance.

The **Novations** were a third century sect within Christianity that taught that a baptized Christian who falls into serious sin can never be forgiven. They were declared heretics by the Church.

As this article makes clear, true repentance is sorrow for a sinful deed which one wants no more to do with. Repulsed by the deed itself, the penitent realizes that his action has put him into opposition with God. This is where God's law acts like a mirror to show us our sin, and off in the distance, shows us the death that sin shall bring. But in true repentance, we have full forgiveness because Jesus Christ has fully paid for that sin, which is what making satisfaction means. True repentance bears fruit because it comes from a living faith, and thus the believer seeks to avoid that sin in the future.

The Roman Catholics taught (and still teach), that we must make satisfaction for our sins. The Confutation responded to this article with these words:

In the 12th article of their confession that the church should give absolution to such as return to penitence is commended but the second part of this article is utterly rejected, for when they ascribe only two parts to penitence, they come into conflict with the whole church, which from the time of

the Apostles has held and believed that there are three parts in penitence: contrition, confession, and satisfaction . This part of the article therefore can be in no way admitted .

Notice who, according to the Roman Catholic position, makes satisfaction for our sin - **us** rather than Christ! For this reason, Luther and the confessors were quick to point out that the Roman Catholic position here makes the work of Christ on the cross into nothing.

In our culture, a heart that is broken over one's sin is not only unusual, it is considered a bad thing. People usually sorrow over something they did wrong only because they are sorry they got caught. But, of what value is a heart, broken over one's sin, according to Psalm 51:17?

The Roman Catholic response to this article in the Confutation stated, in part, *when they ascribe only two parts to penitence, they come into conflict with the whole church, which from the time of the Apostles has held and believed that there are three parts in penitence: contrition, confession, and satisfaction. This part of the article therefore can be in no way admitted .* According to Acts 5:29-31, how many parts to repentance are there?

What are they?

Who is speaking here?

According to the Confessors in Article XII, what follows true repentance and forgiveness?

### Article XIII - The Use of the Sacraments

There is more than meets the eye in this article. The obvious point is that faith must receive the sacraments and participation in the sacraments is a confession of one's faith. The power in the sacraments comes not from our use of them but from the God's Word of promise connected to the bread, wine and water. The hidden issue comes out more fully in the *Apology* [defense] *of the Augsburg Confession* where this article is retitled: *The Number and Use of the Sacraments*.

### **The Confutation responded to this article of the Augsburg Confession, saying:**

We must request that they here ascribe to the seven sacraments in general and that they also confess specifically concerning the seven sacraments of the church and take measures for their observance by their subjects.

The Roman Catholic seven sacraments are:

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Penance.
4. The Lord's Supper
5. Marriage
6. Ordination
7. Extreme Unction

The difference between what Lutherans call sacraments and what Roman Catholics call sacraments

arises because each defines a sacrament differently. Lutherans define as sacraments *Rites which have the command of God and to which the promise of grace has been added*. As a result, the Lutherans define as sacraments, **Baptism** and the **Lord's Supper**. Sometimes *absolution* is referred to as the third Lutheran sacrament because the forgiveness of sins is given through absolution. But in the proper sense, absolution is not a sacrament because it lacks a visible element.

#### Article XIV - Order in the Church

The point of this article is made clearly in one sentence. Only those who have been properly called by a congregation to publicly preach, teach and administer the sacraments may do so. A number of things are assumed by this article since neither the Roman Catholics nor any of the other Reformation groups differed with the Lutherans on those points. First, *it was assumed* by all that anyone called to preach, teach and administer the sacraments would be properly trained. Second, it is simply assumed that *only men* were eligible for such a call (1 Timothy 2:11-3:13).

A properly called man (usually a pastor), is responsible for what is taught preached and sung at his congregation, even if others are doing some of the teaching. However, his supervision of what is preached, taught and sung within his congregation is not his individual action or ego, but a consequence of the congregation's call. Such a call is considered actually to be from the Lord, mediated through the congregation. As a result, both the congregation and the pastor are ultimately tied to Scripture (see Hebrews 13:17 and James 3:1). We also see from these passages that no one has a **right** to preach or teach in the church, no matter how badly they may wish to do so.

Who called Paul to his work as an Apostle to the Gentiles according to Acts 22:21?

Even so, Paul did not begin his work until what took place, according to Acts 13:1-3?

Once Paul had been called by the church at Antioch, the Jerusalem church decided to send him some help. How did they do this, according to Acts 15:22?

There were some in the First Century church who felt that Gentile Christians needed to adopt Jewish ceremonial and religious laws. This group (sometimes called the *circumcision party*), went from church to church preaching their line and creating havoc in many churches. To cultivate more order in the church, so that everyone wasn't preaching and teaching whatever they wanted, with or without a call, Scripture establishes some additional requirements about who shall receive a call. Paul describes these to Titus (1:5-16), whom he left as the supervising Pastor over the church on Crete. What do these requirements include?

#### Article XV - Church Usages

This article grows out the article on justification, as do the others, but more clearly shows its relationship to the article on justification. It rejects all human attempts to gain God's favor. At this time the Lutherans were abolishing the saints' days and moving most of the Apostles' days to the next Sunday. They were not abolishing the primary festivals of the church year, such as Easter, Christmas, etc.

The Roman Catholic position was that saints' and Apostles' days were to be observed as good works which earned merit before God. The Roman Catholic church had even made it a mortal sin to miss

services on any of the saints' or Apostles' days.

It also rejects the idea that such activities as taking monastic vows or observing a meatless Friday earns God's favor.

**Of this article the Confutation stated:**

*It is false that human ordinances instituted to propitiate God and make satisfactions for sins are contrary to the Gospel .*

This dependence on the part of the Roman Catholics for relief from guilt by various humanly instituted activities ultimately led to the Roman Catholic condemnation of all who believe and teach that we are saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

Article XV also allows for freedom in the observances of the church, provided the idea is not given that participation in such observance gain God's favor. Further, the observance must not be something that is directly or by implication sinful according to Scripture. The goal of the observance must be, as the article makes clear in the first sentence, to contribute to good order within the church.

**Article XVI - Civil Government**

Article XVI was accepted by the Confutation *with pleasure*. The Confutation especially commends that stand the reformers took against the Anabaptists. The condemnation which begins the final paragraph is also directed against the Anabaptists. Some of them had taken up that type of monasticism described in the article. The Anabaptists also considered God their one and only king and rejected all political or religious authority.

As an historical aside, until about the year 300, Christians refused induction into the Roman armies, even though to do so usually meant death. One of their grounds was that there were Christians in the armies they would be fighting and it was not right for Christian to fight Christian.

As Article XVI concludes, it notes that **we ought to obey God rather than men**. The entire incident which teaches us this is recorded in Acts 5:27-29. What had officials ordered the Apostles to do?

What are some examples today where the principle of obedience to God conflicts with the laws of man?

What is the origin of civil government, according to Romans 13:1?

Does this verse include everyone, whether he agrees with the government or not?

Read Romans 13:1-7. Remember that when these verses were written, a very corrupt and pagan Roman government was in authority. What good did it do?

Look again at Romans 13:4. How do you harmonize what it taught here with God's command not to

kill?

Could a Christian serve in the position of executioner? Why or why not?

## Article XVII - The Return of Christ to Judgment

In this article the Reformers identify with the universal Church, rejecting the teachings that had sprung up among some associated with the Reformation, but not with the Lutherans, like the Anabaptists. The Lutherans wanted to be seen as protesting Catholic errors and abuses, but did not want to be identified with groups like the Anabaptists. The Confutation accepted this article fully and completely.

This article specifically rejects the idea that a loving God will not damn anyone. It also rejects the idea that those who live good lives, but did not believe in Jesus Christ, will be saved because of the positive good they did during their lives. The real existence of the devil and hell is affirmed.

In Mark 9:43-49 our Lord speaks about hell. Is He telling a parable here or speaking in some other way? How?

How does the Lord describe hell?

In Matthew 26:31-46 Jesus depicts the final judgment as a sorting of the sheep and the goats. Those who are saved by faith are depicted as sheep. Their deeds, cited at the judgment, did not save them. But those with real faith live that faith. Sin has been atoned for on the cross, the only sin that now condemns is unbelief. The *goats* showed their unbelief in their failing to do the acts which flow from faith. What is their end, according to verse 41?

Who was hell originally prepared for?

What Jesus talked about, partly in figurative language, was shown to John, who writes about it in Revelation 20:11-15. John's description helps us sort the figurative language from the literal language in our Lord's description. Which elements and events appear in both descriptions of the judgment and must be taken literally?

How would you answer someone who told you that since God is love, He will not condemn anyone to hell?

The Confessors also condemn and reject the teaching that when Christ returns He will set an earthly kingdom which He will rule for a thousand years. This teaching originated in or before the first century with the Jews who thought the Messiah would have an earthly rule. A few Christians in the first century (probably Jewish Christians), maintained the hope that Jesus would return and set up an earthly rule. One, by the name of Cerinthus, was known to John, who rejected Cerinthus' teachings. This teaching had pretty well died out until the Reformation when again, a few of the Anabaptists began teaching it again. Their teaching is rejected in this article. With what words does our Lord reject this teaching in Matthew 25:31-33?

Millennialism (also known as *Chiliasm*) is based on only one passage of the Bible, Revelation 20:5, which is a very figurative passage. Millennialists take it literally. However, when other passages are

taken into account, as well as the context of Revelation 20:5, the *1,000 years* mentioned here must clearly be taken as figurative. None of the other accounts of Christ's return include a 1,000 year earthly rule, which is an omission of an important major detail if it were real. Rather, the church has taken this *1,000 years* of peace under the rule of Christ to be the same peace that was declared by the angels at Jesus' birth. As Christ rules His church on Earth during this time, Satan is bound like a dog on a chain. He is limited in what he can do (see Colossians 2:15 and 1 John 3:8).

## Article XVIII - Freedom of the Will

The main point of this article is to confess that we do have a free will when it comes to matters of our earthly life. You can decide whether you want to rob a bank or give a generous gift to the food shelf. But when it comes to spiritual matters, we have no freedom. By nature, we are unable to come to faith in Jesus Christ, as the Confessors point out, using 1 Corinthians 2:14. We do have the freedom to reject saving faith if the Holy Spirit tries to get us to believe. It is only through the action of the Holy Spirit that we can come to faith. Only God has perfect free will.

### **The Confutation accepted this article.**

This article rejects:

- Man has no free will and is only a collection of conditioned responses.
- Man has a free will in all things, even when it comes to spiritual matters.
- Man can find his own way to God.
- That we can make a decision for Christ.

The Confessors cite Augustine to show that their position is solidly with what the church has always taught.

Why did the Confessors deal with a topic like this? After Luther had written a book on this subject, Erasmus, wrote to him. Erasmus told Luther that he shouldn't get involved with a topic like this since it was complicated and it wasn't that clearly taught in the Bible, anyway. Erasmus told Luther to teach Christ crucified instead. Luther wrote back to Erasmus, *Silly, ignorant remarks, all of them! We teach nothing save Christ crucified. But Christ crucified brings all these doctrines with Him, including wisdom also among them that are perfect.*

How does Paul describe our natural reason in Romans 8:6-8?

What does this say to those who think that they can find God through their own reason?

Who, according to 1 Corinthians 12:3, is responsible for changing us from unbelief to belief in Christ as our Lord and Savior?

What does this say about the freedom of our will?

## Article XIX - The Cause of Sin

God does not force His grace on anyone. This article confesses that when someone has been a Christian living under grace, and then refuses God's will and counsel, that person is also rejecting

God's grace. The source of that refusal is within their own evil heart. With this refusal, the one who was a Christian is now again godless and belongs to the devil. Even the old Adam of the believer remains forever an enemy of God. This is why the old Adam needs to be drowned daily, lest sin change from being an incidental weakness within the believer's life to the ruler of a person's life.

At first it may seem that this article is not all that important. But its message is deadly serious: sin can still damn a believer. The Roman Catholic theologians had accused the Lutherans of doing away with the law and leaving nothing to motivate the Christian to live a Godly life. But here we see that the Lutheran position is that every sin in the Christian's life is a serious danger, and should be immediately repented of before God. Then the believer can grasp the comfort of the forgiving Gospel. According to our Lord's stern words to the Jewish leaders in John 8:42-47 when a person continues in sin, they speak and act according to the devil's nature, and no longer have Christ on, but literally have the devil on. When we understand that the old Adam within us forever remains God's enemy, and therefore as believers, it is our enemy, we will learn to have the same attitude toward sin that God does. This truth is demonstrated by St. Paul in Romans 7:12-25. Does Paul here see his sinful nature as an alien enemy or as part of himself?

What does Paul find to be the solution for this problem?

What does Paul encourage us to do in Galatians 6:7-8?

What are practical ways in which we do this?

Peter, in 2 Peter 1:2-7 calls this a participation in the divine nature. How does he say we cultivate participation in the divine nature?

## Article XX. - Faith and Good Works

As we have noted, the Lutherans had been accused of teaching that since we are saved by grace alone, the Christian could do whatever he wanted without worrying about sin. Where the previous article talked about the dangers of sin living comfortably in someone's life, this article says more. It says that not only is sin not to live comfortably in a believer's life, but that good works will flow from saving faith.

Crucial in this matter of faith and good works is the understanding that saving faith is not belief in God or the knowledge of Christ's suffering death and Resurrection. Who has such faith as this, according to James 2:19?

How does the article define true, saving faith?

This true, saving faith, worked by the Holy Spirit provides the believer with the unflinching desire to please the Lord by doing His will. Of course, this desire strives against the old Adam, who remains. Where there is no desire to do good works in the Lord's Name, there is no saving faith. We don't do good works to be saved but we do good works because we are saved.

In paragraph 2 of this article the Reformers identify the chief article of the Christian faith. What is it?

What does faith give us, according to Romans 5:1?

What do the words *have been* in Romans 5:1 tell us?

Ephesians 2:8-9 is often quoted because it clearly explains that we are saved by grace, through faith, which itself is even God's gift, all without any effort on our part. Seldom quoted is verse 10 which explains the purpose for which we have been saved. In your own words, what is that purpose?

Read James 2:17-18 and then circle the correct statement(s) below:

Good works are necessary for salvation.

Good works are not necessary for salvation, but they are necessary.

Faith without works needs to be encouraged to do works.

Faith without works is dead.

## Article XXI - The Cult of the Saints

The Roman Catholic church taught and still teaches people to pray to select saints. To be a saint in the Roman Catholic church is to have special status. The word *saint* appears in Philippians 4:21. What is its obvious meaning there?

As the Roman Catholic church spread, it made the error of incorporating local pagan gods or folk heroes whom the local people loved among the official listing of saints. It was thought that this would make Christianity more acceptable to local peoples. Many in the church learned to live with this compromise. The result was that they could still pray to their pagan gods as long as they prayed in a Christian manner, or at least what the Church said was a Christian manner. Other saints to be prayed to came out of the Church's history, like Mary, the mother of our Lord.

Official sainthood is bestowed by the Roman Catholic church upon a person, if, after his or her death, two miracles can be proven to have resulted from praying to the person. Hence, faithful Roman Catholics were urged (for an example) to begin praying to Mother Teresa. The Roman Catholic church discourages prayer directly to Jesus Christ or the Father.

The Reformers completely rejected this system as unbiblical. At the same time, they said that knowledge of the saints lives had some value. What is it?

This is exactly how Scripture speaks of believers who have come before us. See, for example, Hebrews 11, and then read 12:1.

The final paragraph of this section of the Confession is a conclusion to the first section. How did the Reformers refer to their concern to accurately reflect the Bible's teachings?

Since they had shown that what they were teaching had firm grounding in Scripture and the church fathers (of equal authority in the Roman Catholic church), they did not expect Catholic leaders to object very strongly to these articles. However, they expected strong Roman Catholic disagreement to the articles that follow.

What do the Reformers say is to be the highest authority in the Church, according to the

introduction of the *Articles About Matters in Dispute* ?

## Article XXII - Both Kinds in the Sacrament

When this was written (in the 16th century) withholding the wine from the laity was a relatively recent innovation. Until the 13th century both the bread and the wine was given to the laity. The Fourth Lateran Council had ordered withholding of the cup in 1215 AD. This was despite the fact that which earlier Pope had ordered use of both kinds in the sacrament?

Which words of Christ in the institution of the Sacrament indicate that He intends for all communicants to receive the wine as well as the bread?

What did the Confessors think of carrying the Sacrament in a procession? Why?

The Augsburg Confession was presented a week before the Corpus Christi festival in which the Sacrament is paraded down the street while being adored by the faithful. The signers of the Confession refused to celebrate this festival when it was held at Augsburg the following week. Later they even forbade carrying the Sacrament across the street.

## Article XXIII - The Marriage of Priests

Celibacy of the priests was often practiced in earlier centuries, but had not been required and enforced until the 11th Century by Pope Gregory VII. At the time of its enforcement, many of the priests in Germany were married. Marriages were forcibly broken up by the church at this time. Many times, priests who refused to submit to this rule of celibacy were executed.

The Roman Catholic church taught that being a priest, monk or a nun was especially pleasing to God - more so than being a mother, father, or lawyer. The Lutherans taught (and still teach), the idea of *vocation*. Vocation literally means *calling*. Lutherans believe that as long as you faithfully fulfill your calling, whether as a pastor or a plumber, both are equally pleasing to God. Moreover, each of us have multiple vocations which God wants us faithfully to fulfill. One can be both a plumber, a husband and a father.

According to paragraph 1, were the lay people aware of sexual abuses and sin among the priests? Which words in this paragraph support your answer?

What did the Lutherans do in an attempt to solve this problem?

What is Christ referring to in Matthew 19:10-11?

After citing Scripture in support of the marriage of priests, what do the Confessors refer to next in support of their arguments?

The second paragraph of this article is designed to show the Roman Catholics that the Lutherans stand more faithfully within the Catholic tradition than the Roman Catholic church of that day, or this, for that matter. In the second paragraph the Confessors next cite what sources in favor of their position that priests may be married?

In the third paragraph we read that even one Pope spoke in favor of the marriage of priests. Which one?

In the 8th paragraph the Confessors cite 1 Timothy 4. What does 1 Timothy 4:1-5 say is the source of the teaching that some may not be married?

What other familiar Roman Catholic teaching do these verses prophesy about ?

## Article XXIV - The Mass

To the Lutherans, then and now, the mass is nothing more than the communion service. The word *mass* comes from the Latin word meaning dismissal. These Lutherans celebrated the mass as a service that looked and sounded virtually like the Roman Catholic mass. They omitted the abuses, and taught people properly about communion. Even today, the Lutheran communion service and the traditional Roman Catholic mass look and sound much alike. What, according to the first paragraph of this article, is the purpose of the mass?

What abuses were discontinued by the Lutherans, according to paragraph 2?

Which false teachings about the mass were corrected by the Lutherans, according to paragraph 3?

According to paragraph 3, what is the mass not?

Because the mass is not a new sacrifice of Christ for our sins, the Lutherans removed the prayer that came between the Sanctus (*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might:* ) and the Lord's Prayer. In that prayer the worshippers would offer themselves and their sacrifices to God in recognition that Christ was being offered once more for the forgiveness of their sins. Often worshipper would bring their gifts to the front at this time and then the bread and wine might be processed forward to the altar. That prayer did not appear in *any* Lutheran hymnal until Lutheran Worship (and Lutheran Book of Worship), was published in 1982, when it appeared in a form modified from the Roman Catholic form. How does Hebrews 9:28 show us the error of the Roman Catholic teaching that the mass is another sacrifice of Christ for sins?

How often was mass celebrated among these first Lutherans, according to paragraph 7?

## Article XXV - Confession

While the Confessors have already stated that they retained confession in Article XI, the purpose of this Article is to bear witness to the high value they placed on confession. They also explain the abuses which they had eliminated from the practice of confession. At this time, in the Roman Catholic church, people were taught that they could have forgiveness only for the sins they actually confessed to the priest, and then only after they had completed the required penance. Once they had completed the required penance, which might range from a pilgrimage to Rome, to prayers to certain saints or the purchase of an indulgence they were told that they had worked their way back into God's favor, at least as far as the enumerated sin was concerned.

In response to the Reformers' witness and return to Biblical practices regarding confession, some

Roman Catholic priests also returned to Biblical practices regarding confession.

While the Reformers did not require those confessing their sins to list every sin they had committed, they did require confession before admission to the Holy Supper. After citing Scripture to show that no one can list all of their sins, they then cite the Church Fathers.

What is the *chief and most important part* of confession, according to the Confessors?

## Article XXVI - The Distinction of Foods

Article XXVI treats much more than just Roman Catholic dietary laws. Centering on Christ's saving work for us the Confessors state that any ceremony or church regulation which goes beyond Scripture needs to be considered voluntary, so long as it is not sinful and does not produce disorder in the church. At the same time, the proper place of such observances needs to be taught to the people. The fact to be stressed is that these voluntary observances do nothing to gain God's favor. Roman Catholic teaching stated that such humanly devised activities did gain merit before God, as is clear from the first paragraph. What does this teaching do to Christ's saving work for us, according to paragraph 2?

According to paragraph 3, what did the Roman Catholic stress on such activities actually do to God's commands?

The Reformers' teaching of calling is well summarized in paragraph 3. One's calling is whatever God has given you to do in life. A husband's calling is to be a good husband. A parent's calling is to care for and provide for their children. What activities do the Reformers say are commanded by God?

What activities have they said are not commanded by God?

What additional effects did the Church's demand that humanly devised religious activities be done have on people according to the fourth paragraph?

According to the fifth paragraph, what does the church need to emphasize?

In paragraph six, the Reformers bring in Scripture to support their position. Along with Scripture, what do they call the teachings that prohibit marriage or certain foods?

In paragraph seven the Reformers base their understanding of Jovinian's position on Jerome's slanderous depiction of him. Jovinian was a fourth century ascetic who fought against monastic teaching about earning merits before God and the so-called *stages of ethical perfection*. However, he did not, in fact, fight against *mortification and discipline*. Where, do they say, the Christian's suffering is to come from?

What do they say is the proper purpose for mortification and discipline, according to paragraph eight?

At the same time, what do they reject in this paragraph?

How did they instruct their people concerning the ceremonies and traditions they kept, according to paragraph nine?

At the time of the Reformation Easter was observed on the Jewish Passover in Asia Minor. In Palestine and Egypt it was observed one Sunday later.

## Article XXVII - Monastic Vows

Article XXVI, like the other articles, is directly related to justification by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. Is the life of a pastor more pleasing to God than being a plumber? The Reformers answer, on the basis of Scripture is *No*. We are made pleasing to God by what Christ has done and not by what we do. Yet the monastic system directly contradicted this. Those in monasteries were said to be living the holiest and most pleasing lives of all. In fact, the church taught that those living in monasteries could be so holy that they could do more than just pay for their own sins. They could also do *holy works of supererogation* which could be *banked* and given to the less holy. As a result of the Reformation, monasteries emptied, a fact which showed the effectiveness of the Reformation and shocked Roman Catholic leaders.

Until the 8th Century, one could leave monastic life any time he or she wanted. Monastic life was strictly voluntary. The result was that the monasteries began to decline at that time. What does paragraph 1 say that the church did about that?

According to paragraph 2, what other outrageous practice had come into being?

According to paragraph 3, what did these children do in the monasteries?

Though monasteries and the rules governing life in them were man made, to what did the church equate monastic life, according to paragraph 4?

While monasteries at least taught the Bible to children who were placed in them, what were they now learning, according to paragraph 5?

What do the Reformers cite in paragraph 6 to support their position on monastic life?

Paragraph 7 argues that the church recognizes that if a vow made contrary to papal canons (laws) is not binding, then how can vows made contrary to God's law be binding. In paragraph 8 the Reformers mention the case of King Aragon. King Aragon died without child, and thus, the throne fell to his brother, Ramiro II, who was a monk. He was released from his vows so that he could assume the throne and produce heirs to the throne.

Paragraph 9 points out that few in the monasteries took their vows of chastity voluntarily or after proper consideration. In paragraph 10, the Reformers note that canon law and papal regulations allow those who make vows before their 16th birthday may be released from those vows if they change their minds. Another sets the age at 18. Yet these regulations did not cover the children who were sent to the monasteries. Yet there is one more and over-riding reason why monastic life should be abolished mentioned in paragraph 12. What is it?

According to paragraph 13, what does the teaching that monastic life makes satisfaction for sin do

to the Gospel?

Paragraph 14 points out how those who teach that one can be justified through the law, have actually fallen away from grace. What additional and absurd error did the monks begin to teach people, according to paragraph 15?

The monks also taught that they were in a state of perfection, according to paragraph 16. According to the Reformers, what is true Christian perfection?

According to paragraph 16, what was the effect of the teaching that monks are perfect on the common man?

How had a church father evaluated the monks' teaching about perfection, according to paragraph 18?

How do the Reformers evaluate monastic vows in the last sentence of paragraph 19?

## Article XXVIII - The Power of Bishops

Bishops as they are known today did not exist in the Old Testament or New Testament church. In the early Christian church more experienced pastors who were natural leaders came to supervise less experienced pastors. As the number of churches and pastors grew, such supervising pastors came to be known as bishops. By the time of the Reformation the office of Bishop had become so powerful that their power and authority was considered equal to or greater than even princes. This power was challenged by the Reformation in directly and directly, as in this article. As a result, the office of Bishop in the Roman Catholic church has great power, but only within the church. Other church bodies also use the title. In some churches, only the leader, what we would call the president, is called a Bishop. In others, such as the ELCA, they refer to district presidents as Bishops. Within our own church, a pastor who supervises a vicar is often referred to as that vicar's Bishop.

Paragraph 1 begins with a brief review of the abuses that had grown up around the office of bishop. According to this paragraph, what power do bishops have?

What power do they **not** have?

According to paragraph 2, what specific powers do bishops have?

How is the power of a bishop exercised, according to paragraph 3?

What specific powers do bishops not have, according to paragraph 4?

Read Luke 12:13-14. In what realm did Jesus refuse to exercise any authority and why?

Now read John 8:2-11. In what realm did Jesus use His authority and why?

According to paragraph 5, which authority, temporal or spiritual was to be held in the highest esteem?

According to paragraph 6, with what does temporal authority have no connection?

When was the bishops' authority not to be honored, according to paragraphs 7 and 8, and what authorities do the Reformers cite for their conclusion?

At this time in Europe, Lutheran princes ruled Lutheran territories and Roman Catholic princes ruled Roman Catholic territories. There was not a pure separation of church and state as we know it in America today. Reread paragraph 9 in this light. What was to be done with bishops who were not doing their jobs?

What other powers did bishops claim for themselves, according to paragraph 10?

Why didn't the bishops have this power, according to paragraph 11?

The reformers suggest why bishops might have claimed such vast powers in paragraph 12. What pattern might they have been following when they imposed legalistic restrictions on the church?

How did Christ refer to those who impose unnecessary ordinances on God's people, according to paragraph 15?

What is Scripture's view of multiplying new laws beyond Scripture on the backs of believers, according to paragraph 16?

According to paragraph 17, what did the bishops teach that the keeping of their laws would do for a person?

Therefore, on what basis did the Reformers reject these new laws?

The example of Sunday worship was used in paragraph 18 because John Eck had claimed that the Reformers had erroneous views about the Lord's day. What should be the primary purpose of any man-made laws in the Church, according to this paragraph?

What should be the Christian's motivation for keeping such man-made laws, according to paragraph 19?

Paragraph 20 explains the basis upon which the early church changed the day of worship from the Old Testament Sabbath day to Sunday, as well as the basis upon which we continue that tradition. Paragraph 21 then explains why additional regulations should not be added to Sunday as a worship day, such as what to eat, drink, etc. What do the Reformers say (at the end of this paragraph), is the primary cause of people wanting to add additional regulations to Sunday?

Paragraph 22 mentions the example of the Apostles at the First Council of Jerusalem. They refused to impose more than a minimal number of rules on the church, and then only rules that would avoid offense. In paragraph 23, the reformers give examples from church history of how human rules fall into disuse because they no longer address any problem. Paragraph 24 begins with three examples of rules devised by the church which would be a sin to keep. Which are these?

- 1.
- 2.

3.

Paragraph 25 closes off this article by citing Peter's words in 1 Peter 5:1-3. Which of St. Peter's words were the bishops violating, according to what you have seen in this article?

## Conclusion

In the conclusion the Reformers state that many other issues could be mentioned, but they decided to mention only the main items at issue. They felt that these other items did not need to be mentioned here, since they are well known and can be judged in light of what has already been said in the articles presented here. What do they say was their reason for doing this?

In the second paragraph, we see the peaceful tone with which the Confessions began. The Reformers re-affirm that they stand solidly with universal Christian tradition and teachings. What specifically do they say they were careful to do?

## The Meaning of Confessional Subscription

Just as the three creeds define what is and is not Christian belief, so do the Lutheran Confessions. Just as the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds grew out of doctrinal disagreement and controversy within the Church, so did the Lutheran Confessions. Thus we hold to both the creeds and the Lutheran Confessions unconditionally. The Augsburg Confession is confessed even by many non-Lutherans. John Calvin even signed it.

There are two ways of subscribing to the Augsburg Confession or any of the Lutheran Confessions among those who accept them:

1. Those who subscribe to them unconditionally and without reservation *because* they accurately reflect Scripture's teaching on the matters they touch and no where say anything contrary to God's Word. This position holds the Lutheran Confessions above all other human writings, but a little lower than the Bible (LC-MS, ELS, WELS).

2. *Conditional acceptance* of the Lutheran Confessions which reserves the right to reject anything in them that the individual believes might not be Scriptural (ELCA, LWF).

While these two approaches to the Lutheran Confessions have been present with Lutheranism since the Reformation, the Confessions themselves demand the first (unconditional), type of subscription. The LC-MS has held this type of subscription to the Confessions since its founding. World wide over 20 Lutheran church bodies who hold to this type of subscription and formed an international association.

In light of an understanding of this type of subscription we can better understand the stands taken by the Confessors in the Augsburg Confession:

1. The Confessors express a sincere desire to ask or require not one thing more than Scripture does, so as not to go beyond Scripture.

2. Anything fully Scriptural has to be, by definition, part of the Universal Christian faith. Therefore

rejection of anything in this Confession is a rejection of Scripture itself. The Authority behind the Confession is not the Confession or Luther, but God Himself.

3. The first Lutherans took great pains to show that their teaching was not new, but in full agreement with the Apostles and Apostolic Fathers. The Apostolic Father were personally taught by the Apostles, or taught by men who had been. Where there was disagreement with the Roman Catholic Church, it was not because the Reformers were teaching something new, but because the Roman Catholic Church had invented new teachings since the Apostles and Fathers.

4. The conclusion must follow that anyone who rejects what the Lutherans were teaching are acting contrary to Christian love and are splitting the church by so doing.

Many believe that it is no longer realistic for Lutherans to hold to the Confessions because they are a true and faithful witness to Scripture. What are some of the obstacles we face because we hold to this type of subscription?

Can one be a Christian without being a Lutheran? Can one be a Lutheran without being a Christian? Why will a true Christian, always growing in his faith and understanding of the Word be led by the Spirit to the Lutheran position?

(Note: paragraph numbers are based on the 38-page reprint pamphlet of the Augsburg Confession.)