

# The Book of Concord

## *Sources and Story*

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[Presented at the Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions,  
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary,  
September 26-27, 2005]

### Introduction

Anniversaries have a way of throwing great events under the spotlight for assessment. An event 475 years ago made a major impact on church history, the history of Christian dogma, and the story of civilizations in Europe and the world.<sup>1</sup> In A.D. 1530, Lutheran princes submitted a confession of faith that was destined to become a symbol of church reform and the flagship of the Lutheran Church. Fifty years later the Lutheran Estates collected their confessional writings into the *Book of Concord*.

Questions concerning the durative nature and significance of these confessions are the subject of this essay and raise provocative questions for a "post-Christian" world. What does adherence to such creeds and confessions imply for our age? Are the Lutheran Confessions – even more basic – are creeds and confessions obsolete in an age of cross-cultural outreach and ecumenical action – and if so, why?<sup>2</sup> What lessons can we learn from their formation and usage for the church in our age? Do the "particular" creeds of the Lutheran church actually create barriers to our mission to spread the gospel?<sup>3</sup> How does the Augsburg Confession relate to the ancient Christian creeds? And how does this pivotal confession integrate with later evangelical confessions in the Book of Concord?

Vital questions like these are directed to an essay on the *Book of Concord: Sources and Story*. We raise them because they lie in the background of our discussion and are an integral part of the presentation. As assigned, this essay merely aims "to relate the unique nature of each of the confessional writings included in the 1580 publication as well as the account of its formation, publishing, and subscription."<sup>4</sup> Though this huge task is limited by time, a bird's-eye view of events has advantages. As the Apostle John demonstrates in presenting Jesus' life, the eagle that flies high sees the big picture. If the "devil is in the details," you can find the historical intricacies carried out in such a classic study as *The Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* by F. Bente.<sup>5</sup> Our assignment, though more modest, is hopefully also incisive and useful in Christian ministry.

## I. The Ecumenical Creeds

### A. The Apostles Creed *the Baptism creed*

From its inception the Christian church was neither creedless nor without Christian confession. No church has ever formed without stating what it believes (*credo*) and confesses (*confessio*). The Christian belief (creed) is so deeply imbedded in the apostolic writings that the early church's witness to the world would be meaningless without it. Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations by "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" focuses the church's testimony first of all on the mission of Jesus Christ, who reveals the works of God in unmistakable clarity and fullness (Mt 28:19f; Jn 5:39).

As the apostolic missionary to the Gentile world, the Apostle Paul picks up on the centrality of Jesus' work for Christian ministry. He assures believers that God's word to mankind in Christ is not abstract or far away, but so near that it is, "in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming." In this way Christ and his righteousness are made available orally to all who receive him by faith. Applied to each

person this simply means, "If you *confess* with your mouth, 'Ιησους κυριος' (Jesus is Lord) and *believe* in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Faith and confession go hand in hand as naturally as mouths communicate what is in the heart.<sup>6</sup> "For," as Paul explains with carefully measured words "with your heart you believe and are justified and with your mouth you confess and are saved" (Ro 10:7-10 – the great mission chapter).

After apostolic eyewitnesses to Christ's life and work passed from the scene, a formulated confession of faith became increasingly important. A creedal statement was one of three major means used for gathering Christians into congregations. As happened with the episcopal office and in the assemblage the New Testament canon, the creed arose in a specific form. Its aim was to gain and train initiates for entrance into the church by baptism. Initially the church used the creed primarily for teaching and worship purposes. The scriptural word for confession (*homologein*) expressed not merely a confession of faith, but also confession of sins and praise of God (Mt. 10:32 / Mk 1:5 / Mt 11:25). Like interlocking concentric circles, they belong together in Christian faith and life. In gospel ministry, confession of sin leads to confession of faith and praise of God (Peter in Lk 5:8; Mk 16:16). Over time the congregational needs for instruction and worship resulted in the formulation of the Apostles' Creed.

We can only reconstruct the *story* of the Apostles' Creed from the Scriptures and non-biblical Christian *sources*. Two major legends of its origin – that Christ himself communicated the Creed to his disciples between his resurrection and ascension (Ac 2:3) or that the Apostles compiled the Creed, sentence for sentence, before they separated after Pentecost<sup>7</sup> – are countered by the silence of the of the New Testament and the early ecumenical councils on the matter.

Logically though not necessarily chronologically, the Baptism creed seems to have started with the Christological center "as of first importance" (1Co 15:3; Ro 1:3-4; Php 2:6-11). In essence, a confession to Jesus Christ – whether by acclamation or in a formulated creed – simply stated, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" (Jn 6:68f). To confess Jesus as LORD is to address him by that holy name reserved for God in the promises of Old Covenant (1Co 12:3).

In the earliest Christian confessions, the use of Jesus' human, divine, and prophetic names added significant understanding to a novice's instruction in the faith. To acknowledge "*Jesus, the Christ (Messiah), as God's Son and our Savior*"<sup>8</sup> was to speak aloud God's holy name in faith, and to pray, praise and give God thanks for his wonderful works. Instruction in the Baptism creed helped Christians to communicate their faith and to confess the person and work of Jesus at home and in the marketplace.

Simultaneously, this core Christological confession expanded into a Trinitarian form. According to Jesus' parting instructions, baptism was to be carried out "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). In the East, however, the church followed St. Paul's twofold confession of faith as a creedal statement. Written in parallel sentences to counter contemporary polytheism, this creed stated: *For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live* (1Co 8:6). This simple, mono-syllabic creed – direct in description and dynamic in scope – lacked a reference to the Holy Spirit. To complete Jesus' threefold baptismal form, the Eastern Church merely added the phrase "and in the Holy Spirit" without further descriptors.<sup>9</sup> At the time, Greek Easterners were struggling to grasp the nature and work of God's Spirit.

The Roman West led the way in formulating what eventually became the Apostles' Creed. The Baptism formula in Rome began as a threefold confession to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each specifically identifying God's activities in the world outside himself. In a verbal symmetric form, it ended up being a triple triad [3 x 3]. "I believe (*credo*) in God, the Father, the Pantokrator (2Co 6:18), and in Jesus Christ, his *only-begotten Son, our Lord*; and in the Holy Spirit, the *holy church, the resurrection of the flesh*."

Later an expanded rendition of the Old Roman Baptism Formula added two important "who" clauses to flesh out the Christian confession. Not surprisingly, the additions focused on the Christological core. The first clause identified Jesus' *person* as the incarnate deity, "*Who* was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary." The second highlighted the *life and work* of Jesus, "*Who* was crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried; etc."<sup>10</sup>

Later additions of the "descent into hell" in the life of Christ, and of "the communion of saints" and "the life everlasting" under the Spirit's work gave the Creed its modern form.<sup>11</sup>

The Creed's specific focus on God and his activities toward us provided the Christian church a platform for instructing new believers, a foundation of faith meant to be shared with one another and the world. Called the Christian's "canon of truth" [κανων αληθειας] or the church's "rule of faith" [*regula fidei*], the Baptism creed served as a sign of identification to unite believers. Later on, Christians referred to the Creed as their *symbol*, a watchword or seal that distinguished them from unbelievers.<sup>12</sup>

In this respect the Apostles' Creed was historically and theologically unique. It was made up of a series of titles to be used as a training tool in catechetical instruction. The words, drawn from the apostolic writings, were brief and epigrammatic for easy use by teachers, each word a lesson in faith.<sup>13</sup> The Creed was not completed at once like the pouring of a bell, but there was a gradual extension of the formula and only fundamental teachings were included. The formulae were not stiff but changing until the Creed reached a form now generally accepted by the church. But importantly the creed was part of the living liturgy of the church. In every sentence baptized Christians heard an echo of their former instruction in the faith. It was, in short, a compendium of the theology of the Christian church.

## B. **The Nicene Creed** *confessing the Trinity*

Why then another creed? The answer lies primarily in the early church's challenge of evangelizing the Gentile world and testifying to the Christian God in the Greek idiom. There was no dogma of the Trinity as such for Christians to use in witnessing to the questioning world. Besides, Christians were regarded as atheists, as Polycarp experienced in his trial at Smyrna,<sup>14</sup> because they had no Temples dedicated to the images of their gods and they were shaking the foundations of the civilized world that claimed *κατσερ κυριος*, not *Ιησους κυριος* (Ac 17:2-7).

The spotlight in the Christian confession and witness therefore was on Jesus – and on the question, who is Jesus? Is he really God, as God is God, or a mysterious superman who opened the way to God and the ways of God to man? The result of that fundamental question gave birth to the Nicene Creed and the clarification of the Christian confession to Jesus as *true God*.

From the outset Christians in the post-apostolic age continued to witness to their faith in God as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. God's revelation of himself as "I AM" not only provided the schema for Israel's distinctive confession of faith: "The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Ex 3:14; Dt 6:4). It also remained the exclusive name to confess Christian monotheism. God was one, and only one. He is the LORD God, Ο ΩΝ, "the Being," whom Christians believe, teach, and confess.<sup>15</sup> But the confession that reverberated throughout the Roman world was more pointed: "*Jesus is LORD*." And that confession accounted for severe persecutions during the centuries prior to the coming of Emperor Constantine and the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. But how did one clarify the belief (*creed*) that Jesus is Lord together with the faith in the one Being?

Even more complicated, Christians believed that the one LORD God was "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," whom Jesus revealed in word and deed with unmatched clarity.<sup>16</sup> Attempts to witness to the Christian faith in one God without ending up with a triad of three separate beings created its own set of problems and heresies. The triad did not yet express a tri-unity. How Jesus as God's Son related to the Father caused a debate within the church that resonates to this day. The place of the God's Spirit was not yet in the forefront of the debate.

Christian defenders naively and vainly tried to solve the dilemma by designating Jesus as "another God" in a derivative sense.<sup>17</sup> The overriding concern was to preserve monotheism in a world where deities dotted the landscape in visual forms. Different from the pagan gods, the Lord God ruled over all things like a sovereign monarch. In the viewpoint of some, this divine Being adopted Jesus, a human imbued with divine powers, as his Son. Or, with a different spin, God was seen as a divine actor on the world's stage and Father, Son and Spirit, merely different modes of God's appearance.<sup>18</sup>

The Christian defense failed, and the need to distinguish God from God remained. Christians searched

for ways to express their faith in God in a way that measured up Jesus' words and the apostolic witness and writings. The need to differentiate between the triad of Father, Son, and Spirit and their tri-unity remained a mystery that was to defy human explanation and needed to rely on divine revelation. Christians came to express the three-ness of Father, Son, and Spirit as the difference between God's Being, his *ousia* (Ex 3:14), and his *υποστασις*. God's *hypostasis* pointed to a distinct divine self-existence. With reference to Jesus, *hypostasis* meant that he was the "exact representation" of God's Being (Heb 1:3 *υποστασις*).<sup>19</sup> At issue then was the relationship between Jesus and the Father, between God's Son and God the Father.

The breakthrough came, not by speculation, but through a search of sources in the apostolic scriptures of God's old and new testaments. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon, took note how the Scriptures speak of God differently when they refer to God's inner Being from when they speak about God's revelation of himself in the story of salvation. In writing on the *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, Irenaeus points out that "God is shown to be one according to the essence of his Being and power ... but as the administrator of the economy of our redemption, he is both Father and Son."<sup>20</sup>

This distinction between God in his essence and God at work in our salvation opened the door to expressing the *mystery* of the Triune God without solving it. So God, the eternal Being, had with him from eternity his Word (Jesus, the *Logos*) and his Wisdom (the Spirit). These three *hypostases* of God were at work in God's activities *outside* himself.

Tertullian, the Latin theologian, picked up on the Greek expressions to communicate the Christian confession to the Latin-speaking world. He transferred the more ethereal Greek expression *hypostasis* to the Roman stage where the particular individuality of a character was made known by use of a mask. The actor communicated the character by sounding through the mask – in Latin *per - sono* – and thus the person. So *hypostasis* became *person* in the Western church. In God's revelation of himself, God was one Being (*ousia*) but three persons (*hypostasis*), each with its distinct individuality and task. Father, Son, and Spirit are one Being but not one person.

The Christian teacher, Origen of Alexandria, connected God's revelation of the persons in time and place back to God's *eternal* Being. From reading the apostolic writings Origen taught that Jesus as God's Son incarnate is one with God the Father and begotten of the Father from eternity. Father and Son were "of the same Being" (*homoousios*).<sup>21</sup> So the revelation of the persons in time simultaneously refers to God's eternal Being. The term *homoousios* caught on, and was challenged. The challenge came with regard to Jesus' person.

The challengers, Arius and the Arians, divided the Christian witness to the world in far-flung reaches of the Mediterranean world.<sup>22</sup> Arius openly acknowledged belief in One God. But he described God's Being as an exclusive one – a Being who was "alone unbegotten, alone everlasting, alone without beginning, alone true, alone immortal, alone wise, alone good, alone sovereign ...unalterable and unchangeable, just and good."<sup>23</sup> To Arius, only the Father measured up to such qualities as the one and only transcendent and unchangeable God. In a burst of metaphysical speculation he denied full deity to Jesus Christ, the Son begotten of the Father. This logical conclusion meant two things time-wise. There was a time when the Father's Son was not. Therefore the Son, though divine and like God and "of like substance," was nevertheless made by God for his purposes. In short, Jesus Christ was the foremost creation of the Father.

Against such speculation, the creed adopted at Nicea under the leadership of the young Athanasius, gave scriptural testimony to Jesus as *true God*. At stake in this dispute was our salvation. Christians were redeemed not by a creature or a sub-deity, but by God himself (Mt 16:18-19; Jn 10:30; 14:8-11). The Nicene formula clearly expressed the relationship of the Father and the Son as well as the purpose of the incarnation.<sup>24</sup> It meant that the apostolic testimony to the Son as *begotten of the Father* unfolds a mystery hidden in Christ but revealed for faith (Jn 1:1-18; 3:16).

Without using the word *person* the Nicene formula spotlights Jesus Christ as *true God and Savior* and explicitly explains with biblical clarity that Jesus is "*begotten from the Father, only begotten – that is, from the Being of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, homo-ousios with the Father, ... who because of us men and because of our salvation ... became incarnate*"<sup>25</sup> (Jn 1:1-9; 12:35f; 1Jn 1:5). At Nicea the creed affirmed that the Son had the same divine Being as the Father by excluding

any notion there was a time when God the Father was alone.

Some half century later the Nicene formula was further clarified. A council of Eastern bishops confirmed the Nicene formula and simultaneously affirmed that the Holy Spirit was also LORD, of the same Being as the Father and the Son, and highlighted the Spirit's activity in confirming the Son's divine work (in 15:26). Picking up on the distinction between God as he relates to himself *internally* and God at work *outside* himself in the world, church leaders froze the terms of the debate.<sup>26</sup> God's *ousia* was the way to speak of God's Being, the common substance. *Hypostasis* referred to the persons of the divine Being - Father, Son, and Spirit.<sup>27</sup>

So, without using the term *tri-unity* (trinity), the Nicene Creed simply distinguishes God from God - God's Being from the persons, the essential trinity from the operative trinity, God as He Is from God revealed as creator, redeemer, and life-giver. It gave witness to the Christian faith in God without dividing God's Being or confusing the persons. The reformulated Creed was given final approval in East and West at an ecumenical council at Chalcedon.

### C. **The Athanasian Creed** *confessing the Christ*

For centuries Athanasius' stalwart biblical defense of the triune God at Nicea had a widespread impact on the church, its preaching, its worship, and its testimony. As attacks on the Christian faith multiplied in and outside the church, commentaries on the Nicene formula and the writings of Athanasius permeated the church in mission. Evidence points to the fact that, early on, the church in Southern France included an explanatory version of the trinity traceable to Athanasian and Augustinian writings.<sup>28</sup> It was used as a rule of faith (*regula fidei*) for recitation in the Psalm-books and breviary. Whatever the exact origin, the influence of Athanasius' theology is unmistakable. The dogma of the Trinity in *Part 1* of this so-called Athanasian creed clarified the faith of the church catholic by unfolding the mystery of the Three in One and the relationship of the persons for use pedagogically, liturgically, and defensively.<sup>29</sup>

Only the clarification of the doctrine of Jesus' person surpassed the dogma of the Trinity in intensity. *Part 2* of the Athanasian Creed further clarified the Nicene Creed. It took up the basic question cited by the Council of Chalcedon: If Jesus Christ is *true God*, how can one say that he also *true man*? In answer, the Christian church put the mystery of the incarnation in creedal form. It brought expressions of Christ's dual nature in one person in line with the Gospels and St. Paul's witness to Colossae: "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Col 2:9). To divide Jesus' human nature from his divine Being as Nestorius did, only ends up with two separate Christs, one human and one divine. To commingle Christ's two natures into one without distinction as Eutyches did, finally results in Jesus being a divine superman whose suffering and death on the cross becomes mere play-acting.

From Irenaeus to Athanasius the revelation of God as he relates to himself *inside* and to the world *outside* were the foundations of faith. On this faith (creed) the Reformation built its testimony.<sup>30</sup> And by this faith (creed) the Lutheran confessional writings in the Book of Concord connected to the church catholic by boldly asserting with special emphasis: *Christ is, and remains to all eternity, God and man in one indivisible person. Next to the Holy Trinity this is the highest mystery, as the apostle testifies [1Ti 3:16], and the sole foundation of our comfort, life, and salvation* (FC:Ep VIII:18).

## II. **The Evangelical Creeds**

None of us can truly appreciate the Lutheran reform unless we return to these foundations. The work of Christ does not stand alone at the center of our life before God. The cross can only be rightly understood on the background of the nature and work of God, clearly spelled out in the early creeds. Your speaker vividly remembers the day at the University of Erlangen, when Prof. Wilhelm Maurer began a Reformation seminar by stating flatly, *justification by faith* is not the root of the Lutheran reformation. It is the fruit of the reformation.

The root of the reformation is Luther's return to the theology of the early Christian church."<sup>31</sup>

That insight holds true today and is the reason for treating the ecumenical creeds so prominently in the story and sources of the Book of Concord. The interconnection of the Lutheran confessions with the early Christian creeds and the Scriptures that birthed them cannot be taken for granted and indicates how important it is for each generation to recapture that story and its sources. The creeds and confessions in the Book of Concord do not only claim to clarify our scriptural witness to the world [FC:Ep Intro. 1-6]. Specifically they identify what it means to be *Lutheran*.

All Christian churches – whatever the denominational name or heritage – claim the Scriptures as normative. But adherence to the ecumenical and evangelical confessions is a trademark of the Lutheran Church that is faithful to the Scriptures and the Holy Gospel on record in them. On trial in the Reformation confessions is the place of the Gospel in the life of the church. Confessing the gospel of Christ in its fullness was initially the church's assigned task and mission and continues to energize the church militant until God finally completes his eternal mission: "To bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Eph 1:10).

#### **A. The Augsburg Confession** *confessing the Gospel*

When the Augsburg Confession was handed in to Emperor Charles V, the princes were caught in the maelstrom of Caesero-papism, a longstanding medieval struggle that played off traditional Germanic political rights against ecclesiastical papal power.<sup>32</sup> The reading of the Confession on June 25, 1530, in the south-German city of Augsburg, climaxed a dramatic struggle between the two.

The affair had started twelve years earlier with the decision of the papal Curia in Rome to initiate a *processus ordinarius* against Martin Luther.<sup>33</sup> This ordinary legal procedure in Roman church law aimed to extract from Luther a recantation of his alleged heresy. But Luther insisted that his sacred oath as Doctor of Theology charged him to uphold the Scriptures. In publicly posting the Ninety-five Theses that sparked the trial, he acted freely and conscientiously "out of love and zeal for the truth"<sup>34</sup> and therefore was not easily moved to recant unless convinced and convicted on the basis of the Holy Scriptures as the norm of judgment.

Early in the legal process Luther saw the matter to be unresolved and appealed for a hearing before a General Council of the Church for good reason. This assembly of bishops was Christendom's authoritative ecclesiastical Supreme Court. But significantly for the fallout of the trial process, a papal judgment in January, 1521, precipitously cut short his appeal. The Bull *Decet Romanum* excommunicated "Martin himself" from the Roman Church as "a slave of a depraved mind," and banned his followers who "shall likewise share his punishments and his name, by bearing with them everywhere the title *Lutheran* and the punishments it incurs."<sup>35</sup>

The name *Lutheran* became a badge of identification, much to the chagrin of Luther and the evangelical reform movement. Just as Christ's enemies despised his followers as *Christians*, the designation *Lutheran* was meant to be a label of detestation by enemies.<sup>36</sup> The Roman ban split the church and set in motion a confessional crisis that was to engulf Christendom like a tidal wave. In its wake the Papal inquisition and wars waged in the name of Christ caused "religion" to become disgusting to many and raised the question of the Christian confession of faith to levels not experienced since the early church.

On the surface, only the Elector's appeal to the political makeup of the Holy Roman Empire saved Luther from a trial in Rome. Luther's prince, Elector Frederick of Saxony, succeeded in getting Luther tried on German soil and thereby effectively moved the evangelical cause into the jurisdictions of the Empire. There the evangelical princes appealed to the *ius reformandi*, a traditional right in effect since tribal times that put religious legal matters into princely hands.<sup>37</sup> On this basis Emperor Charles' judgment against Luther in the *Edict of Worms* became unenforceable. It was a dead letter because princely backing and popular sentiment supported the evangelical cause.

The Emperor was forced by circumstances to submit the Luther-case to an Imperial Diet in Augsburg.

The immanent threat of a Turkish-Muslim takeover of European Christendom moved him to call a squabbling church to unity. He asked each of the contending parties to submit their case in writing in the hope of negotiating a settlement in an amicable and charitable atmosphere [AC Preface 1-4]. In time, the confession at Augsburg became the core Lutheran confessional writing and proved to be the flagship of the Lutheran confessions assembled in the Book of Concord.<sup>38</sup>

The Augsburg Confession achieved this unique status among the Lutheran confessional writings for good reasons. Theologically, the confession embodied insights into the Gospel that led Luther to challenge Rome's understanding and practice of the Christian faith. Historically, the so-called *Augustana* gave the Lutheran territorial churches a legal basis in the Empire and in countries that adopted it for their national churches.

### 1. Theological sources

The theological base for the Augsburg Confession was crystallized by Luther in his titanic struggle with the Bible scholar Desiderius Erasmus.<sup>39</sup> True to his name, the peace-loving humanist hated quarrelsome truths and refused to make assertions about biblical teachings that to him were obscure. In a broadside against the Reformer, Erasmus cited the Trinitarian distinction of persons and the union of the divine and human natures of Christ as examples of dogmas that are so *obscure* as to be irrelevant to argue about [LW 33:27f].

Luther seized on the term. For Luther the theologian, the *hiddenness* of God reached into the core of God's revelation in the sacred writings. "What sublime thing can remain hidden in the Scriptures," he asks rhetorically, "now that the seals have been broken, the stone rolled from the door of the sepulcher [Matt. 27:66; 28:2], and the supreme mystery brought to light, that Christ the Son of God was made man, that God is three in one, that Christ has suffered for us and is to reign eternally?" [LW33:25-26].

For Christians, therefore, Christ, the light that illuminates the Scriptures, gives us an understanding of them. "Take Christ out of the Scriptures and what will you find left in them?" Luther asks in a second rhetorical touché [*Ibid*]. That insight in itself should not have surprised Erasmus or the medieval church. More vital for the reform of the Christian church, however, was Luther's follow-up distinction between God and God. "God and the Scripture are two things," Luther observes in an obvious dialectic, "no less than the creator and the creature are two things" [LW 33:25]. The words spoke theological and pastoral volumes.

This paradox, Luther clarifies, relates directly to our salvation. In unknown things God remains obscure and distant to us. The unanswerable *whys* and *hows* of life lie hidden in God's majesty (Is 45:15; LW 33:140). That is what makes God to be God. But God reveals his Father love for us in the clearest and brightest light through his Son. The Son does what humans born in sin are unable to do. The incarnate Christ lives in full and faithful obedience to his Father's will, suffers and dies on a cross for our sakes, and reconciles us to God the almighty Father.

To learn to distinguish God from God – God hidden from God revealed, God as He Is from God in the flesh, God nude from God clothed, God preached from God unseen, God in his unsearchable judgments from God on the cross, in short to distinguish between the Word of God and God Himself – this is for Luther the art of a Christian teacher [LW 33: 139-140].

But there is a second and less obvious hiddenness that can escape our notice. When God *reveals* himself, he hides himself. Contrary to human experience, God reveals himself not by coming out of hiding but by going into hiding. *Creatures* come out of hiding to reveal their beauty. But *God* hides himself in the things of his creation<sup>40</sup> – in flesh, in his Word, in elements like water and bread and wine. God goes into hiding to reveal his love in suffering and death by crucifixion. To know God hidden under the things of creation requires a Spirit-given faith that grasps God's Word and holds to its promises (1Co 2:6-10).

Luther grew to understand this mystery of God ever since the Apostle Paul's letter to Rome had revealed to him another face of God. The key to understanding the Reformation is in one word: the *righteousness* of God.<sup>41</sup> St. Paul had opened Luther's understanding of our justification before God, not – as taught by the medieval church – as an *active* righteousness that the holy God demands of us in order to fulfill Christ's work.

But our justification before God is a *passive* righteousness. God is the doer and we the recipients. Christ's work is given us as a gift of unmerited grace. "I felt I was altogether born again and had entered paradise through open gates," he later admitted, "There [*in Romans 1:17*] a totally *other face* of the entire Scripture showed itself to me" [LW 34: 337]. In one stroke St. Paul had cut the Gordian-knot of the law-bound medieval penitential practice to expose true gospel-comfort for Luther's sin-troubled conscience.

God's revelation of himself in Christ – in his works to the *outside*, in the holy Gospel – laid the foundation of our justification before God by faith alone. The story of the Augsburg Confession is the sequel. Between 1518 and 1530, before and after his excommunication, Luther continued to unfold the Gospel message. Beginning at Heidelberg the story and sources formally intertwine. In the *Heidelberg Theses* Luther distilled his theological insights. He opens paradoxically the difference between the deceptive attractiveness of human works compared to the unattractiveness of Christ's work on the cross in suffering and shame – in short, the difference between the theology of glory and the theology of the cross. To understand this paradox is to know this fact about God ways: God does not love by attraction as humans do. God's love does not seek an object by taking a fancy to it, but rather creates the object [LW 31: 39-41].

Two years later, under threat of excommunication, Luther fired an evangelical salvo at the medieval church's sacramental system. In the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther took up a basic question: What is a sacrament? His answer is simple – Scripture knows only one sacrament, namely Christ (1Ti 3:16). Christ, however, gives us three sacramental signs, namely baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution, as a means to assure us of God's savior love [LW 36:18; 94f; 124]. The answer redefined Rome's seven sacraments and how God's grace works for a sinner in need of a savior. Luther's distinction between divinely-instituted sacraments and ecclesiastical rites had a major impact on the formulation of the confession at Augsburg

But perhaps the most insightful of Luther's reform pamphlets in respect to Christ's work was his treatise on *The Freedom of a Christian* [1520]. Once again Luther sets before the public a fundamental scriptural paradox. He counters the church's neo-platonic dualism of body and soul with the biblical paradox of the dual nature of a Christian person. "A Christian," he writes in a simple but all-embracing definition, "is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none." But simultaneously, "a Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all" [LW 31: 344].

This paradox opened the door for the biblical place of faith and love in Christian life. But, above all, it allowed for a classic expression of Luther's Christology. The third incomparable benefit of faith in Christ, he notes, is the union of Christ and the sinner as a bride is united with her bridegroom. This scriptural bride/bridegroom image is the basis for the joyous exchange of our sin for the redemption in Christ, the heavenly bridegroom [LW 31: 351 ff].

## 2. *Historical sources*

Authoring the Augsburg Confession, however, was not Luther's direct privilege. Under indictment, the "heretic" sat out the meeting under his prince's protection at Castle Coburg in the southernmost reach of electoral Saxon lands. The task of writing fell to the Master Philip Melanchthon, theological representative of the Lutheran cause and Wittenberg wordsmith. The young University Professor had previously prepared a Lutheran dogmatics and, along with Luther, had participated in theological discussions as a university representative.

Now, as ambassador with portfolio, Melanchthon faced the task of preparing the confession of faith requested by Emperor Charles from princes that espoused the Lutheran cause. The sensitive scholar felt the pressures of preparing a document of faith for presentation before prelates and princes, and he knew that, outwardly, the fate of the church hung in the balance. But he had with him documents previously prepared under the Reformer's guidance.<sup>42</sup> Upon receiving notification of the Diet, Elector John of Saxony immediately appointed the Wittenberg theologians led by Luther to document the matters in controversy and to submit the same to him at his Torgau residence.

Melanchthon carried these *Torgau Articles* with him to Augsburg. They were designed to be the



evangelical defense in respect to controversial matters called *abuses*. In effect, *The Articles about Matters in Dispute, in which an Account is given of the Abuses which have been Corrected (sic!)* were intended to be the Lutheran princes' sole defense at the Augsburg assembly. But this defense became Part 2 of an expanded confession for a special reason. Dr. Eck had published *404 Articles* that tried to hang the mantel of innovation and heresy on the Lutheran party. He slanderously accused Luther's followers of teaching false doctrines attributed to radical reformers like Carlstadt, Zwingli, and the Anabaptists. The tactic called for a corrective. To disassociate their confession of faith from these radical sectarians, Melanchthon added 21 *Articles of Faith and Doctrine* to become the first part of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>43</sup>

Part 1 likewise had its sources. The *Articles of Faith and Doctrine* were based primarily on formulations written at Schwabach the year before. A product of the Wittenberg theologians, the *Schwabach Articles* aimed to become a basis for union between evangelical "protestants," so-called ever since the Lutheran princes' legal protestations at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Diet in Speyer. The years 1528 and 1529, therefore, produced a series of writings to clarify the re-formation of Christian doctrine to accord with the core Gospel insight of justification by faith.

Melanchthon, for one, had drawn up a list of instructions for a parish visitation in electoral Saxony. These *Instructions* [1528], reviewed by Luther, contained a series of examination questions to assess and instruct pastors and congregations in the evangelical faith [LW 40: 269-320]. During the next year Luther wrote his lengthy *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* that not merely interpreted and defended the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. It also spelled out general Christian doctrine in as organized and succinct a form as Luther had presented up to this time [LW 37:161-372, especially, part 3, 360-372].<sup>44</sup> But a debate with the sacramentarians at Marburg Castle elicited an even more defined confession of faith. The text of the *Marburg Articles* ranged from Nicene Creed to an understanding of the sacraments. The 15<sup>th</sup> and final article, on the Lord's Supper, remained in contention [LW 3T:83-89].

### 3. *The text of the Augustana*

On the basis of this portfolio Melanchthon made a composite of previous confessional statements, filing away on the text and, at times, softening its tone. The Preface to the document, originally intended to be Saxon Elector's defense, became more general after other Lutheran estates joined in the confession.

Melanchthon understandably took ownership for the full text of the Augsburg Confession, submitted in Latin and German at the Emperor's directive. Both originals were lost to posterity. The German original reportedly was filed in the Library of the Imperial Chancery in Mainz. The Emperor took the Latin copy to the Imperial Archives in Brussels. Though the Emperor forbade publication of the Confession, copying could not be suppressed and copies appeared after the Diet. A year later Melanchthon published the Augsburg Confession in Latin from his notes and a good manuscript – a first edition (*editio princeps*), as it were, that later appears in the Book of Concord.

The Roman party did not submit a similar confession of faith for good reason. In their eyes the church was not on trial, only the opposition to it. Charges of heresy and innovation left the defense in the reformers' court. So Rome's response came merely in the form of a critique of the Augsburg Confession, article by article. The 351-page *Pontifical Confutation* was so full of insults and slander that the Emperor rejected it. Only a toned-down version was finally read and the matter submitted to a conference committee for resolution. But negotiations reached an impasse. And, as a result, Melanchthon framed a defense, the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, to be a counter-response. In it, the article on "Justification" by itself took up one-third of the response.

The upshot of the Emperor's effort to unite the Empire under one faith failed to reach a theological resolution. Anticipating this outcome, the Lutheran princes advised the Emperor to pressure the Pope into calling a Council of the Church and diplomatically offered to participate in a "general, free, and Christian council" [CA Preface, 21-24]. But the Emperor was in haste, and felt bound by his Catholic heritage. He rejected the Augsburg Confession and its Apology as a settlement and gave the Lutheran princes a half year to return to the church. As he saw it, only the threat of armed force could settle the issue of unity.

The Confession now became a private document under Melanchthon's name and he felt free to file away at its wording and to improve its accuracy. Only seven years later, in 1537, did an assembly of Lutheran leaders at Smalcalden publicly and formally accept both the Augsburg Confession and the Apology as a public confession of faith. Because of their importance, Melanchthon kept on reshaping the wording, and tweaking the text for clarity. But in notable cases re-wording the Confession actually altered the original meaning. Dr. Eck, Luther's long-standing nemesis, caught a subtle change in a wording on the Lord's Supper, one more acceptable to the radical reformers.<sup>45</sup> In assembling the Book of Concord, therefore, the Lutheran church rejected Melanchthon's *Variations* and accepted only the original *Unaltered Augsburg Confession*.

The Augsburg Confession – unique in structure, clear in testimony – is historically a confession to the Gospel. It demands knowledge of the Church of Rome, its theology and its practices, on the one hand, and insight into the errors that are rejected, on the other. The first six articles are an evangelical package. They teach all that is necessary for faith and faith-life: namely, the nature of God (1) and man (2 - *on original sin*), the God-Man Jesus Christ, the Son of God (3), and how God works our Justification by grace through faith in Christ (4). It shows: How such justifying faith is obtained? –that is, through the God-ordained Ministry (5) of the Gospel and sacraments through which God's Spirit works. And what such faith produces? –a New Obedience (6), the hearing of faith (*ακοη πιστεως*, Gal 3:2) that should produce a life of faith which works without merit.

Articles 7-16 take up the Gospel impact on Christian life in the church. They identify what alone is necessary for building the Church (7), what the Church is (8), the means of grace God uses to build the church, bringing us to faith through Baptism (9), sustaining faith through the Lord's Supper (10) and the practice of Confession (11), leading to a life of ongoing Repentance (12). Then come the questions, of what Use the Sacraments (13) are in the church, how the public ministry vocationally keeps Order in the Church (14), and how Church Usages (15) and traditions are evangelically handled. Under-girding the church's life is the rule of God in Civil Government (16) and his final rule, the Rule of Christ in Judgment (17). The last four articles are appendages: Two articles on the nature of the human will – outwardly having a measure of Free Will (18), but, by nature, being an enslaved will that is the Cause of Sin (19). And finally two articles on the Nature of Faith and Good Works (20), and on what the Cult of Saints (21) can teach about a godly life.

## **B. The Small & Large Catechisms** *life in the Gospel*

### *1. Story and sources*

The Large and Small Catechisms of Dr. Luther – that pre-date the Augsburg Confession and therefore impact its insights – are included in the Book of Concord for special reasons. As the *layman's Bible* and *children's catechism*, they contain all that a Christian needs to know for faith and the life of faith [FC Intro 5; LC Preface: 1; LW 43: 43]. As a young priest and theologian, Brother Martin was concerned about Christian prayer-life and personal preparation for communion. But he was convinced that the church's legalistic penitential practice, particularly in the indulgence traffic, hindered a life of true repentance.

As a corrective, Luther produced a small tract for confession and self-examination.<sup>46</sup> In doing this, he acted not as an innovator but a reformer. Medieval catechetical manuals were a hodge-podge of instruction in piety.<sup>47</sup> Concerned that the Gospel does not remain trapped in untrustworthy saints' legends and inconsequential details of the confessional practice, Luther cut through the maze of medieval practices. For the Gospel's sake he eliminated non-evangelical ceremonies, the emphasis on good works as merits, and many ecclesiastical rules and regulations.

In replacement Luther produced a digest of the Scriptures to prepare both young and mature Christians for a meaningful life within the church and out in the world. The Catechisms aimed to provide a forum for continuing education on a personal level beyond confirmation. He desired that God's Word be taught simply, purely, and accurately to people's joy and edification.

Seven years prior to the Catechisms' publication in 1529, Luther had already compiled a *Personal*

*Prayer Book* to assist Christians in understanding the Ten Commandments, Creed, and Lord's Prayer [LW 43:11-45]. He felt that Christians ought to be obligated to learn them because "the total content of Scripture and preaching and everything a Christian needs to know is quite fully and adequately comprehended in these three items" [LW 43:13]. The teachings served as a *Beichtspiegel*, a mirror for self-reflection and self-examination and were meant to be a life-long companion and prayer-book for meditation in the privacy and quietness of home for one important reason. Satan and his cohorts are always trying to hinder and suppress God's word [LW 43:43].

Later, while revising the liturgy, Luther championed the Catechism's public use. In *The German Mass and Order of Service*, he indicates that the church service "needs a plain and simple, fair and square catechism" to prepare Christians for everyday life. Instructions were to take place daily or at stated times as needed, and then repeated or read aloud evenings and morning at home, "in order to train Christians" [LW 53: 64f]. If one wonders why Luther had such a rich prayer-life, here is the reason. He remained a lifelong student of the Catechism. It was his daily prayer-book. Its words flowed through his heart and mind as he meditated on God's Word and talked with God. Believing (*creed*) and praying (*service*) went hand in hand.

## 2. Accents in the Catechisms

To accentuate the essentials of Christian faith without fragmenting the message calls for the skill of a master. The failure of others to produce a work of equal quality and durability as the Small and Large Catechisms demonstrates the Reformer's God-given ability, experience, understanding, and maturity in expressing the Christian Gospel.<sup>48</sup> The inclusion of these two manuals in the Book of Concord was in itself a confession to their Gospel content.

The order – Commandments, Creed, and Our Father – was purposeful. The Commandments stand at the beginning because they tell what God wants people to do or not to do. But, as in the early church, the Creed remains the heartbeat of the Catechism. It reveals all that people must expect and receive from God [LC Creed II: 1]. Luther changed the traditional twelve-fold division of the Creed into three articles simply to clarify how the triune God gives himself to us in creation, redemption, and sanctification [LC Creed II: 5-6]. "The Father gives us all creation, Christ all his works, the Holy Spirit all his gifts" [LC Creed II: 69]. Through this knowledge Christians come to love and delight in the commandments of God because they see that "God gives himself completely to us with all his gifts and power to help us keep the Ten Commandments" [LC Creed 68f].

Nor was the Lord's Prayer added disconnectedly. After Christians come to know what to do and believe from the Commandments and the Creed, Luther states, the third chief part of the Christian faith teaches us how to pray. Even though Christians begin to believe, perfection in obeying God's Commandments is impossible. The devil enlists the world and our sinful flesh to resist our faith-born efforts. Consequently we need to pray to God incessantly that he give, preserve, and increase in us faith and obedience to his commandments and to remove whatever hinders us from fulfilling them. [LC Creed 111, 1-3].

To these three *chief parts*, the Catechisms include instructions on the evangelical use of the sacraments. And for the sake of being a personal manual, the Small Catechism lists suggested bedtime and table prayers, and includes Scripture passages on the duties of Christians in their various vocations in life.

## C. The Smalcald Articles *in defense of the Gospel*

### 1. Confessing before a General Church Council

Chronologically, the Smalcald Articles are a sequel to the story of the Confession at Augsburg. If the *Augustana* eventually became the evangelical flagship of the Lutheran reform, the Smalcald Articles served as its battleship to defend the Gospel. The Articles – direct from Luther's pen – set an explicit agenda for inner-churchly reform at the highest level. In the long run the historical and theological dynamics of the Articles

helped to change the church's direction in Western Christendom because Rome proved to be intractable in resolving the evangelical issue.

In a sense the Smalcald Articles were not only a direct outgrowth of the political meeting at Augsburg seven years earlier but an indirect result of Luther's original appeal to be heard by a General Council of the Church. The Emperor's threat at Augsburg to force unity by armed intervention moved the evangelical princes to form a league for mutual defense. Constitutionally, the Holy Roman Empire was not a monarchy but an oligarchy. As an elected official, the Emperor was first among equals (*primum inter pares*). By signing the Imperial Capitulation, he was bound not to interfere with the constitutional rights and privileges of his princely electors, especially in matters of faith.<sup>49</sup>

On this basis the evangelical princes formed the Smalcald League and scheduled it to sunset in six years if no longer needed. Charles V therefore had to modify his plans within the Empire and concentrate on the more immediate external threat of a Turkish takeover. But the delay backfired and caused the League to expand and envelop most of the Empire.<sup>50</sup> A theological agreement reached in the *Wittenberg Concord of 1536* united Saxony with imperial states of Upper Germany on the issue of the Sacraments.<sup>51</sup>

As support for the Lutheran cause grew, concern in Rome heightened. The election of Pope Paul III signaled Rome's attempt to improve the ecclesiastical situation. In the summer of 1536 the Pope called for a General Council of the Church to meet in Mantua on Pentecost of the next year. It was to be a showdown meeting to enact needed inner-churchly reforms and to expunge the poisonous, pestilential Lutheran heresy. Upon receipt of the invitation the Saxon Elector sent a well-reasoned diplomatic memo to the Wittenberg theologians with specific considerations and recommendations to meet the papal challenge.<sup>52</sup>

In order to present a united front at Mantua, the Elector asked that Luther himself prepare articles, and to indicate where he would not yield for the sake of faith and where he could and ought to yield for the sake of love. All articles were placed under scrutiny of a panel of Wittenberg theologians and selected pastors for their input, and later subscribed to by the confederate princes and their theologians. The goal was to achieve unanimous consent in confession and testimony to the Council.

### *The Articles*

Luther followed the directives explicitly and wrote the articles with an eye toward the Council. But because of ill-health nearly to the point of death, it appears that he was also constructing his last will and testament before appearing before God's judgment seat.<sup>53</sup> Luther structured Part I on the Triune God, and Part II on the teaching of Christ and Faith carefully. But under severe physical pain, he merely outlined most of Part III, the Articles of Faith and Doctrine – beginning with the article on the Gospel.<sup>54</sup>

Luther-like, the Smalcald Articles are forthright and direct; its three parts intentionally to the point and ready for debate. At stake for Luther were the holy Gospel and its place in the Christian church. Part I on the sublime articles of God's majesty was foundational. Luther worded the creedal article on the triune God in a way that highlighted Christ's incarnation. The emphasis in this non-controversial article was intentional and formed a direct bridge to the articles in controversy. The work of the incarnate Christ was to be his chief defense, as it was for the early church.

In Part II, Luther describes justification by faith under the more personalized terms of Christ and Faith [II: I]. He unfolds this key teaching simply by weaving together a series of clear scripture passages to demonstrate how the church stands or falls. Any teaching or practice that opposes the role of Christ in our redemption is anti-Christ. The Gospel does not create the barriers because it reveals God's all-embracing love for the world in Christ. Not God, but human beings create barriers to faith by inventing traditions, practices, and fabrications contrary to the Gospel. The simple *rule of faith* is: God's Word establishes articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel [Gal 1:8].

On this score Luther anticipates the Mass [II: II] to be the decisive issue in the Council. The Mass is anti-Christ because it turns the sacrament into a churchly sacrifice that detracts from Christ's sacrifice on the cross. It therefore becomes a human work that delivers from sin. As carried out in Roman practice, it actually

masks Satan's opposition to Christ. And this dragon's tail has produced the poison of seven idolatrous practices in the church, namely: purgatory, evil apparitions that request the Mass, pilgrimages, fraternities in support of the Mass, relics, indulgences, and the invocation of saints.

The devil's mask has even deceived the regular clergy in Chapters and Monasteries [II: III]. Once dedicated to praiseworthy functions of educating people for vocations established by God, monks now busy themselves with formal services in a way to holiness that detracts from the fundamental article on redemption through Jesus Christ. But Satan's greatest deception is reserved for the Papacy [II: IV]. That institution claims a magisterial authority to head the church by divine right [*iure divino*] that belongs to Christ alone, as the papal triple crown (tiara) demonstrates.

The strong words concerning the Papacy caused the Lutheran delegates at Smalcalden, in Luther's absence, to request a more complete historical and theological exposition on papal power. For this purpose Melancthon drafted a *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*. This Treatise was officially adopted as a confession of faith and intended to be an addendum to the Augsburg Confession. Luther's articles, though not officially endorsed at the meeting because of his absence, were signed by many pastors in attendance and by Melancthon with reservation. In time, they became part of the body of doctrine included in the Book of Concord.

But as Luther's Preface written at a later date indicates, the Smalcald Articles were never presented at the papal Council. The Pope postponed the Council at Mantua. It met eight years later as the Council of Trent [1545-1563] with no Lutheran representatives present to give their confession of faith. Yet the Smalcald Articles served a purpose diplomatically and theologically. It caused Rome to harden its doctrine at Trent, to damn the gospel of justification by faith alone, and to enshrine traditional canon law as the rule of faith.

#### **D. The Formula of Concord** *united under the Gospel*

The story of the Lutheran evangelical confession does not end abruptly at Smalcalden. Three major happenings subsequently converged to bring about discord and eventually concord among the evangelical Lutheran congregations in the Empire. The theological controversy over the sacraments remained unresolved and overshadowed relationships with the Swiss reformers and their followers in and outside the Empire. Then, Luther's death in 1546 resulted in a second generation struggle for the gospel heritage. At the same time the political situation destabilized quickly. Emperor Charles took up the religious conflict once more and defeated the rebel princes in the Smalcald War.

Only the Peace at Augsburg eight years later gave the evangelical confession the legal right to exist and sealed the political and confessional split of the church in the Empire. But the path to peace was strewn with religious controversy within Lutheranism and left bitter memories of the famed Augsburg and Leipzig Interims of 1548. After Charles V crushed the Smalcald League, he imposed an interim solution to the religious controversy until a General Council of the Church could make a permanent settlement. The *Augsburg Interim* thoroughly compromised the evangelical confession.

But in Saxony the traitorous and venturesome Duke Maurice of Saxony was not satisfied with the *Augsburg Interim*. Under the leadership of the Wittenberg faculty a modified version came out, and Maurice made it Saxon law. But even the modified *Leipzig Interim* remained a compromise. It restored Roman Episcopal jurisdiction pledging the clergy to obey the Pope and the bishops, and reintroduced former ceremonies at baptism, confirmation, extreme unction, and the Corpus Christi festival. The teaching of justification was made to read that, by the Holy Spirit's renewal, a person "can fulfill righteousness with his works."

Within the Lutheran church, the pressures of the Interims produced intense struggles to recapture the confession so clearly and simply expressed at Augsburg. Two opposing camps vied for the Lutheran heritage. Followers of Melancthon and the University of Wittenberg were under suspicion for good reason. Melancthon not only had a tendency to compromise, but his Variations to the Augsburg Confession deviated from his former stand. In response, Master Philip's followers accused certain radical defenders of Luther of

extremism and exaggeration.

Over a period of thirteen years, seven controversies rocked the Lutheran church.<sup>55</sup> The issues were not trivial. Involved were basics of Christian faith such as justification and good works, the nature of Christ and the sacrament, the place of Law and the human will in Christian life and conversion, and how to handle situations that challenge Christian liberty. At the Religious Colloquy of Worms, certain Saxon theologians led by Matthias Flacius questioned the right of the Melanchthon party to appeal to the Augsburg Confession. In the Diet of Naumburg, the divergence over the Lord's Supper led to the question whether the Augsburg Confession was a sufficient basis for confession. In view of the gathering strength of Calvin's teachings within the Lutheran church, there were expressed demands for enlarging the corpus of doctrine.

But multiplying collections of confessional statements did not answer old controversies. Needed was a new approach – to identify the state of the controversy as succinctly as possible, to affirm biblical and confessional answers to them, and to reject what was contrary to the deposit of faith in the Holy Scriptures. The way to concord began in 1576. The princes of the Lutheran states of Hesse and Württemberg commissioned Jacob Andreae, a brilliant Christian leader from Upper Germany, to draw up a formula acceptable to all pledged to the Augsburg Confession. His mediation encompassed issues central to the evangelical reform. On the agenda were justification by faith and its relationship to a life of good works, the understanding of the sacrament of the altar, the place of the will before, in, and after conversion, and questions of situational adiaphora.

In an attempt to put the disputed articles of faith into a pastoral and scriptural setting, Andreae preached on them. His *Six Christian Sermons* attempted to get to the bottom of the controversies by a catechetical method rather than by investigation and infighting. The sermons were favorably received by seasoned and influential theological leaders in North Germany.<sup>56</sup> Plans for hammering out a formula of compromise were abandoned in favor of a formula to consolidate all Lutherans.

In the territory of Württemberg the *Swabian Concord* [1574] arranged Andreae's Sermons in article form and laid the basis for the future settlement in the Formula of Concord. The next year the *Maulbronn Formula* rearranged its eleven articles to preserve the order of the Augsburg Confession. Clearly, the direction was scripturally and theologically to reassert the clarity and correctness of the confession at Augsburg. In its final form the formula cites Luther as "this highly enlightened man" through whom "the chief articles of our Christian faith" were "once more clearly set forth on the basis of God's Word" [FC:SD VII:28; Intro:1] to be "the foremost teacher of the Augsburg Confession" [FC:SD 34, 41]. Melanchthon's name is not mentioned.

Two years later at the electoral palace at Torgau, the Elector of Saxony asked representatives from North, Middle and South Germany to write out an agreement on the basis of the recent formulae. Though different in character and temperament, the men entrusted with the task came together in confession.<sup>57</sup> The *Book of Torgau* was acceptable to all parties and given to the Saxon Elector and most evangelical estates in the Empire. But the confession was criticized as too long for common use and a summary (epitome) was requested. The elector sent a commission of three to Cloister Bergen to agree on a final form. In May, 1577, the three – Andreae, Nicolaus Selnecker, and Martin Chemnitz – finished their work and presented the *Book of Bergen* to the Saxon Elector. It contained the former lengthy Torgau Book and the summary (epitome).

The Book of Bergen was given a three year trial period. The Electors of Saxony and Brandenburg sent copies of the Bergen Book for approval and subscription to all estates where consent seemed certain. Suggestions and objections to wording were noted and dealt with. In the end the confession was renamed the Formula of Concord to reflect its purpose and use. Its two sub-parts were named the Solid Declaration [FC:SD] and the Epitome [FC:Ep]. Included in the Book of Concord's *corpus doctrinae*, in addition to the Formula of Concord, were the Ecumenical Creeds and the other Evangelical Confessions – the unaltered Augsburg Confession and its Apology, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise on the Papacy, and Luther's two Catechisms + a Catalogue of Testimonies from Scripture and the early church Fathers, as an addendum.

On June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1580, on the day of the Augsburg Confession's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Book of Concord was accepted by genuine consensus of 3 electors, 20 dukes and princes, 24 counts, 4 barons, 35 Free Imperial Cities, and about 8000 pastors and teachers.<sup>58</sup>

## *Issues and answers*

The formulators and subscribers to the Formula of Concord were conscious of their responsibility to the church catholic. As a people ultimately answerable to God, they openly submitted their work to the scrutiny of the entire Christian church. "In the presence of God and all Christendom," they asserted, "we wish to have testified that the present explanation is our teaching, belief, and confession in which by God's grace we shall appear with intrepid hearts before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ and for which we shall give account" [FC:SD XII,40].

Still stung by Rome's accusations of sectarian innovations, the Lutheran confessors walked the middle way of faith between rigid confessionalism that no longer speaks the truth in love and false adherence to churchly traditions. They highlighted the living tradition of the Gospel handed on through the Holy Scriptures and paid homage to patristic traditions "no farther than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was received in post-apostolic times" [FC:Ep Summary 2]. To counteract the inner turmoil caused by the inroads and impact of the sectarians, especially the Swiss sacramentarians, the Formula carefully identifies the issues and put them under the scrutiny of God's Word. As caretakers of God's mysteries, they followed the example of the early Christian church in answering. Where God reveals mysteries, the confessors made scriptural distinctions between the ways of God and the ways of men.

The issues and answers that are handled in the 12 Articles of the Formula of Concord mark the chief differences between the evangelical Lutherans and the Calvinist reformed and other sectarians, and also Rome. The articles deal with basic issues as the nature of human beings before, during, and after conversion [I-II], the righteousness that avails before God [III], how good works, the Law, and the Gospel function in Christian life [IV-VI], how the mystery of Christ's person relates to the mystery of the Lord's Supper [VII-IX], the use and abuse of Church traditions [X], God's election as a cause for comfort or despair [XI], and a collection of sectarian errors [XII].

For the subscribers to the Book of Concord the return to the Scripture in itself was not of first importance but the peculiar kind of return to the Bible text. The Lutheran confession in its essential nature is nothing else than a rediscovery of the Gospel. The early church gained a core understanding of the Triune God and the true divinity/humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ after a long struggle to put into words what God revealed concerning himself in his word.

During the Reformation, by God's grace, Martin Luther provided scriptural insights into the early church's core confession concerning Christ, the eternal Son of God, "who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven ... and was crucified for us." The answer put the spotlight on justification by faith as the article by which the church and its teachings stand or fall. There on center stage Christ the light of the world [*Christus lux*] shines with brilliance unrealized in the medieval church and unknown to Adam's fallen race.

The rediscovery of the scriptural truth of a sinner's justification by grace alone, through faith alone, for the sake of Christ alone, is nothing but the light of the Gospel. If this truth is forgotten, neglected, lost or obscured, the Gospel must be re-interpreted as a moral system or a theory of religious truth.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, justification by faith permeates the Book of Concord. It constitutes a reformation of the church because it reveals with clarity and certainty the truth by which the church lives. For the church does not live by morals, by the knowledge and observance of God's law. Nor does the church live by religion, by lofty experiences of the divine. The church lives solely by the forgiveness of sins.

## **Postscript**

After reviewing the story of the Book of Concord, we might listen with different ears to a minister's plea to discard the creeds. "Christ hardly asked anyone to believe in anything at all," he states, "He just said, 'Follow me.' And the lesson for me is this. Many Christians stay outside of the organized church because we ask them to believe too much. The issue is sharpened and becomes an outright scandal when men are ordained and asked if

they believe the Apostles' Creed. My plea is that on the road to becoming a united church, we may liberate ourselves from all our excess baggage – all the weight of doctrine that Christ never asked his people to bear – that we may strip our creed stark naked like Christ on the cross – strip it down to the barest elements of belief, and embrace the one belief that counts, 'Jesus is Lord.'"

The ecumenical and evangelical confessions in Book of Concord strike a different note, more joyous and comforting. They rely on God's Word for guidance and on God's promises for aid. They reflect the entire work of the triune God as confessed in the creeds and reject what obscures and denies his full and faithful revelation. They believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both Lord and Savior. They do not presume to strip the creed naked like Christ on the cross, but look to the cross with repentant grieving. There in the death of God's Son on the cross, *God strips us* bare-naked. There we can no longer hide our shame and sinfulness from view for a simple reason. "The suffering and death of Christ, the Son of God, is an earnest and terrifying preaching and advertisement of God's wrath" [FC:Ep V, 9]. Christ on the cross exposes our sin.

A whole world of God's love lies behind this central act of Christ crucified [1Co 1:22]. This alien work of Christ Jesus – his suffering on the cross – masks God's eternal love for us. He made his Son to be sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him [2Co 5:21]. The cross is God's way of bringing us to sorrow over our waywardness and sin and simultaneously to faith in what he has done for us in Christ. The cross, in short, is God's way – the way "by which Christ comes to his proper office – namely, to preach grace, to comfort, to make alive. And this is the preaching of the Gospel, strictly speaking" [SD:Ep VI: 10]. The demonstration of God's love in Christ brings us to repentance, a whole new attitude toward God and life. In the final analysis, this is what Christians believe, teach, and confess - and so we serve (*credo et servo*).

To God alone be the glory!



Appendix #1  
**THE APOSTLES' CREED**

- *Early confession of Jesus as the Messiah*

Jesus Christ, God's Son, [is] Savior

*Iesus Christos theos uios soter*

*I ch th u s* - in the sign of the fish

- *Eastern Trinitarian formula* [1Co 8:6]

I believe in

one God, the Father, the Almighty, of whom everything is, and

one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, through whom everything is,

*and in the Holy Ghost.*

- *Old Roman baptism formula* [R] 3x3 [Mt 28:18-20]

I believe in God, the Father, Almighty ;

And in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, our Lord;

And in the Holy Spirit, the holy church, the resurrection of the flesh.

- *Later rendition of the Roman baptism formula* [R]

I believe in God, the Father, (the) Almighty;

And in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, our Lord;

*Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,* {Person}

*Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried;* {Work}

*on the third day he rose from the dead,*

*ascended into heaven*

*sat down at the right hand of the Father;*

*from where he will come to judge the living and the dead;*

And in the Holy Spirit, the holy church, *the forgiveness of sins,*

the resurrection of the flesh.

Appendix #2  
**APOSTLES' CREED – SCRIPTURE SOURCES**

<i>Baptism Formula</i> .....		Evangel of Matthew	28:19-20
		Paul: Letter 1 to Corinth	8:06
 <i>I believe in God</i>			
	Father	Paul: Letter to Ephesus	1:03
		Paul: Letter to Galatia	4:06; Matthew 6:08-15
		Paul: Letter to Ephesus	4:06
	Almighty	Paul: Letter 2 to Corinth	6:18
	Maker of		
	heaven & earth	Paul: Letter to Ephesus	3:14f
 <i>I believe in Jesus Christ</i>			
	Only-begotten Son	Evangel of John	1:14 & 18; 3:16f
	LORD	Paul: Letter to Rome	10:08
		Paul: Letter to Philippi	2:11
<i>His PERSON</i>	Conceived	Evangel of Luke	1:35
	Born of Virgin Mary	Evangel of Matthew	1:18-20
<i>His WORK</i>	Suffered under	Evangel of Luke	3:01
	Pontius Pilate	Luke: Record of Acts	4:27
	Crucified	Evangel of Luke	23:33
	Died	Paul: Letter 1 to Corinth	15:03
	Buried	Paul: Letter 1 to Corinth	15:04
	Descended into hell	Peter: Letter 1	3:19
	Rose	Paul: letter to Corinth	15:05
	Ascended	Luke: Record of Acts	1:9ff
	Sitting at the right hand	Old Testament Psalm	110:01
		Evangel of Mark	12:36; 14:62
	Judge of	Luke: Record of Acts	1:11
	living & dead	Paul: Letter 2 to Timothy	4:01
 <i>I believe in the Holy Spirit</i>			
	Holy	Peter: Letter 1	2:09
	Christian [catholic]	Luke: Record of Acts	26:28
	Church	Paul: Letter to Galatia	1:02
	Communion of saints	Paul: Letter 1 to Corinth	10:16
	Remission of sins	Evangel of Luke and record	24:47; Acts 02:38
	Resurrection of flesh	Paul: Letter 1 to Corinth	15:44; Job 19:26
	Life eternal	Evangel of Matthew	25:46
		Evangel of John	03:15f

Appendix #3  
THE NICENE CREED

- *The creed as adopted by the COUNCIL OF NICEA [A.D. 325]*

We believe in one God,  
the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God,  
*begotten from the Father, only begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father,  
God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one  
being with the Father, through whom all things came into being, things in heaven and  
things on earth, who because of us men and because of our salvation came down and  
became incarnate,  
becoming man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended to the heavens, and  
will come to judge the living and the dead;*

And in the Holy Spirit.

*(But as for those who say, There was when he was not, and, Before Being  
born he was not, and that he came into existence out of nothing, or who  
assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is  
created, or is subject to alteration or change these the catholic church  
anathematizes.)*

- *The NICENO-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN Creed [A.D. 381. C-panum]*

We believe in one God,  
the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,  
*begotten of the Father before all ages, light from light, true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came  
into existence, who because of us men and because of our salvation came down from  
heaven,  
and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man, and  
was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again  
on the third day according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven, and sits at the  
right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge the living and the  
dead, of whose kingdom there will be no end.*

And in the Holy Spirit,  
*the Lord and life-giver, Who proceeds from the Father [-], Who with the Father  
and the Son is together worshiped and glorified, Who spoke through the prophets, in  
one holy and catholic and apostolic church. We confess one baptism for the  
forgiveness of sins; we look forward to the resurrection of the dead in the life of the  
world to come. Amen.*

Appendix #4  
THE ATHANASIAN CREED  
**Part 1: Trinity**  
Trinity in Unity  
Relationship of the persons

*Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold to the true Christian faith.  
Whoever does not keep this faith pure in all points will certainly perish forever.*

*Now this is the true Christian faith*

We worship one God in *three persons* and three persons in *one God*,  
without mixing the persons or dividing the divine being.  
For each person - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - is distinct,  
but the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one,  
equal in glory and co-eternal in majesty.

What the Father is, so is the Son, and so is the Holy Spirit.  
The Father is *uncreated*, the Son uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated;  
the Father is *infinite*, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite;  
the Father is *eternal*, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal;  
yet they are not three who are eternal, but there is one who is eternal;  
just as they are not three who are uncreated nor three who are infinite,  
but there is one who is uncreated and one who is infinite.  
In the same way the Father is *almighty*, the Son is almighty, the Holy Spirit is almighty;  
yet they are not three who are almighty, but there is one who is almighty.

So the Father is *God*, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God;  
yet they are not three Gods, but one God.  
So the Father is *Lord*, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord;  
yet they are not three Lords but one Lord.  
For just as Christian truth compels us to confess each person individually to be God and Lord,  
so the true Christian faith forbids us to speak of three Gods or three Lords.

The Father is neither made nor created nor begotten of anyone.  
The Son is neither made nor created, but is *begotten* of the Father alone.  
The Holy Spirit is neither made nor created nor begotten, but *proceeds* from the Father and the Son.

So there is one Father, not three Fathers;  
one Son, not three Sons,  
one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.  
And within this *Trinity*, none comes before or after, none is greater or inferior,  
but all three persons are *coequal* and *coeternal*, so that in every way, as stated before:  
All three persons are to be *worshipped* as one God and one God as three persons.

*Whoever would be saved must have this conviction of the Trinity.*

Appendix #4  
THE ATHANASIAN CREED  
**Part 2: Christ**  
Person of Christ  
Work of Christ

*It is furthermore necessary for eternal salvation truly to believe  
that our **Lord Jesus Christ** also took on human flesh.*

*Now this is the true Christian faith:*

We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and man.  
He is *God*, eternally begotten from the nature of the Father;  
And he is *man*, born in time from the nature of his mother;  
Fully God, fully man, with rational soul and human flesh;  
equal to the Father as to his deity,  
less than the Father as to his humanity.

And though he is both God and man, Christ is not two persons but one,  
one, not by changing the deity into flesh, but by taking on the humanity into God;  
one, indeed, not by mixture of the natures, but by *unity in one person*;  
for just as the rational soul and the body is one human being,  
so God and man are one Christ.

He suffered for our salvation,  
descended into hell,  
rose the third day from the dead.  
He ascended to heaven,  
is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty,  
and from there will come to judge the living and the dead.

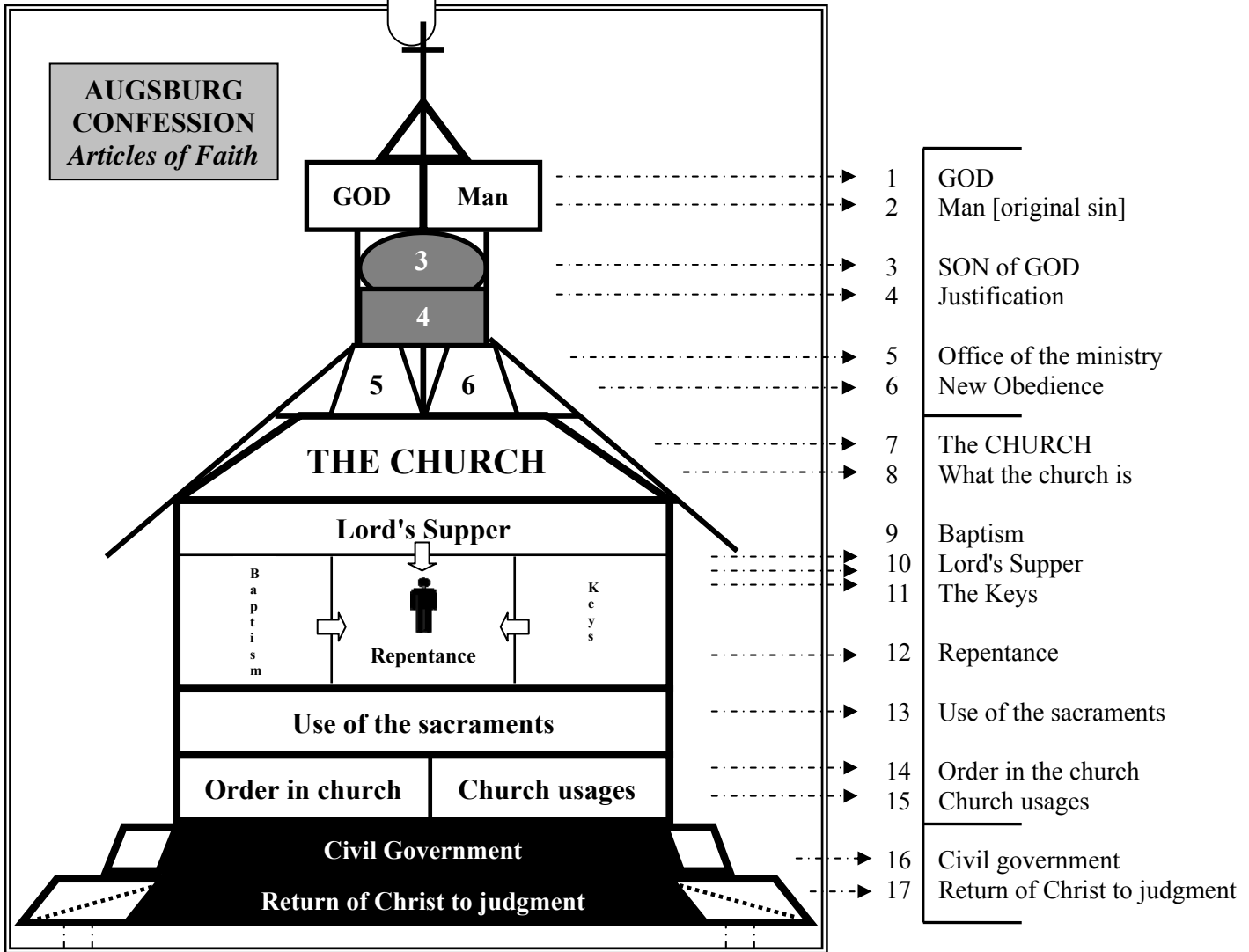
At his coming all people will rise with their own bodies to answer for their personal deeds.  
Those who have done good will enter eternal life,  
but those who have done evil will go into eternal fire.

*This is the true Christian faith.*

*Whoever does not firmly and faithfully believe this cannot be saved.*

**THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION**  
**Preface**  
**Articles of Faith and Doctrine 1-21**  
**Abuses calling for Reform 22-28**

- Abuses: reform needed*
- 22 Both kinds in the sacrament
  - 23 The marriage of priests
  - 24 The Mass
  - 25 Confession
  - 26 The distinction of foods
  - 27 Monastic vows
  - 28 Ecclesiastical power



Appended

- |    |                                 |                    |    |
|----|---------------------------------|--------------------|----|
| 18 | Free will                       | Faith & good works | 20 |
| 19 | Cause of sin<br>[enslaved will] | Cult of saints     | 21 |

Appendix #6  
SMALL & LARGE CATECHISMS [1529]

**Sources in Luther's Works:** ► [LW: American Edition]  
(*Treatises on Word & Sacrament in LW 35-38 not included*)

- 1516 Sermon series on the Ten Commandments. Luther preached as substitute for Pastor Simon Heinz at St. Mary's (City Church) in Wittenberg.
- 1517 Lenten sermon series on the Lord's Prayer. Brief exposition of the Ten Commandments, produced in a small *tract* for confession and self-examination.
- 1518 Republished former tract as *Short Explanation of the Ten Commandments*. Published the previous sermon series as *Ten Commandments Preached to the People of Wittenberg*.
- 1519 ► *An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer for Simple Laymen* [LW 42, 19-81], a new publication of the previous sermon series. ("Blessed are the hands that wrote this. Blessed are the eyes that see it. Blessed shall be the hearts that believe this book and cry to God." John Mathesius, Venetian printer)
- *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* [LW 35,29-43]
- *The Sacrament of Penance* [LW 35,9-22]
- 1520 ► *A Discussion on How Confession Should Be Made* [LW 39,27-47]
- *A Short Form of the Ten Commandments, of the Creed, and of the Lord's Prayer* [found in the "Works of Martin Luther", II, Philadelphia: 1915,351-386]. In this work Luther brought together his explanations of previous publications. This 1520 *Short Form* became a chief instrument of religious instruction.
- 1521 ► *Sermon on the Worthy Reception of the Sacrament* [LW 42,171-177].
- 1522 ► *Personal Prayer Book* [LW 43, 11-45], a revision of the 1520 *Short Form* (above). This was the evangelical catechism of Luther until the Small Catechism replaced it. Nine editions in 1522; five in 1523; four in 1524; two in 1525; one each year until 1530. Initial paperbound price for the 41 page booklet was twenty pennies. It became the first evangelical catechism of England, translated in 1522 as the *Booklet of Prayers*.
- 1523 Sermon series on the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, followed then yearly by the new pastor of Wittenberg's City Church, Rev. John Bugenhagen. It was customary to have eight catechetical sermons - four times a year, two weeks for each series.

*Five Questions in Regard to the Holy Supper*, drawn from Luther's sermon on the Sacrament in view of the practice of asking a person his reasons for attending the sacrament.

In 1523/24 Melancthon prepared a handbook for his private students that contained the

Commandments, Creed, and Lord's Supper + an alphabet, proverbs, and prayers.)

1524 ► *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools* [LW 45,347-378]. The work does not directly apply to the Catechisms.

1525 In February, Justus Jonas and John Agricola were commissioned to prepare a catechism for children (*catechismus puerorum*); the first time the term *catechism* was applied to a book rather than to oral instruction. Already in 1521 at Luther's direction John Agricola was called to Wittenberg as regular catechist for youth.

(*Booklet for Laymen and Children* appeared with Bugenhagen (?) as author. Here for the first time baptism and the Lord's Supper appear in the "chief parts," together with several prayers.

1526 ► *The German Mass and Order of Service* [LW 53,61-90, especially 63-67]. Luther gives direction on how to use the catechism material as part of the service. The sermon is used to introduce a course of instruction for children and the unschooled.

1527 Melancthon's *Exposition of the Ten Commandments with pictures*, eight Cranach woodcuts.

1528 ► *Concerning Rebaptism* [LW 40, 229-262].

Luther conducts three sermon series on the five chief parts of Christian teaching: The Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. They are held on May 18-30; September 14-25; and November 30-December 19. These sermons represent the final stages of Luther's preparation before writing the Catechisms. The sermon series helped Luther to form the vocabulary in which he cast the Catechisms.

1529 ► *Ten Sermons on the Catechism* [LW 51,137-193], present the text of the third sermon series on the catechism in 1528.

- *Small Catechism* appears in January, + first charts, possibly modeled after a work of the Bohemian Brethren done in 1520.
- *Large Catechism* appears in April, written in winter 1528/29. Both are incorporated in the Book of Concord.

*Nuremberg Text-booklet*. From this booklet the three questions regarding the Office of the Keys were added to Luther's section on Confession in the Small Catechism.



Appendix #7  
THE WITTENBERG CONCORD  
*The concord between the Wittenberg theologians and the theologians  
representing the Imperial states in Upper Germany.*

On the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper  
*Recorded at the direction and request of both parties  
by Philip Melancthon, in the year of Christ, 1536.*

We have heard Dr. Bucer give the following explanation of the opinion which he and the others present with him hold concerning the sacrament of Christ's body and blood:

I.

They confess in accord with the words of Irenaeus that the Eucharist consists of two elements, the earthly and the heavenly. Therefore they maintain and teach that Christ's body and blood are truly and essentially present, distributed, and eaten with (*cum*) the bread and the wine.

II.

And although they deny that transubstantiation takes place, and do not feel that either a local inclusion occurs within the bread or any permanent union happens outside of the sacrament, nevertheless they concede that the bread is the body of Christ by a sacramental union. That is, they maintain, when the bread is distributed, the body of Christ is present at the same time and is truly offered. For apart from its use, they feel that Christ's body is not present, when it is kept in the pyx or displayed in processions, as is done among the Papists.

III.

Furthermore, they maintain that this institution of the sacrament is effectual in the church and does not depend on the worthiness of the one who distributes or the one who partakes. Therefore, just as Paul says that the unworthy (*indigni*) also eat, so they maintain that the true body and blood of the Lord are distributed also to the unworthy and that the unworthy eat where Christ's words and institution are observed. Yet these eat to their judgment, as Paul says, because they misuse the sacrament when they use it without repentance and without faith. For it was, in fact, instituted to be a testimony that the benefits of Christ apply to them, and that those who repent and take courage by faith in Christ have become members of Christ and are purified by Christ's blood.

*Since only a few of us are assembled here, however, and it is necessary for both parties to report this matter to other assemblies and to their superiors, we are not yet permitted to enter into an agreement concerning the concord before we have referred it to the others.*

*Yet since they all profess their willingness to hold and teach the most excellent Gospel professed in all the articles in accordance with the confession and its apology, we desire above all that the concord be confirmed and established. And we hope, if the remainder of the respective parties will add their consent, there will be a firmly-based concord.*

Signed,  
D. Wolfgang Capito, Minister of the Church at Strassburg  
M. Martin Bucer, Minister of the Church at Strassburg  
Lic. Martin Frecht, Minister in the Word, of the Church at Ulm  
Lic. Jacob Otther, Licensed Theologian, Minister of the Church at Esslingen  
M. Boniface Lycosthenes, Minister in the Word, of the Church at Augsburg  
M. Gervasius Scholasticus, Pastor of the Church at Memmingen

M. John Bernhardi, Minister of the Church at Frankfurt  
Martin Germani, Minister of the Church at Furfeld  
M. Matthew Aulbert, Pastor of the Church at Reutlingen  
John Schradinus, Deacon of Reutlingen  
Martin Luther, Doctor at Wittenberg  
Justus Jonas, D.  
Caspar Cruciger, D.  
John Bugenhagen, Pomer, D.  
Philip Melanchthon  
Justus Menius of Eisenach  
Fredrick Myconius of Gotha  
D. Urbanus Rhegius, Superintendent of Churches, Duchy of Lüneburg  
George Spalatin, Pastor of the Church at Altenburg  
Dionysius Meander, minister of the Church at Kassel,  
and many others

### On Baptism

In regard to infant baptism, all agree without reservation that infants should be baptized. For since the promise of salvation pertains also to infants and does not apply to those who remain outside the church, it should be applied to infants through the ministry and so add them as members of the church. And since it is said concerning such infants that are in the church: "It is the will of the Father that none of these should perish," it is fitting that infants, through baptism, obtain forgiveness of original sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is efficacious in them after the manner of children.

For we reject the error of those who imagine that infants please God and are saved without any action of God, since Christ clearly says: "Unless one is reborn by water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Therefore, although we cannot understand what sort of action of God this is in infants, yet it is certain that new and holy impulses are brought about in them, just as also new impulses were caused in John in the womb. For even if one ought not imagine that infants understand, yet those impulses and inclinations for believing Christ and loving God are somewhat like the impulses of faith and love (*in us*). This is what we mean when we say that infants have faith. For we express it this way to make it clear that infants are not made holy nor saved without divine action in them.

So even though it is customary in some places to administer baptism publicly on certain days, yet people should be taught that, if the infant's life is in any danger, they take care of baptizing them in the meantime, and ministers ought to approve the baptism in such cases.

### On Absolution

In regard to absolution all of us wish that private absolution also be preserved in the church, both for the consolation of consciences and because it is exceedingly useful to the church as that discipline in which people are heard privately so that the unlearned might be instructed. For certainly such an exchange and examination is needed for the less educated. Not that the old confession and enumeration of sins ought to be approved or required, but the aforementioned exchange should be preserved on account of absolution and its institution.

Translated from the *Corpus Reformatorum* [ajk]

## Considerations of Elector John Frederick

Re: the upcoming Council  
(Wittenberg, Beginning of December 1536)

### **Memo**

*Regarding Articles to be addressed and negotiated,  
in reference to the Council - as well as other matters.*

1. Because we might surely infer [from the invitation] that we might present everything in a council set up like this, let our presentation be *well founded and grounded in the holy, divine Scripture* - as it should be. Nevertheless let this [basis] be recognized by the opposition, who are a foreign, scheming, senseless people that show no respect but regard everything as Lutheran seductive heresy. And let them make their verdict known - on which they probably have already decided and agreed. What is more, soon thereafter their preconceived decision to outlaw and excommunicate our party will follow.

Accordingly, it will be most necessary that *Dr. Martin prepare* his basic arguments and thoughts from the holy Scriptures. [*Let him consider*] which of all the articles previously taught, preached, and written he *intends to adhere to and persist in* at the Council as well as before God's almighty judgment seat when he finally departs this world - and not to yield in them in violation of divine majesty even though body or property, peace or discord are at stake.

Yet [*let him also consider*] in which *articles* some things *can and ought to be yielded for the sake of Christian love*, apart from such as do untold harm to God and his word. Although such articles undoubtedly will be few, they would also thereby be distinctly marked by the aforementioned Dr. Martin.

2. And when Dr. Martin is finished [between now and the Day of Paul's conversion (*January 25*) at the latest, since the Doctor can work on his own), he will then present his work to the other theologians at Wittenberg as well as to several outstanding pastors whom he holds in highest esteem, to see whether or not they agree with his stated articles and whether thereby their attitudes and opinions are fully heard to their soul's salvation. But [*let them be considered*] without pretense, without concern for peace or discord, nor fearing confrontation with the Doctor and therefore on this account not opening their hearts completely, but, finding later at another time that they want to preach, write, and bring to light a different doctrine, they might then give people different advice contrary to the articles in question, as has previously happened through them several times in several cases etc.

And after the *theologians and pastors* come to an agreement with Dr. Martin's appointed articles, the participants who agreed on them will *subscribe to them* and prepare the same articles *uniformly both in Latin and in German*.

3. Subsequently, a public meeting should be agreed on [that, God willing, will take place also around the time when the upcoming Candlemas (*February 2*) is underway]. At that time the announced articles should be *publicly presented and explained to all religious confederates [princes]*.

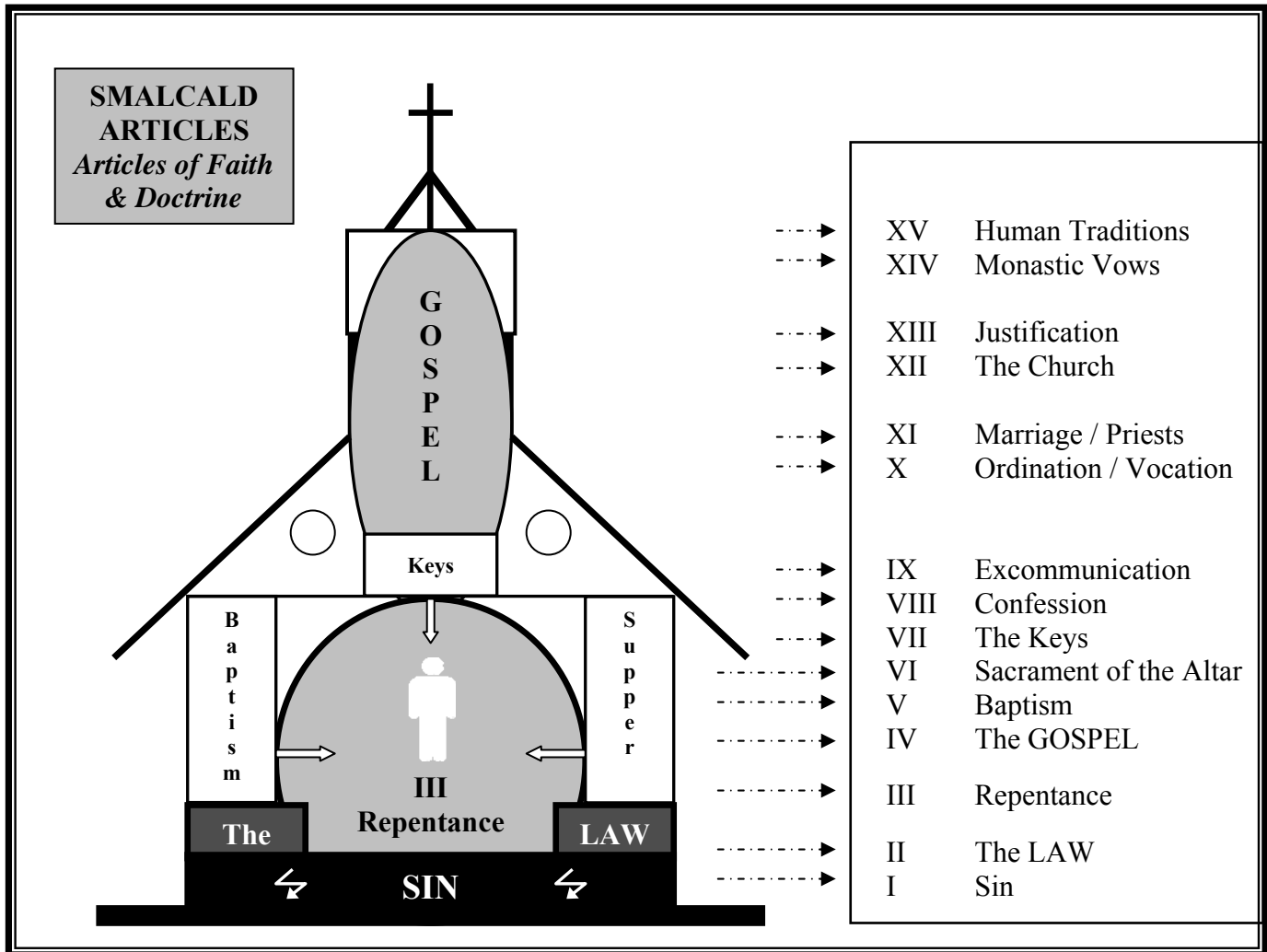
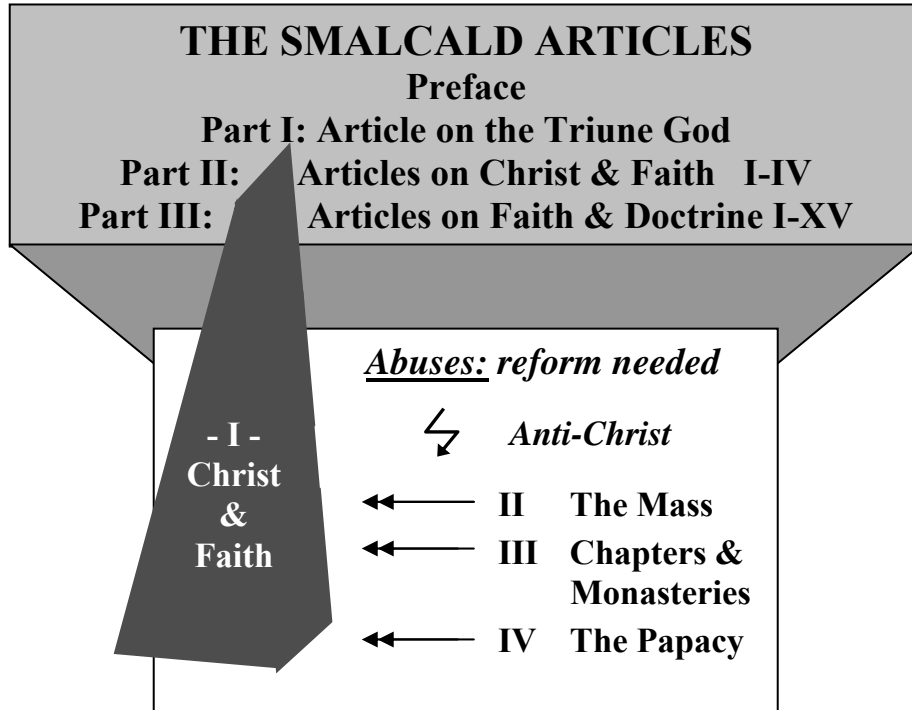
Thereupon one should hear the same from them - which articles they wish to agree on or which not, and whether several or more of the articles are deficient or defective. This should be pointed out clearly, along with reasons and particulars. So let also *the confederate princes* be attached to the demands of the proposed meeting.

Let each *bring with him two or three theologians* so that at that time a unanimous agreement might be reached in regard to these articles and no delay sought and pretended.

When one finally decides on which articles there is unanimously agreement and to which one wishes to adhere *with one consent* as entrusted to the almighty God, one should then further decide with what form, deference, measure, and manner *a general, free Christian council be convened by our party*. And take into consideration that such [a council] be convoked through Dr. Martin, together with his sub-bishops and ecclesiasts and pastors

Likewise, [*consider*] whether anyone indeed would object [to an evangelical counter-council] because of the presence that vocational military officers bring to the resistance, and whether it is of too little help that the princes obligate themselves to the extent of sacrificing body, goods, and their entire fortune and unhesitatingly abide by the acknowledgement and order of such a council (!), as well as by the aforementioned articles that should have been agreed upon previously.

Translated from the *Corpus Reformatorum 3:139* [ajk]



## THE BOOK OF CONCORD

### The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church

*We purpose to cooperate with one another in the future in the implementation of this effort at concord in our lands, according to our own and each community's circumstances, through diligent visitation of churches and schools, the supervision of printers and other salutary means. If the current controversies about our Christian religion should continue or new ones arise, we shall see to it that they are settled and composed in timely fashion before they become dangerously widespread in order that all kinds of scandal might be obviated.*

**In testimony whereof we have with one mind and heart subscribed  
our names hereto and ordered our privy seals impressed hereon**

LOUIS, count palatine on the Rhine, *elector*

AUGUST, duke of Saxony, *elector*

JOHN GEORGE, margrave of Brandenburg, *elector*

JOACHIM FREDERICK, margrave of Brandenburg, administrator of  
the archdiocese of Magdeburg

JOHN, bishop of Meissen

EBERHARD, bishop of Lübeck, administrator of the diocese of Verden

PHILIP LOUIS, palgrave [of Pfalz-Neuburg]

Duke FREDERICK WILLIAM [of Saxe-Altenburg] and

Duke JOHN [of Saxe-Weimar]

Duke JOHN CASIMIR [of Saxe-Coburg] and

Duke JOHN ERNEST [of Saxe-Eisenach]

GEORGE FREDERICK, margrave of Brandenburg [Ansbach-Bayreuth]

JULIUS, duke of Brunswick [Wolfenbüttel] and Lüneburg

OTTO, duke of Brunswick and Lüneburg [Harburg]

HENRY THE YOUNGER, duke of Brunswick [Wolfenbüttel] and Lüneburg

WILLIAM THE YOUNGER, duke of Brunswick and Lüneburg [Hanover]

WOLF, duke of Brunswick [Grubenhagen] and Lüneburg

ULRICH, duke of Mecklenburg [Güstrow]

Duke John and

Duke SIGISMUND AUGUST of Mecklenburg [in Ivernack]

LOUIS, Duke of Württemberg

Margrave ERNEST [of Baden-Durlach] and

Margrave JAMES of Baden [Hachberg]

GEORGE ERNEST, count and lord of Henneberg [Schleusingen]

FREDERICK, count of Württemberg and Montbeliard

JOHN GUNTHER, count of Schwarzburg [Sondershausen]

WILLIAM, count of Schwarzburg [Frankenhausen]

ALBERT, count of Schwarzburg [Rudolstadt]

EMICH, count of Leiningen

PHILIP, count of Hanau [Lichtenburg]

GODFREY, count of Oettingen

GEORGE, count and lord of Castell [Rüdenhausen]

HENRY, count and lord of Castell [Remlingen]

JOHN HOYER, count of Mansfeld [Artern]

BRUNO, count of Mansfeld [Bronstedt]

HOYER CHRISTOPHER, count of Mansfeld [Eisleben]

PETER ERNEST THE YOUNGER, count of Mansfeld [Eisleben]

CHRISTOPHER, count of Mansfeld

OTTO, count of Hoya [Nienburg] and Burghausen

JOHN, count of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst

ALBERT GEORGE, count of Stolberg

WOLF ERNEST, count of Stolberg

LOUIS, count of Gleichen [Blankenhain]

CHARLES, count of Gleichen [Blankenhain]

ERNEST, count of Regenstein

BODO, count of Regenstein

LOUIS, Count of Lowenstein

HENRY, baron of Limpurg [Schmiedelfeld], Semperfrei

GEORGE, baron of Schönburg [Waldenburg]

WOLF, baron of Schönburg [Penig-Remissa]

ANARCK FREDERICK, baron of Wildenfels

Mayor and Council of the City of Lübeck

Mayor and Council of the City of Landau

Mayor and Council of the City of Münster-in-St. Georgental

The Council of the City of Goslar

Mayor and Council of the City of Ulm

Mayor and Council of the City of Esslingen

The Council of the City of Reutlingen

Mayor and Council of the City of Nördlingen

Mayor and Council of Rothenburg-on-the-Tauber

Mayor and Council of the City of Schwäbisch-Hall

Mayor and Council of the City of Heilbronn

Mayor and Council of the City of Memmingen

Mayor and Council of the City of Lindau

Mayor and Council of the City of Schweinfurt

The Council of the City of Donawerda

Chamberlain and Council of the City of Regensburg

Mayor and Council of the City of Wimpfen

Mayor and Council of the City of Giengen

Mayor and Council of Bopfingen

Mayor and Council of the City of Aalen

Mayor and Council of the City of Kaufbeuren

Mayor and Council of the City of Isna

Mayor and Council of the City of Kempten

The Council of the City of Hamburg

The Council of the City of Göttingen

The Council of the City of Brunswick

Mayor and Council of the City of Lüneburg

Mayor and Council of the City of Leutkirch

The whole administration of the City of Hildesheim

Mayor and Council of the City of Hamelin

Mayor and Council of the City of Hanover

The Council of Mühlhausen

The Council of Erfurt

The Council of the City of Einbeck

The Council of the City of Northeim

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup>In a noteworthy selection, the Time-Life corporation's volume, *The LIFE Millennium, a pictorial history of the world and the discoveries that changed it*, lists Martin Luther among the 100 most important people of the past 1,000 years. In their assessment, Luther, 3<sup>rd</sup> in order of importance, is selected for being the Reformer who, by posting the 95 Theses "for the purpose of eliciting truth," changed the political and religious world for centuries. Robert Friedman (ed.), *The LIFE Millennium*, LIFE Books, Time Inc., New York, New York, 1998. ISBN: 0-82122557-X

<sup>2</sup>In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Protestantism's great scholar, Adolf von Harnach led the liberal charge to deconfessionalize the church. Liberalism regarded the creeds as product of the Greek mind, temporary necessities in early cross-cultural evangelism, but of no need or service in the modern world. Von Harnach (1851-1930), professor of church history at Berlin University, thought creedal formulations to be obsolete philosophic encrustations that hindered the essentially ethical message of Jesus. See Hermann Sasse, *We Confess Jesus Christ*, Concordia, St. Louis, 1984. ISBN # 0-570-03941-X, Vol. 1, pp. 9-35. An unedited version of the foregoing contains Sasse's remarks concerning Von Harnach's liberal goals.

<sup>3</sup>The designation "Particular Creeds" was given to the Lutheran Confessions to distinguish them from the "Ecumenical Creeds" of the early Christian church. The name had a more historical use in the territorial churches of the Empire than a theological claim. It is this author's preference to call the Particular Creeds by the name "Evangelical Creeds" for good reason. The true Lutheran church does not view itself as doctrinal innovators in the church catholic, but as a church that by God's grace and under Luther's leadership restored the Gospel to the center of the church's confession. This alternate name views church reform and all doctrines contained in the so-called Particular Creeds in the light of the Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God. For this reason early Lutherans preferred to be called Evangelicals, a name that has since morphed into a different denominational identification.

<sup>4</sup>Directives from the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's annual Fall Symposium committee, December 10, 2004, came in a communication under the signature of Prof. James P. Tiefel.

<sup>5</sup>This work, now published independently, is found in the *Concordia Triglott*, reproduced by the Mott Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1955, pp. 1-256.

<sup>6</sup>In line with this way of speaking, Jesus quotes the proverbial Jewish saying as a warning to the self-righteous Pharisees, "Out of the overflow of the *heart* the *mouth* speaks" (Mt:12:34).

<sup>7</sup>The 4<sup>th</sup> Century document *Apostolic Constitutions* (380) gave this account of the origin of the Apostles' Creed: "*On whose account we who are now assembled in one place - Peter and Andrew; James and John, sons of Zebedee; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthias; James the son of Alphaeus and Lebbaeus who was surnamed Thaddeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Mathias, who instead of Judas was numbered with us, and James, the brother of our Lord and bishop of Jerusalem; and Paul, the teacher of the Gentiles, the chosen vessel - having all met together, have written to you this catholic doctrine, for the confirmation of you to whom the oversight of the universal church is committed.*" Migne, P.L., XXXIX, 2189, still earlier in a sermon attributed to St. Ambrose Migne, P.L., XVII, 671.

<sup>8</sup>See Appendix #1, *The Apostles' Creed*, "Early Confession of Jesus as the Messiah" [in the sign of the fish *Ichthus*, an acronym for the Christian confession to Christ.

<sup>9</sup>See Appendix #1, *Eastern Trinitarian formula, according to 1Co 8:6*.

<sup>10</sup>In a most insightful writing *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), Martin Luther used this creedal summary to answer the question: What is the Word of God? In recognition of Jesus as the Word in the word, he wrote, "You may ask, 'What then is the Word of God, and how shall it be used, since there are so many words of God?' I answer: The apostle explains this in Romans 1. The Word is the gospel of God concerning his Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead and was glorified through the Spirit who sanctifies." LW 31:347.

<sup>11</sup>See Appendix #1 for the Old Roman creed.

<sup>12</sup>The term symbol for the baptismal confession is traceable to the early church father, Cyprian (A.D. 258). See *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. XI under "Symbolics."

<sup>13</sup>See Appendix #2, listing the Scriptural sources for the Apostles' Creed.

<sup>14</sup>Polycarp, a disciple of the church father Irenaeus, who in turn was taught by the Apostle John, was tried for treason at Smyrna in Asia Minor in A.D. 155. The Christian record of the trial states: "Great was the uproar when they heard Polycarp had been seized. So he was led before the Proconsul, who tried to pressure him, saying, 'Swear by the genius of Caesar, change your mind, and say: 'Away with the atheists!' Then Polycarp looked sternly at the mob of lawless heathen in the stadium. He waved his hand in *their* direction and said: 'Away with the atheists!' But the Proconsul continued to urge him and said: 'Swear and I will release you; curse the Christ.'" From *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, an encyclical letter written on February, 22, 156.

<sup>15</sup>The O Ω N remains the basic symbol in the nimbus of the Orthodox Church's icons depicting Christ. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century this symbol imbedded in Eastern culture carried Christianity through the atheistic communist times since the old icons traditionally remained hanging in many homes.

<sup>16</sup>In the synoptic Gospels, the roles of the Father, Son and Spirit are revealed. But Jesus final discourses before his death, especially,

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the "High Priestly" prayer on record in the Gospel of John (Jn 14-17) convinced the disciples that Jesus "came from God" [Jn 16:29] who revealed God in heretofore unmatched clarity by distinguishing God from God as three in one and revealing the relationship to one another.

<sup>17</sup> See Justin Martyr in books on the History of Dogma, such as Seeberg R., *Textbook of the History of Doctrines*, Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, Michigan.

<sup>18</sup> Monarchians rightly stressed the one-ness of God, but rationalized the place of Jesus in respect to the One divine ruler. To Sabellius, for example, in the appearance of Jesus, the Father was suffering as the Son, only in a different form or mode of his Being. "For that which is seen, which is the man, this is the Son; but the Spirit dwelling in the Son, this is the Father." This source is given in Seeberg R., *Textbook of the History of Doctrines*, Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1956. Vol. I, p. 168.

<sup>19</sup> The reference is to the use of the term *hypostasis* by the writer to the Hebrews. The passage states that Jesus is God's Son, who is the radiance of God's glory and his "exact representation," [χαρακτηρ της υποστασεως αυτου] (Heb 1:3). Jesus has the distinctive mark or character of God's Being. To know him is to know God's nature.

<sup>20</sup> Irenaeus, "Proof of the Apostolic Preaching," chapter 47. Found in Quasten, J., and J.C. Plumpe, eds. *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*. Over 40 vols. thus far. Westminster, MD: Newman, 1946-and continuing. These are possibly the best English translations and introductions available.

<sup>21</sup> In John 10:30 when Jesus declared "I and the Father are one," he uses the neuter for "one," indicating that both are one in Being, not one in person, as if to say the Father and I are one thing [εγω και πατηρ ενσμεν].

<sup>22</sup> Arian theology was spread north and west by Goths and even penetrated the Italian peninsula at Ravenna. The beautiful mosaics of the Arian Baptistry in Ravenna remain today as a witness to the promotion of this Unitarian creed in Ravenna until the death of Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths.

<sup>23</sup> Fragments of Arius' writings are contained in the works of his opponent, Athanasius, presbyter of Alexandria. This edited rendition comes from <http://home.zonnet.nl/shotki/fragments%20from%20arius.htm>, quickly located in the search engine *Google* under – Arius writings.

<sup>24</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, writes: "In speaking of the appearance of the Saviour amongst us, we must needs speak also of the origin of men, that you may know that the reason of His coming down was because of us, and that our transgression called forth the loving-kindness of the Word, that the Lord should both make haste to help us and appear among men. For of His becoming Incarnate *we were the object, and for our salvation He dealt so lovingly as to appear and be born even in a human body.*" For the entire text, see <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2802.htm>

<sup>25</sup> If it is unclear what the creed meant and did not mean, the Council added a clear condemnation clause: *But as for those who say, There was when he was not, and, Before being born he was not, and that he came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is created, or is subject to alteration or change these the catholic church anathematizes.* [See appendix #3 for the full text].

<sup>26</sup> In speaking of God, Christian witnesses easily interchanged God's Being (*ousia*) and his *hypostasis* (translated in Latin as *substance*). The condemnation clause in the Nicene formula slides over the two: *But as for those who say, There was when he was not, and, Before being born he was not, and that he came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is created, or is subject to alteration or change these the catholic church anathematizes.* The three Cappadocians lived contemporaneously: Basil the Great [d. 379], Gregory of Nyssa, his younger brother [d. 394], and their close acquaintance, Gregory of Nazianz [d. ca. 390]. They had a major impact on the formulation of the later rendition of the Nicene Creed.

<sup>27</sup> The Augsburg Confession, Article I, 4 makes a special point of assent to this manner of speaking. "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."

<sup>28</sup> An older view of the creed's origin stated that the *entire* Athanasian Creed was composed in ca. A.D. 430 by Hilary, Abbot of the Monastery of Lerins, on a Mediterranean island along the French Riviera offshore from the present city of Cannes. The creed was spread in the Gallican church, and by the time a century had passed it achieved the status of being commented on like the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed simply as the catholic faith. Not until ca. 670 was the name of Athanasius attached to it because of its excellent confession to the Triune God and the Incarnate Deity.

Recent research challenges former views. It acknowledges that Part 1 (on the Trinity) was traceable to the Monastery of Lerins and the Gallican rule of faith (*regula fidei*), and that this portion explains the Trinity as taught in the Nicene Creed under the guidance of Athanasius. But Part 2 (on Christ) bears the markings of the heritage of Augustine. In the background are the disputes with Nestorius and Eutyches on the natures of Christ that first started at Augustine's time after the death of Athanasius.

<sup>29</sup> To achieve this goal the creed stressed the unity God's Being without dividing God or confusing the Persons. The three are one and the one is three. The mystery of the Three in One is that Father, Son, and Spirit – equal in glory and coeternal in majesty – possess attributes that breaks the bounds of time and space because God is uncreated, infinite, eternal, and almighty. Despite God's unity the Scriptures clearly distinguish God's activities as the Three in One relate to one another in God's Being. The eternal generation of the Son by the Father, distinguishes the Son from the Father, who himself was un-begotten, and from the Spirit, who proceeds from God. See Appendix #4 for the text of the Athanasian Creed.



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<sup>30</sup> Luther hailed the distinction of the Three in One as vital. In *The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith* (1537), he says as much. Father, Son, and Spirit "reveal themselves to us, *outside* of the Godhead, in the creatures. For the Son is physically born of his mother and here also is called "son" and "born." ...And the Holy Spirit proceeds physically...in the form of a dove. ...Thus the Father remains of himself, so that all three persons are *in majesty*, and yet in such a manner that the Son has his Godhead from the Father through his eternal immanent birth (and not the other way around) and that the Holy Spirit has his Godhead from the Father and the Son through his eternal immanent proceeding." [LW34:218].

<sup>31</sup> Maurer elucidates his remarks in an essay on "Die Einheit der Theologie Luthers," found in Wilhelm Maurer [collected works], Volume I, *Luther und das Evangelische Bekenntnis* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970]. He writes: "Luthers Lehre von Glaube und Rechtfertigung ist eine Frucht seines Verständnisses der altchristlichen Theologie; das 'simul iustus et peccator' setzt das 'Christus simul Deus et homo' voraus. Der hier vorhandene Zusammenhang wird uns klar, wenn wir nicht so sehr auf die Einzelheiten des Rechtfertigungsvorgangs, sondern mehr auf das *Ergebnis*, auf den gerechtfertigten Sunder schauen" (p. 19).

"Luther's teaching of faith and justification is a *fruit* of his understanding of the early Christian theology. The (fact that a Christian is) 'simultaneously just and sinner' presupposes that 'Christ (is) simultaneously God and man.' The connection made here will become clear to us if we concentrate not on the details of the way justification comes about, but more on the *result* for the justified sinner."

<sup>32</sup> In his 1520 address *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* (LW 44, 123ff), Luther cites the Pope as wearing a "triple crown" (tiara) in contrast to monarchs who wear "only one." The papal tiara, (from the 14<sup>th</sup> C.) signified the supremacy and authority of the pope over worldly rulers and gave the Vicar of Christ the rule over the church, over the world, and over the angels (pp. 139-141).

<sup>33</sup> Olivier, Daniel (John Tonkin, trans.). *The Trial of Luther*, Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, Missouri, 1978. An account of Luther's indictment and warrant for his arrest is found in pp. 29-37.

<sup>34</sup> LW 31:25. These are in the initial words of Luther's *Ninety-five Theses*.

<sup>35</sup> The Papal Bull *Decret Romanum*, is a rare document in English. It can be found in an English anthology of Reformation writings by E.G. Rupp and Benjamin Drewery [editors], pp 63-67. The book appears under the simple title "Martin Luther," and is published by St. Martin's Press, New York.

<sup>36</sup> See Acts 11:26. "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." It is unclear whether Christ's followers first invented the term "Christian" or whether non-believers used the name as a term of reproach to identify followers of the condemned and crucified Jewish messiah. Either way the label stuck and became a badge of identification. Martin Luther preferred to speak of the evangelical reform and once said in a moment of reflection, "What is Luther? After all, the teaching is not mine [John 7:16]. Neither was I crucified for anybody [1Cor. 1:13]. ... I neither am nor want to be anyone's master. I hold, together with the universal church, the one universal teaching of Christ, who is our only Master [Matt. 28:8]" [LW 45:70f].

<sup>37</sup> See Schwiebert, E. G., *Luther and his Times*. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1950, p. 468. The princes were acting as emergency bishops (*Notbischöffe*) because the papal hierarchy was unable to reform itself without relinquishing its power.

<sup>38</sup> In perspective, many raise a simple question: why? Why another book besides the Holy Bible? Perhaps the question is faulty, even biblicistic. Christian churches generally appeal to the Bible as their source. The question then becomes one of interpretation. Rome's charge against Protestants seizes on this particular point and raises another question that Rome has already definitively answered: Where does "teaching authority" in the church lie? Rome's answer: In the church's Magisterium [See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994, ISBN #0-38547967-0, paragraphs #85-95; 888-892]. Modernist ecumenists give a much different answer, "We have one Bible, but different traditions." So, besides the Book every church has a book that spells out their tradition. The Jews collected the *Talmud*; Rome, the *Book of Canon Law*; Eastern Orthodoxy, the *Seven Ecumenical Councils*; Methodists, Wesley's *Book of Discipline*; Reformed, *The Westminster Confession*; the Church of England, *Thirty-nine Articles of Religion*; Baptist, *The Schleithem Confession*, etc. Even the Community Churches' non-creedal stance is their creed.

<sup>39</sup> Luther responded to Erasmus' *Diatribes on Free Will* with a critical and pastoral essay on *The Bondage of the Will*. Because the issues under discussion got down to the vital issues [*jugulum*, the jugular] of the Christian faith, Luther highly favored this writing and considered it one of three of his writings [along with the Large and Small Catechisms] that deserved to be kept. [LW 33 contains the *Bondage of the Will*]

<sup>40</sup> See Luther's expressions in regard to the trinity in *The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith* (footnote #28 above). The hiddenness of God under the cross (*TECTUM CRUCE*) is expressed often in Luther regarding God's works on earth, that is, to the outside. "Therefore the kingdom of grace is and remains a secret kingdom, concealed from this world, maintained in Word and faith until the time of *its revelation*" [LW 14:30, Sermon on Ps 117 in 1530]. The conclusion: "It is necessary that everything which is believed should be *hidden*. Nothing is more deeply hidden than under an object, perception, or experience which is contrary to it. Thus when God makes alive he does it by killing, when he justifies he does it by making men guilty, when he exalts to heaven he does it by bringing down to hell, as Scripture says, 'The Lord kills and brings to life'" Luther observes on the basis of Heb 1:11 [LW 33:62]. So God operates by contraries ... contrary to our mind, contrary to our experience, contrary to our reason and all our senses."

<sup>41</sup> According to Isadore Epstein to understand Judaism is to comprehend two words *qdc* and *tm*), "righteousness and truth" as revealed in the Torah [Isadore Epstein, *Judaism*. Penguin Books: Baltimore, Maryland, 1964. p. 26f]. For Paul, a converted Rabbi, to

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understand Christianity is to comprehend the righteousness of God, δικαιοσύνη θεου, which come by faith as revealed in and through Jesus Christ.

<sup>42</sup> See the extensive treatment of the confession's authorship by Wilhelm Maurer, *Melanchthon as Author of the Augsburg Confession*, in "Lutheran World" 1960, Vol. 7, No. 2, 151-167.

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix #5 for the structure of the Augsburg Confession.

<sup>44</sup> Luther expressly stated his intentions: "I desire with this treatise to confess my faith before God and all the world, point by point. I am determined to abide by it until my death and (so help me God!) in this faith to depart from this world and to appear before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ. ... I have most diligently traced all these articles through the Scriptures, have examined them again and again in the light thereof, and have wanted to defend all of them as certainly as I have now defended the sacrament of the altar" [LW 37:360].

<sup>45</sup> Melanchthon had changed the original Article 10 from "the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the Supper of our Lord under (*sub*) the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received." In the variation, Article 10 was made to read: Concerning the Lord's Supper they teach that the body and blood of Christ are truly *exhibited together with* the bread and wine...." [quod *cum* pane et vino vere *exhibeantur* corpus et sanguinis Christi]. The Latin expression *cum pane "exhibited together with"* suggested a *separation* of the elements from the body/blood of Christ that was compatible with the Zwingli's understanding of Christ in heaven and the elements on earth.

<sup>46</sup> See Appendix #6 for an annotated chronological list of sources for the Large and Small Catechisms.

<sup>47</sup> Medieval confessional and catechetical manuals contained such things as instruction in the Golden rule, the seven deadly sins, the six sins against the Holy Ghost, the nine strange sins, as well as the Beatitudes, the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit, the seven works of mercy, the seven gifts of the blessed, the seven sacraments, churchly ordinances, etc.

<sup>48</sup> Among others that tried their hand at writing catechisms were Melanchthon, Agricola, Spalatin, and even John Brenz. But they failed to produce a quality work that was as durable as Luther's Catechisms.

<sup>49</sup> The Imperial Capitulation was a written agreement that legally set the terms by which the German Emperor was elected. Ever since medieval times the Imperial Capitulation had designated terms by which the elected emperor made a pledge to the electors in the event of his being elected. So at the time of Charles V (1519), the Seven Electors of the Holy Roman Empire, representing the princes, laid before the future Emperor an Imperial Capitulation (*capitulatio caesarea*) for him to sign. Its intent was to avoid making the Empire a heritable monarchy, as in France and England, and to assure the Electors of their political positions designated in the Golden Bull of Nürnberg in 1356.

<sup>50</sup> In 1531 the original members were – from *Middle Germany*: Electoral Saxony, Hesse, the Mansfeld Dukes – *from the North German Plains*: Braunschweig-Lüneburg and the Free Imperial Cities of Lübeck, Magdeburg, and Bremen. To these were added in 1534: *Württemberg in the South*, and Pomerania along the *Baltic Sea*; and in 1539: Ducal Saxony in *Middle Germany*, and Electoral Brandenburg in the *North*.

<sup>51</sup> See appendix #7. The Upper German delegation was headed by the Strassburg representatives, Bucer and Capito, as well as representatives from the Quad Cities [*Tetrapolitana*] and other free Imperial cities. Reform in the Free Imperial Cities in many cases came about because the cities were democratically run by elected Town Councils.

<sup>52</sup> See Appendix #8 for the Elector's Memo.

<sup>53</sup> See the Elector's directives to Luther in the Elector's Memo, Appendix #8. See also a commentary on the Volz-Bizer debate on the *motifs* in the Smalcald Articles in Kenneth Hagen, *The Historical Context of the Smalcald Articles*, found in the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 51, #4, October, 1987, pp. 245-253.

<sup>54</sup> See the structure of the Smalcald Articles in a pictographic form in Appendix #9.

<sup>55</sup>

1. Controversy on ADIAPHORA	[after 1547]
2. Osiandrian controversy on JUSTIFICATION	[after 1550]
3. Majoristic controversy on GOOD WORKS	[after 1552]
4. ANTINOMIAN controversy	[after 1552]
5. Crypto-Calvinistic controversy on the LORD'S SUPPER	[after 1552]
6. SYNERGISTIC controversy	[after 1555]
7. CHRISTOLOGICAL controversy	[after 1560]

<sup>56</sup> Noteworthy are Martin Chemnitz, Superintendent of the City of Braunschweig, Joachim Westphal from Hamburg, and David Chytraeus of the University of Rostock.

<sup>57</sup> For a characterization of four of the six formulators of the Formula of Concord, refer to Theodore Jungkuntz, *Formulators of the Formula of Concord - Four Architects of Lutheran Unity* [Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, 1977. ISBN # 0-570-03740-9]. The biographical descriptions are of Jacob Andreae, Martin Chemnitz, David Chytraeus, and Nicolaus Selnecker. Not included are Andreas Musculus and Christoph Koerner.

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<sup>58</sup> For a listing of signatories see Appendix #10.

<sup>59</sup> See LW 26:4-12, esp., 9. Found in Luther's reworked *Lectures on Galatians* [1535]. For the expression *solus Christus*, Christ alone as the center of our justification before God, see LW 31:347 in *the Freedom of a Christian*.