

The Augsburg Confession

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Lesson One: Introduction; Preface

Introduction

It is the very nature of a Christian to...

_____ his faith (Romans 10:10-13, 17).

_____ with fellow believers (Hebrews 10:23-25).

_____ from those who teach falsely (Romans 16:17).

Name other confessions that we regularly use in the church.

Why are confessions so important? Why is it often inadequate simply to say, "I believe the Bible"?

What is the proper relationship between the Lutheran Confessions and the Scriptures? Two Latin phrases summarize the correct understanding:

Scripture is the "*norma normans*" _____

Confessions are "*norma normata*" _____

Evaluate the two following expressions of how someone might view the Lutheran Confessions. Which would best describe your mindset? What's the important difference between the two?

- a) I agree with the Lutheran Confessions *insofar as (quatenus)* they are a correct interpretation of the Scriptures.
- b) I agree with the Lutheran Confessions *because (quia)* they are a correct interpretation of the Scriptures.

Why is the Augsburg Confession important today?

What happens when God's people are not clear about what they believe and confess? Give some examples.

History of the Augsburg Confession

Early years of the Reformation:

- Lutherans and Catholics

- Lutherans and other Protestants

- *Cuius regio, eius religio* ("He who reigns designates the religion").

Important term

Diet - A parliamentary general assembly of political leaders, often called together with the goal of reconciling conflict.

Tappert's historical introduction (excerpts):

On January 21, 1530, Emperor Charles V summoned an imperial diet to meet the following April in Augsburg, Germany. He desired a united front in his military operations against the Turks, and this seemed to demand that an end be made of the religious disunity which had been introduced at home as a result of the Reformation. Accordingly he invited the princes and representatives of free cities in the empire to discuss the religious differences at the forthcoming diet in the hope of overcoming them and restoring unity. In keeping with this invitation the elector of Saxony asked his theologians in Wittenberg to prepare an account of the beliefs and practices in the churches of his land. Since a statement of doctrines, known as the Schwabach Articles, had already been prepared in the summer of 1529, all that seemed to be needed now was an additional statement concerning the changes in practice which had been made in the churches of Saxony. Such a statement was therefore prepared by the Wittenberg theologians, and since it was approved at a meeting in the Torgau at the end of March, 1530, it is commonly referred to as the Torgau Articles.

Together with other documents, the Schwabach and the Torgau Articles were taken to Augsburg. There it was decided to make a common Lutheran statement, rather than merely a Saxon statement, of the account which was to be submitted to the emperor. Circumstances also

Preface to the Augsburg Confession (excerpts)

Most serene, most mighty, invincible Emperor, most gracious Lord:

A short time ago Your Imperial Majesty graciously summoned a diet of the empire to convene here in Augsburg... The purpose was for deliberation on what might be done about the dissension concerning our holy faith and the Christian religion, and to this end it was proposed to employ all diligence amicably and charitably to hear, understand, and weigh the

demand that it be made clear in the statement that Lutherans were not casually to be lumped together with all the other opponents of Rome, and other considerations suggested the desirability of emphasizing the agreements with Rome rather than the differences from Rome. All these factors played a part in determining the character of the document which was now prepared under the hands of Philip Melancthon. The Schwabach Articles became the principal basis for the first part and the Torgau Articles became the principal basis for the second part of what came to be the Augsburg Confession. Luther, who was not present in Augsburg, was consulted through correspondence, but revisions and emendations were made to the very eve of the formal presentation to the emperor on June 25, 1530. Signed by seven princes and the representatives of two free cities, the confession immediately achieved peculiar importance as a public declaration of faith.

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

judgments, opinions, and beliefs of the several parties among us to unite the same in agreement on one Christian truth, to put aside whatever may not have been rightly interpreted or treated by either side, to have all of us embrace and adhere to a single, true religion and live together in unity and in one fellowship and church, even as we are all enlisted under one Christ.

Wherefore, in dutiful obedience to Your Imperial Majesty, we offer and present a confession of our

pastors' and preachers' teaching and of our own faith, setting forth how and in what manner, on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, these things are preached, taught, communicated, and embraced in our lands, principalities, dominions, cities and territories.

We offer in full obedience, even beyond what is required, to participate in such a general, free, and Christian council as the electors, princes, and estates have with the highest and best motives requested in all the diets of the empire which have been held during Your Imperial Majesty's reign. We have at various times made our protestations and appeals concerning these most weighty matters, and have done so in legal form and procedure. To these we declare our continuing adherence, and we shall not be turned aside from our position by these or any following negotiations as we herewith publicly witness and assert. This is our confession and that of our associates, and it is specifically stated, article by article, in what follows.

This is nearly a complete summary of the doctrines that are preached and taught in our churches... As can be seen, this teaching is grounded clearly on the Holy Scriptures and is not contrary or opposed to that of the universal Christian church, or even of the Roman church (in so far as the latter's teaching is reflected in the writings of the Fathers). Therefore, those who presume to reject, avoid, and separate from our churches as if our teaching were heretical, act in an unkind and hasty fashion, contrary to all Christian unity and love, and do so without any solid basis of divine command or Scripture. There is, however, disagreement on certain abuses that have crept into the Church without rightful authority. Even here, if there are some differences, the bishops should bear with us patiently because of the Confession we have just reviewed. Even the Church's canon law is not so severe that it demands the same rites everywhere. Nor, for that matter, have the rites of all churches ever been the same.

Discussion

Describe the overall tone of the preface. Why was it important to write and speak in this way?

Paragraph 1: Who called the Diet of Augsburg? What issue faced the empire? The Church? Do you think the expectations of this diet were reasonable?

Paragraph 2: What's the key phrase?

Paragraph 3: What's the point that the confessors are pressing?

Paragraph 4: What action did the Lutheran confessors request of Emperor Charles V in the event that the differences between the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics were not peacefully settled?

Augsburg Confession Article I: Of God (Time permitting)

¹ We unanimously hold and teach, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Nicaea, ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ 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

⁵ Therefore all the heresies which are contrary to this article are rejected. Among these are the heresy of the Manichaeans, who assert that there are two gods, one good and one evil; also that of the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and others like them; ⁶ also that of the Samosatenes, old and new, who hold that

there is only one person and sophistically assert that the other two, the Word and the Holy Spirit, are not necessarily distinct persons but that the Word signifies a physical word or voice and that the Holy Spirit is a movement induced in creatures.