The Augsburg Confession – and the – Apology of the Augsburg Confession – with – Key Historical Documents:

The Concordia Reader’s Edition

Excerpted from the Book of Concord in Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions

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Scripture quotations in Luther’s Exhortation to the Clergy in Augsburg, John Eck’s 404 Theses, and The Pontifical Confutation are translations by the authors.

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The images on p. XX are from ___


The Smitley Collection of Reformation Works, Pritzlaff Memorial Library Rare Book Collection: Concordia Seminary Library, St. Louis, Missouri, page 29.

Manufactured in the United States of America
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The two most foundational statements of what the Lutheran Church believes, teaches, and confesses are the Augsburg Confession\(^1\) and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession.\(^2\) This book provides both of these documents, along with several other historical texts that are important for understanding the historical context of the preparation and presentation of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology. The supplemental texts include Martin Luther’s *Exhortation to the Clergy Assembled at the Diet at Augsburg* (May 1530), John Eck’s *404 Theses* (June 1530), and the Roman Catholic *Confutation of the Augsburg Confession* (August 1530).

The Lutherans who attended the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 had to leave Luther behind at the Coburg Castle because he was still in considerable danger. Coburg was the southernmost city of Electoral Saxony, so Luther was safe there. It was from Coburg that Luther prepared his Exhortation for the Lutheran princes and theologians, and chiefly for Philip Melanchthon, who was finalizing the text of the Augsburg Confession. Melanchthon took Luther’s words very seriously; we can see Luther’s influence in the Augsburg Confession. The Roman Catholic scholar who was directed to translate Luther’s Exhortation into Latin for the Roman Catholic theologians in Augsburg told a friend, “It is a summary of all Lutheranism. If you want to know the whole Luther, you would better buy it.”

Dramatically, right before the Diet began to meet, Luther’s old nemesis John Eck launched a “sneak attack” and published and distributed to all those in Augsburg a document titled simply *404 Theses*. It was a scorched-earth attack on Luther and other reformers, offering up a mishmash of accusations, lies, half-truths, and obfuscations, all designed to lump Luther in with Ulrich Zwingli and other Reformed theologians and beyond them, even the most wild-eyed radicals of the Reformation. Eck’s document forced the Lutherans to add to the Augsburg Confession a series of doctrinal statements clarifying what it was that they believed, taught, and confessed and what therefore they condemned. At first, the Augsburg Confession was intended only to be an explanation of what the Lutherans had reformed and corrected; these articles were put behind the doctrinal assertions.

The Augsburg Confession was read out loud and formally presented to Emperor Charles V on June 25, 1530. Charles V quickly ordered his court advisors and theologians to prepare a written refutation and response, titled “*Confutation of the Augsburg Confession*.” Five drafts were rejected before finally, after six weeks, the emperor accepted their text. It was read aloud to the Lutherans, but they never were provided

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1 “Confession” here means a public statement of doctrinal beliefs.
2 “Apology” here does not mean, “I’m sorry,” but rather, “defense,” from the Greek “apologia.”
a copy, and ironically, it was never even published until 1573, in Latin, and not in German until 1808. But, fortunately, Lutheran stenographers accurately wrote the content down as it was being read. The Apology was published in May 1531 and is known as the “quarto”\(^3\) edition. Though Melanchthon kept making changes to the Apology, this quarto edition was included in the Latin edition of the Book of Concord in 1584; thus, it is the official edition of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession. The later “octavo”\(^4\) edition with Melanchthon’s changes is not an official version of the Apology and, while useful for study, should not be used in translations of the Lutheran Church’s Book of Concord.

The translation of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (from their Latin versions), along with introductions, explanations, annotations, notes, and graphics, are from a special edition of the Book of Concord titled *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions—A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord*. The texts of the supplemental documents, along with their introductions, are reproduced from public domain sources, as noted at the beginning of each document and as indicated on the copyright page of this book.\(^5\)

Anyone interested in the history of the Reformation will find this collection useful, but it will be particularly important for those who make the Augsburg Confession and its Apology their own confession of faith. Genuinely Lutheran Christians and churches take their place with generations of other Lutherans who, for nearly five hundred years, have taken their stand for the truth of Holy Scripture as it is so clearly, powerfully, and beautifully summarized and articulated in these statements of faith. We do so always for sake of the precious Good News of Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners, the world’s redeemer and only hope, by whom we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Jesus Christ alone.

*I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame.*

*Psalm 119:46.*

Rev. Paul T. McCain  
Publisher, Concordia Publishing House  
June 25, 2020  
The 490th Anniversary of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession

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3 A book size in which four pages are cut from a single sheet of paper.
4 A book size in which eight pages are cut from a single sheet of paper.
5 I would be remiss were I not to heartily recommend *The Augsburg Confession: A Collection of Sources with a Historical Introduction* by Johann Michael Reu. This is ideal for readers who want to go even more deeply into the history and context of the Augsburg Confession. It remains to this day, by far, the most comprehensive collection of sources pertaining to the development, presentation, and publication of the Augsburg Confession and subsequent history available in English. There is nothing else like it. It is available from Concordia Publishing House as an ebook. There are reprints of it available elsewhere, but be sure they are the entire, nearly 800-page edition.
THE CONFESSION OF FAITH

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION
which was submitted to
His Imperial Majesty Charles V at the
Imperial Meeting of Augsburg
in the Year 1530
by certain princes and cities

I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings
and shall not be put to shame.
Psalm 119:46
During the Imperial Meeting [Diet] of Augsburg, Lutheran princes confessed their faith boldly before the most powerful leaders of Europe. The powerful and mighty are always most wise when they bow in humble adoration before Christ.
EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION
TO THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

Against the gates of hell, with the grace and help of God.

—Layman Gregory Brück

On Saturday, June 25, 1530, at three o’clock in the afternoon, Dr. Christian Beyer stood, walked toward the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V, and began reading the Augsburg Confession in a loud and distinct voice. Through the open windows a hushed crowd outside in the courtyard hung on his every word, as did the two hundred or so people gathered in the hall. Beside Dr. Beyer stood Dr. Gregory Brück, holding a copy of the Augsburg Confession in Latin. The German princes around them stood up to indicate their support for the Confession. The emperor motioned for them to sit down.

When Dr. Beyer finished reading, Dr. Brück took the German copy of the Confession from him, handed both copies to the emperor, and said, “Most gracious Emperor, this is a Confession that will even prevail against the gates of hell, with the grace and help of God.” Thus was the Augsburg Confession presented as a unique Confession of the truth of God’s holy Word, distinct from Romanism on the one hand, and Reformed, Anabaptists, and radicals on the other. June 25, 1530, is a date every bit as important for Lutherans as is the more familiar date of October 31, 1517—the day on which Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses.

Events Leading to Augsburg

The presentation of the Augsburg Confession was a decisive moment, one long in coming. It is important to understand the history leading up to the Imperial Meeting at Augsburg. Nine years earlier, on April 18, 1521, at the Imperial Meeting in Worms, Charles had listened as Martin Luther refused to recant his teachings, saying, “I cannot and will not recant. I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand. God help me. Amen.” Now Charles was watching as the most important rulers in his German territories confessed their faith openly and courageously in spite of the threats to their lives from both the government and the Church.

Martin Luther had been declared a criminal and a heretic; he was excommunicated and sentenced to death in April of 1521. By 1526, the Reformation had spread to the point that during an Imperial Meeting at Speyer, the Lutheran princes forced through a resolution that gave each of them the right to arrange religious matters in their respective territories—in any way he felt was best—until the emperor was able to have the pope call a General Council of the Church. So from 1526 to 1529, little changed in the Holy Roman Empire. As a result, most of Northern Germany became
Lutheran, along with many cities in Southern Germany. At the second Imperial Meeting in Speyer (1529), the princes loyal to Rome reversed the decision made three years earlier. The princes loyal to the Lutheran Reformation and other reforming movements fiercely protested this decision, issuing a formal Protestio. Thus the Lutherans, along with other reformers, were labeled Protestants. The name has stuck ever since.

Charles ordered all rulers within the Empire to go to Augsburg to attend the Imperial Meeting (also known as a Reichstag or a Diet). He wanted to settle, once and for all, the controversies in the churches throughout his Germany. The armies of the Turkish Empire were literally at the eastern gates of Charles’s Empire. He wanted unity so that the Turkish threat could be met. He hoped that a combination of kindness, cajoling, and finally, threats, would stop the Lutheran movement and restore Romanism throughout the Empire. But things did not go as Charles had hoped.

The Schwabach, Marburg, and Torgau Articles

Lutheranism was only tolerated where it could not be eliminated by military force. Lutherans had no protection in German territories that were loyal to Rome. After the 1529 Diet of Speyer, Philip of Hesse sought to create a political federation for the mutual defense of those who had protested the autocratic action of Charles V. Philip of Hesse and Jacob Sturm united Saxony and Hesse with certain Southern German evangelical cities (with Ulm, Strasbourg, and Nürnberg as the nucleus). The coalition was created on April 22, 1529, in a secret agreement at Speyer. To clear the way for possible inclusion of the Swiss in the federation, Philip of Hesse planned to settle the dispute between Luther and Ulrich Zwingli at a meeting at Philip’s castle in Marburg.

The Lutherans were concerned by Philip of Hesse's desire to put political unity ahead of doctrinal unity. After the Diet of Speyer, Philip Melanchthon (who had kept silent regarding differences between the German Lutherans and the Swiss) had a change of heart and tried to thwart the federation. Luther also opposed a federation without confessional unity. The Schwabach Articles were prepared by Luther and others sometime between July 25 and September 14 of that year.

The Marburg Colloquy took place October 2–4, 1529. Ulrich Zwingli and Martin Luther faced each other across a table for most of the meeting. The two groups identified much that they agreed about, yet the talks broke down. The disagreement had to do with the Lord's Supper. Zwingli was willing to settle for an “agreement to disagree” approach, but Luther insisted that Jesus’ words “This is My body” mean “This is My body.” In fact, he took a piece of chalk and wrote the words “This is My body” on the table itself (Hoc est Corpus Meum). Whenever Zwingli or the other Swiss Reformers tried to disagree with Luther about the reality of those words, Luther would lift the tablecloth and point to the words. The Marburg Articles therefore indicate “We are not agreed as to whether the true body and blood of Christ are bodily present in the bread and wine.”

The Marburg Articles, along with the Schwabach Articles, provided a firm foundation for the writing of the Augsburg Confession. The seventeen Schwabach
Articles were first presented on October 16, 1529. They insisted on unity in doctrine as a prerequisite for any cooperation among the various Protestant groups in Germany.

Charles V persisted with his efforts to eliminate the religious controversies in his territories. He was facing pressure from the threat of a Turkish invasion from the East. He was also mindful that the pope might, at any time, strike an alliance with the ruler of France and attack his Empire from the West. The Empire was a coalition of relatively independent territories and free cities. The key rulers of the Empire were known as “electors,” for they actually elected the emperor. (See chart, p. 287.) Charles depended on them both militarily and politically. He could not afford to alienate them. Charles was very devout and felt strongly that it was his duty to protect the Roman Church from the threat posed by the Lutherans and other Protestant reformers. He hoped that the meeting at Augsburg would settle all disputes.

The elector of Saxony, John the Steadfast, at first refused to attend the meeting in Augsburg. But Charles urged him to do so. Since Charles invited everyone attending to share their “opinions, thoughts, and notions,” Elector John asked the Wittenberg theologians, led by Martin Luther, to prepare a statement of confession. Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Justas Jonas, and John Bugenhagen met in Torgau and went to work immediately. Their document was given to Elector John at the Torgau Castle in March of 1530, and is therefore known as the Torgau Articles.

Philip Melanchthon was asked by the Elector to write a comprehensive statement of faith. He did so without close consultation with Luther, but he relied heavily on the Schwabach, Marburg, and Torgau Articles—each of which was very much a product of Martin Luther. Luther indicated he approved of Melanchthon’s work, though he pointed out that he would never have been able “to tread as lightly” as Melanchthon did.
The Gathering at Augsburg

On April 4, Elector John left Torgau with Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Justas Jonas, and Veit Dietrich (a secretary to Luther). Ten days later, on Good Friday, they arrived at Coburg Castle. Luther and the Elector remained at Coburg while the others traveled on to Augsburg. There, Philip Melanchthon was given the responsibility of leading the Lutheran theologians. (However, the Elector had set up a special courier service to make sure letters between Luther and his colleagues would be sent and received quickly.) Elector John arrived in Augsburg on May 2.

The meeting began with a clear signal that the courageous Lutheran laymen were not about to concede to the emperor’s demands, nor compromise their convictions. As Charles’s royal procession approached Augsburg, it was met by a large delegation

Emperor Charles V (1500–58)

Charles V became Holy Roman Emperor on June 28, 1519, about two years after Martin Luther posted the Ninety-five Theses. For forty years Charles struggled against Lutheranism. This woodcut depicts him in Erlangen in 1532, two years after the Diet of Augsburg. In 1547 he captured Wittenberg. His knights wanted to desecrate Luther’s grave. Charles explained that he made war against the living, not the dead. He relinquished his throne in 1558, having failed to exterminate Lutheranism in his lands. He died in a monastery in Spain, a lonely, broken man who had suffered emotionally, physically, and spiritually.
THE APOLOGY
OF THE
AUGSBURG CONFESSION
Article IV of the Apology is the longest and most extensive explanation of the Christian faith’s chief article: the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone. This doctrine is the heartbeat of the entire Book of Concord. The offering of Isaac, and the ram sacrificed in his place, powerfully foreshadow the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION TO THE APOLOGY OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

Emperor Charles is an excellent man; he hopes to restore unity and peace.
I don’t know whether he will be able to do this, besieged as he is by so many
demonic monsters.

—Martin Luther to Nicholaus Hausmann
September 23, 1530 (LW 49:422)

After the public reading and presentation of the Augsburg Confession on June 25, 1530, the Lutherans waited to receive the emperor’s reply, which came on August 3. It was read to the Lutherans and soon became known as the Pontifical Confutation of the Augsburg Confession. They heard the reply, but were not given a copy of it. Couched in careful diplomatic language, the emperor’s message was clear: Back down or else. Further meetings were called for between the Lutherans and the emperor’s theologians.

Two series of meeting were held, the first, August 13–21, and the second, August 24. During these meetings, Philip Melanchthon was willing to compromise the Lutheran Confession. However, the Lutheran laymen prevailed and remained firm. In private, Emperor Charles tried everything he could think of to pressure the Lutheran princes to back down. He threatened to exile them from their territories and to seize by force all their property and possessions. Martin Luther, writing from the Coburg castle, encouraged them to stand strong. On September 22, Charles officially declared the Imperial Meeting to be in recess. He stated that the Pontifical Confutation had sufficiently answered the Lutheran Confession and gave the Lutherans until April 15, 1531, to concede to his demands. They refused.

The Lutherans were never given a copy of the Pontifical Confutation, but were ordered to do the following: accept all the conditions it imposed, accept the Confutation’s conclusions, make no reply to it, and not allow it to be published. Such outrageous demands were wholly unacceptable to the Lutherans. Fortunately, while the Confutation was being read, professional stenographers were writing the Confutation down, word for word, so they had an accurate transcript of its contents. The Lutheran princes asked Chancellor Brück and Philip Melanchthon to work on a reply. By September 22, a first draft was ready. They tried to give Charles a copy, but he refused to accept it. Then the Lutheran party left Augsburg. Melanchthon began working on a thorough revision of what was called the “Apology of the Augsburg Confession.” (The word apology in the Greek language, which Melanchthon taught at the university in Wittenberg, means “defense.”) Not until 1573 did the Roman Church officially publish the Confutation of the Augsburg Confession. This was long after the Council of Trent (1546–63) had formally adopted the Confutation’s conclusions.

Melanchthon worked on a thorough revision of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession from the end of September 1530 until April 15, 1531. Melanchthon was
firm and confident as he replied to the Roman Church. He had taken courage from
the example of the Lutheran laymen at Augsburg and was bolstered by Martin Luther
personally, who continued to encourage him to remain strong.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession is the longest and most detailed con-
fession in the Book of Concord. It carefully works through the Roman response to
the Augsburg Confession, refuting errors and setting forth the truth. The driving
force in the Apology is the repeated insistence that the Bible’s most important and
comforting teaching is justification by grace alone, through faith alone, on account
of Christ alone. Again and again, Melanchthon returns to this teaching.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession was first released as Melanchthon’s per-
sonal opinion, since it was not formally adopted by the Lutheran princes in Augs-
burg. It soon became popular throughout Lutheran Germany. Justas Jonas, colleague
and friend of both Luther and Melanchthon, prepared the German translation of the
Apology. In 1531, the Smalcaldic League, an organization of German territories and
cities, was formed. A requirement of membership was acceptance of both the Augs-
burg Confession and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession. In 1533, in a letter to
Christians in Leipzig, Luther urged them to “adhere to our [Augsburg] Confession
and apology.” In 1577, the Apology was included in the Formula of Concord’s list of
doctrinal statements.

The translation is from the 1584 Latin edition of the Book of Concord, which was
the base text for the Apology in the Concordia Triglotta. See the User’s Guide on
page xxvii for details about the use of brackets and symbols. Please note that
in the longer articles of the Apology some subheads are added for the con-
venience of the reader.

Justas Jonas (1493–1555)

Justas Jonas was a close friend and ally of Martin Luther. He came to Wittenberg in
1521 to lead the Foundation of All Saints at the Castle Church and helped Luther
end this last bastion of Romanism in Wittenberg. With Luther, Bugenhagen, and
Melanchthon, Jonas produced the Torgau Articles, a predecessor of the Augsburg
Confession. He was at Luther’s side when he died in 1546. Jonas translated the Apo-
logy into German. (Melanchthon affirmed his work.) He translated many of Luther’s
Latin writings into German.
### TIMELINE

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<td>1531</td>
<td>Augsburg Confession and Apology published, April–May; Apology's second edition published, September</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Smalcaldic League formed, requires acceptance of Augsburg Confession and Apology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ulrich Zwingli dies on Swiss battlefield at Kappel am Albis</td>
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<td>1532</td>
<td>In exchange for religious tolerance, Protestant princes agree to assist Charles V in war against the Turks until religious issues can be resolved by church council and imperial court</td>
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<td>Luther publishes An Admonition to Prayer against the Turks, September</td>
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<td>1533</td>
<td>English King Henry VIII excommunicated</td>
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<td>Luther urges Christians in Leipzig to adhere to Augsburg Confession and Apology</td>
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<td>1534</td>
<td>Luther publishes complete German Bible</td>
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<td>1536</td>
<td>Luther, Melanchthon, and Englishmen Edward Fox and Robert Barnes agree to Wittenberg Articles; rejected by Zwinglians</td>
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### OUTLINE

The outline for the Apology, or “defense,” of the Augsburg Confession has two sets of numbers. Neither set is fully in order because of the way Melanchthon responded to the issues presented by the Pontifical Confutation (see introduction above).

The numbers on the left generally correspond with the articles of the Augsburg Confession. However, note that there is no Article VI, XXV, or XXVI in the Apology, since similar articles were treated together. (The article on “New Obedience” was treated with the article on “Justification”; the article on “Confession” was treated with the article on “Repentance”; and the article on “The Distinction of Meats” was treated with the article on the “The Mass.”)

The numbers on the right, in parentheses, show which articles were disputed by the Pontifical Confutation. The section on “Confession and Satisfaction” is marked in some editions as Article VI.

Greeting

I. God

II. Original Sin (I)

III. Christ

IV. Justification (II)

What Is Justifying Faith?

Faith in Christ Justifies

We Obtain Forgiveness of Sins through Faith Alone in Christ

[Scripture Affirms This Teaching]

[The Church Fathers Affirm This Teaching]

[The Adversaries Reject This Teaching]

V. Love and Fulfilling the Law (III)

[No One Can Keep the Law Perfectly]
[Church Fathers and St. Paul Affirm Justification through Faith]
Reply to the Adversaries’ Arguments
[Passages the Adversaries Misuse]
[The Adversaries’ Teaching Based on Reason and the Law]
[Results of the Adversaries’ Teaching]
[Salvation Is by God’s Mercy]
[The Adversaries’ Other Arguments]
[Conclusion]
VII./VIII. The Church (IV)
IX. Baptism
X. The Holy Supper
XI. Confession
XIIa. Repentance (V)
[The Two Parts of Repentance]
[Scriptural Proofs]
[Forgiveness of Sins Received by Faith]
[Faith and Repentance]
XIIb. Confession and Satisfaction (VI)
[Misuses of Scripture]
[Additional False Teachings]
[True Repentance Produces Good Works]
XIII. The Number and Use of the Sacraments (VII)
XIV. Order in the Church
XV. Human Traditions in the Church (VIII)
XVI. Political Order
XVII. Christ’s Return for Judgment
XVIII. Free Will
XIX. The Cause of Sin
XX. Good Works
XXI. The Invocation of Saints (IX)
XXII. Both Kinds in the Lord’s Supper (X)
XXIII. The Marriage of Priests (XI)
[Arguments for the Marriage of Priests]
[Conclusion]
XXIV. The Mass (XII)
What Is a Sacrifice, The Kinds of Sacrifice
What the Fathers Thought about Sacrifice
The Use of the Sacrament and of the Sacrifice
The Term Mass
[The Mass for the Dead]
XXVII. Monastic Vows (XIII)
XXVIII. Church Authority (XIV)
The Apology of the Augsburg Confession

Philip Melanchthon Presents
His Greeting to the Reader

1 After our princes’ Confession was read publicly, certain theologians and monks prepared a “Confutation.” His Imperial Majesty had it read in the assembly of the princes. Then he demanded that the princes agree with it.

2 Our princes heard that many articles were not approved, which they could not abandon without offense to conscience. Therefore, they asked for a copy of the Confutation so they could see what the adversaries condemned and refute their arguments.

3 In such an important matter of religion and the instruction of consciences, they thought that the adversaries would share their writing without any hesitation.

4 But our princes could only get a copy under the most dangerous conditions, which were impossible for them to accept.

5 Negotiations for peace were begun. It was clear that our princes avoided no burden, however grievous, that could be borne without offense to conscience. But the adversaries stubbornly demanded that we approve certain clear abuses and errors. Since we could not do this, His Imperial Majesty again demanded that our princes agree with the Confutation. Our princes refused to do so.

6 For in a matter of religion, how could our princes agree with a writing they had not seen, especially since they had heard some articles condemned? It was impossible for them, without grievous sin, to approve the adversaries’ opinions.

7 They commanded me and some others to prepare an Apology of the Confession. This would be set forth for His Imperial Majesty the reasons why we could not receive the Confutation. The adversaries’ objections would also be refuted. During the reading [of the Confutation] some of us had taken down the chief points of the topics and arguments. The princes offered this Defense to His Imperial Majesty when they left Augsburg, so that he would know that we were hindered from approving the Confutation by the greatest and most important reasons. But His Imperial Majesty did not receive the offered writing.

8 Afterward, a decree was published in which the adversaries boast that they have refuted our Confession from the Scriptures.

9 Reader, you now have our Apology. From it you will understand not only what the adversaries said about our Confession (for we have reported in good faith), but also that—contrary to the clear Scripture of the Holy Spirit—they condemned several articles. That is how far they are from overthrowing our statements by means of the Scriptures.

10 Originally we drew up the Apology after consulting with others. Yet, as it passed through the press, I made some additions. That is why I give my name, so that no one can complain that the book has been published anonymously.

11 In these controversies, as far as I was able at all, it has always been my custom to keep the traditional form of doctrine. I did this so that at some time unity could be reached more readily. I am not departing far from this custom now, even though I could justly
lead people today even farther away from the opinions of the adversaries.

The adversaries are dealing with these issues in a way that shows they are seeking neither truth nor concord, but to drain our blood.

I have written with the greatest moderation possible. If any expression appears too severe, I must say that I am arguing with the theologians and monks who wrote the Confutation, not with the emperor or the princes, whom I hold in due esteem. I recently saw the Confutation and noticed how cunningly and slanderously it was written, so that on some points it could deceive even the cautious.

Yet I did not discuss all their sophistries, for it would be an endless task. Instead I deal with the chief arguments, so that all nations will have a clear testimony from us that we hold the Gospel of Christ correctly and piously. Disagreement does not delight us, neither are we indifferent to our danger. We readily understand the extent of it when we see how inflamed our adversaries are by bitterness and hatred. Yet we cannot abandon truth that is clear and necessary for the Church.

That is why we believe that troubles and dangers for Christ’s glory and the Church’s good should be endured. We are confident that God approves our faithfulness to duty. We hope that the judgment of future generations about us will be more just.

It is undeniable that many topics of Christian doctrine, whose place in the Church is most important, have been brought to view and explained by our theologians. We are not inclined to repeat here under what sort of opinions, and how dangerously, these topics used to lay buried in the writings of the monks, canonists, and sophistic theologians.

We have the public testimony of many good men, who give thanks to God for this great blessing: our Confession teaches many necessary things better than any of our adversaries’ books.

We will commend our cause to Christ, who will someday judge these controversies. We beg Him to look upon the afflicted and scattered churches and to bring them back to godly and continuous harmony.

Apology of the Augsburg Confession

ARTICLE I

God

Note: Lutherans clearly identify themselves with the historic Church of all times and places by confessing the biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity and by rejecting the teachings of all those who deny the one, true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (See the Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds; AC I; SA I; SC II; LC II.)

Our adversaries approve Article I of our Confession, in which we declare that we believe and teach that there is one divine, undivided essence. Yet, there are three distinct persons, of the same divine essence, and co-eternal: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We have always taught and defended this article. We believe that it has sure and firm testimonies in Holy Scripture that cannot be overthrown. We constantly affirm that those thinking otherwise are outside of Christ’s Church, are idolaters, and insult God.
ARTICLE I. GOD

God Creates the World

The Fall
ARTICLE II (I)
Original Sin

Note: By the sixteenth century, Roman theologians had come to view original sin merely as a weakness in human nature. The Scriptures, however, teach that original sin is the absence of original righteousness and the root cause of all sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. Original sin damns a person to hell, the Bible asserts, so clear definitions were needed. Rome sought some way to preserve mankind’s ability to choose God’s grace and cooperate with it. So it regarded concupiscence, the powerfully strong tendency in us to sin, not as sin, but as mere tinder (Latin: fomes), which could ignite into sinful behavior. The Bible, as the Lutherans were concerned to prove, also names as sin our inborn tendency to sin.

Article II of the Apology is essential for understanding what follows in Articles III and IV. Melanchthon points out the key comforting truth of God's Word: In Christ, God removes the condemnation of all sin, including concupiscence. He does so by forgiving us our sins through Christ’s blood and by applying to us Christ’s righteousness, holiness, and innocence. So, while in this life sin remains, the Holy Spirit continually brings it under check, beats it down and kills it, and works within us to increase and strengthen our faith in God and love for our neighbor. (See AC II; SA III I; FC Ep I and SD I.)

The adversaries approve Article II, “Original Sin,” but in such a way that they actually condemn our definition of original sin, which we gave in passing. Here, right at the outset, Your Majesty will discover that the Confutation’s writers were lacking not only judgment, but also honesty. We simply wanted to mention the things that original sin includes. But these men, by creating a misleading interpretation, cleverly twist a statement that in itself contains nothing wrong. So they say, “To lack fear of God and to lack faith is actual guilt.” Therefore, they deny it is original sin.

Clearly, these sorts of subtleties start in the schools, not in the emperor’s council. Even though such sophistry can be easily refuted, we ask that the Augsburg Confession in German be examined, so that all good people will understand that we do not teach anything absurd in this matter. This will free us from the suspicion of teaching something new. For there it is written:

It is further taught that since Adam’s fall all human beings, who are naturally conceived, are born in sin. From their mother’s womb they are all filled with evil desire and the inclination toward evil. By nature, they have no true fear of God and no true faith in God.

As this passage demonstrates, we teach that those who are born according to the fleshly nature have concupiscence. This means people not only lack fear and trust in God, but also do not even have the power or gifts to produce fear and trust in God. What fault can be found with this point? Indeed, we think that we have explained and defended ourselves well enough to good men. For in this sense the Latin description denies to nature the ability, gifts, and energy to produce fear and trust in God. In adults, we deny the ability actually to do anything truly good. So, when we mention concupiscence, we understand not only the acts or fruit, but also the constant inclination of the nature.

Now we will show more fully that our description agrees with the usual and ancient definition. First, we must show why we prefer to use these words in this place. In their schools, the adversaries confess that “the material” (as they call it) “of original sin is con-
Luther’s Exhortation to the Clergy in Augsburg, 1530

Editorial Introduction

The Exhortation to the Clergy Assembled at the Diet at Augsburg was Martin Luther’s first work from the Coburg Fortress after he arrived there, where he stayed during the Diet of Augsburg. It was as far as Luther could go in Saxony without leaving it. And since Luther was still both a public criminal and a heretic, as a result of the Imperial and Papal edicts against him, leaving Saxony would have been risky, since it was only in Saxony that his prince, the elector John the Steadfast, would be able to protect him from arrest, trial, and quite probably, execution.

On April 15, 1530, the elector of Saxony arrived at Coburg, with his retinue, on his way to the Diet of Augsburg. One of the major purposes of this diet, as announced by the emperor, was to reconcile religious differences and bring Germany to religious unity. With this end in view, he had called upon the “estates” to be ready to express their views on the religious questions then dividing the empire. The elector of Saxony, therefore, took with him as advisers the leaders of religious thought in his dominions—Luther, Melanchthon, Spalatin, Justus Jonas, and Agricola. They had already discussed a confession of faith that might be presented at the diet and had agreed upon a part, at least, of its contents, though its final form had not been determined and the Augsburg Confession was not finished until immediately before its presentation, on June 25. The elector’s party remained at Coburg for a week, and then it moved on toward Augsburg, leaving Luther behind. He was under the ban of the empire, and it was not safe to take him farther. On April 23, he took up his residence at the castle—Feste Coburg—where he remained while the diet was in session. During this period of enforced retirement, he had leisure for writing. He began work on the Exhortation as soon as he was settled in the castle.

On April 29, he wrote to Melanchthon that the work was growing under his hands. On May 12, he sent the manuscript to Wittenberg to be printed. Before the end of the month, it was off the press, and before June 7, it was on sale in Augsburg, where one bookseller disposed of five hundred copies in a few days; “Everybody is reading it,” wrote Justus Jonas to Luther on June 12. Cardinal Campeggio ordered it translated into Latin, though we do not know whether the work was ever done. The man who had been commissioned to make the translation wrote to a friend on June 21, “It is a summary of all Lutheranism. If you would know the whole Luther, you would better buy it.”

This treatise may be regarded as Luther’s own Augsburg Confession. Not only was it written at the same time as the Confession presented at Augsburg, but it deals with
many of the subjects that the Confession treats, especially in the section that deals with abuses in the Church. It reveals Luther's mind on those subjects far more plainly than does the work of the more diplomatic and careful Melanchthon. The material is quite evidently suggested by the Torgau Articles, which had been agreed upon as a basis of a confession of faith by Luther, Melanchthon, and others at a conference held at Torgau on March 20. The latter part of the work is based on notes that Luther apparently made in connection with the conference at Torgau.

To All the Clergy Assembled in Augsburg
at the Diet in the year 1530.

Exhortation of Martin Luther

Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not fitting, Dear Sirs, that I should appear in person at this diet; and even though I had to appear, or were to do so, it would serve no useful purpose, for it would make no difference amid all the splendor and bustle.

Nevertheless, beside my spiritual presence (which I will prove with all my heart and with God's help, through my diligent and earnest prayers and supplications to my God) I have undertaken to be among you with this mute and feeble written message.

The reason is that my conscience drives me to pray, beseech, and exhort each and all of you, in the kindliest way and from the heart, that you will not pass this diet by or use it to vain purposes. For God, through our most gracious Emperor Charles, is giving you grace, chance, time, and cause to accomplish much that is great and good by means of this diet, if only you have the will to do so. He is speaking now as Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 6:1: “I exhort you that ye receive not the gift of God in vain.”

For He says, “I have heard thee in an accepted time, and helped thee on the day of salvation.” “Behold, now is an accepted time and a day of salvation,” especially for you. And we see and hear how the hearts of all men are set upon this diet, and expect, with high hope, that good will come out of it.

If, however, this diet shall break up without result (which may God graciously forbid!) and nothing worthwhile be accomplished, after all the world has for a long while been fed with false hopes and put off by diets and councils, and that hope has all been false and vain, it is to be feared that despair will be bred, and everyone will become overtired of false hopes and delays, and the long, fruitless waiting will produce impatience and make bad blood. For things cannot longer stay as they now are, especially with you and your class; you know and feel that better than I can tell you. I am therefore doing what now I do, for your own good and for the sake of peace and unity.

Certain ones, perhaps, will look with evil eyes on my presumption, and say, “Who needs you? Whoever asked for your exhortation or your writing? There are many learned and pious people here who can give better advice in this matter than a fool like you.” Ah, well! I shall willingly believe this.
God help that it may all be true! I am quite willing that my presumption shall be criticized and condemned. But it is also true that one cannot do too much of a good thing, and a fool has often given better counsel than many wise men, while the greatest wrongs on earth have usually been done by wise people, especially when they relied on their own wisdom and did not act in the fear of God, and did not pray with humble hearts for divine help and grace.

All the histories are full of illustrations of this, both in the Scriptures and out of them; but even though there were no other illustration of it, we could find a good one in yourselves. For ten years now, you have tried your wisdom on this matter, with so many diets, with so many proposals, with so many wiles and tricks, with so much holding out of false hopes, nay, even with force and wrath, with murder and punishment, so that I have seen in you a cause for wonder and woe; and yet the matter has never gone the way you wanted it. That is the whole thing! Wisdom has wanted to control such high and great matters by itself, without fear of God and humble prayer, and has come to shame in its presumption. And if you do not come to fear God and to humble yourselves before Him, so that you cease from threatening and vengefulness and ask God earnestly for help and counsel, you shall still accomplish nothing, though you were as wise as King Solomon; for there stands the Scripture, 1 Peter 5, “God resists the proud, but to the humble He gives His grace.”

We, for our part, pray with diligence; we also know the right way to pray for God's grace, and we are certain, too, that our prayer is acceptable and is heard. This, I fear, only few of your party can do. Moreover, we have now begun to pray earnestly for you, that God Almighty may for once enlighten your hearts and move them to fear His Word and to walk humbly with Him. Such prayer is accepted for us—that we know; but may God grant that you do not set yourselves stubbornly against it, so that our prayer must return again into our bosom because it has been lost and despised among you! For we see that the devil is trying to bring on the Turks, and is stirring up one disturbance after another, and would like to smash everything. If, then, you were still to be hard of heart and continue to be as stubborn as heretofore, that would be too much and altogether intolerable.

To begin with, then, you need not take any action because of me or the likes of me. The true Helper and Counselor has brought us and our cause so far, and has put it where it is to stay and where we want to leave it, so that for ourselves we need no diet, no counsel, no settling of the matter; and we would not have these things come from you, because we know that you can do no better than we; nay, not so well as we. For whether we come under Turks or Tartars, under pope or devil, our cause is secure; so that we know how to believe and live, how to suffer and pray, how to get well and to die, where we are to look for and get and find everything, and where we are at last to abide, according to the word of St. Paul in Romans 8:28: “To the elect the Spirit does all things for the best.”

These things God has given us in rich measure through Jesus Christ our Lord, and they have already been proclaimed and confirmed (Philippians 3:16) by the blood and
Editor’s Introduction

The wording of the Augsburg Confession was, in large part, prepared in response to the vitriolic attack of John Eck against Luther and the Lutheran reformers. John Eck had prepared this attack for the Diet of Augsburg at the command of Emperor Charles V. Eck was Martin Luther’s most zealous opponent. Even as Luther and his colleagues believed it to be their duty to speak out against the errors and abuses of the Roman Church of their day, so Eck believed it his duty to defend the Holy Mother Church against Luther and other emerging reformers, such as Zwingli. While Eck attacks as many others as he can think of, it is Luther who is his real target, and, as his cover letter makes clear, it is to Luther that he attributes all the errors of everyone involved in the reforming movement.

These theses are an important insight into the attitudes of the Roman Church and provide important context for understanding the Augsburg Confession. Eck was also the chief author of the Confutation of the Augsburg Confession, to which the Apology of the Augsburg Confession is a reply.

The style of this document is a bit difficult, since what Eck is doing is recounting, with separate paragraphs, the alleged errors of his opponents at different times, in differing circumstances and on a wide variety of topics. Eck’s assertions are a mixture or rumor, myth and fact, generally asserted with no citations and nearly always taken completely out of context. This is more a work of propaganda than theology. He pauses to interject comments and then moves on to his next set of assertions, or theses.

Reading through Eck’s accusations is an illuminating exercise, since it presents the points at which Rome was disagreeing with Luther and illuminates the depth of the Roman Catholic misunderstanding of the position of the Lutherans.

Also to be noted is how Eck attempts to lump all the reforming movements together, identifying as a group Luther and Zwingli, men who were sharply at odds with each other.
In fulfilling the duty you have assigned me, I have selected a topic pertaining to
the history of the preparation of the earliest and most fundamental Confession
of Protestant Christianity, the Augsburg Confession. It is my purpose to estimate
the influence, upon its final form, of a document the Lutheran reformers found in
circulation on their arrival at Augsburg more than seven weeks before the Confession
was presented by the Evangelical princes to Emperor Charles V.

On March 11, 1530, John, the Electoral Duke of Saxony, received at his residence
in Torgau an imperial citation, issued from Bologna, January 21, and transmitted by the
Imperial Chancellor from Spires, February 20, summoning him to appear at Augsburg,
April 8th. The announced purpose was to deliberate concerning war against the Turks
and the religious dissensions that were disturbing the peace of the empire. No time
was lost. The very next day found the Electoral Council occupied with plans for the
journey, the selection of those who were to be asked to accompany the elector, and
the providing of the funds necessary for what was to be an expensive undertaking.
Saxon Chancellor Dr. George Bruck gave a written opinion concerning topics to be
considered, and, two days later, followed this by another, urging the importance of
carrying with them to Augsburg a carefully elaborated memorandum concerning the
religious questions involved, accompanied with scriptural arguments.

On the same day, March 14, the elector of Saxony wrote to Luther, Justin Jonas,
Bugenhagen, and Melanchthon, informing them of the summons he had received,
and enjoining them, forsaking all other duties, to apply themselves at once to the
preparation of such a memorandum. In this letter, the topics to be comprised are
restricted to those concerning where there had been dissensions. The design was to
exhibit not the agreements but the points of difference between those whom the elector
was to represent and the opponents of the Reformation. The correspondence shows
very clearly that the elector was feeling his way and wanted to be prepared for any
emergency. For this purpose, he directed Luther, Jonas, and Melanchthon to arrange for their absence from the university, Melanchthon to accompany him to Augsburg, and Luther and Jonas as far on the way as circumstances might advise. They were informed also that other states summoned to the Diet would appoint representatives from their theologians to cooperate. “Since among the subjects to be discussed,” he says, “one is with respect to the dissension concerning our Christian religion, it is important that a statement or opinion be first discussed and determined among the states themselves,” and this statement is to include “the matters both in faith and in outward Church ceremonies concerning which there is dissent.” “In this way, before the Diet begins, a decision may be reached as to how far we and the other states that have received the pure doctrine can, with a good conscience, endure prevalent abuses.”

The Wittenberg theologians were instructed to complete their memorandum by March 20, and to hand it on that day to the elector at Torgau. They at once gave all their time to the work committed to them, but it was April 3 before they came to the elector at Torgau, just in time to leave with him next day for Augsburg. The result of their labors up to that time had been no finished document, but a collection of unequally elaborated notes on some points, indicating by mere catchwords matters that might be included. There is a difference of opinion as to whether, with these notes, the Schwabach Articles of 1529 were also included in the material provided for the elector. A long delay occurred at Coburg, where Luther was left on April 23, to remain until after the adjournment of the Diet. Here also the elector received important suggestions as to the contents of the proposed document from a commissioner, Hans von Dolzig, whom he had sent for conference to the Count of Nassau. In his communication, the need of a positive doctrinal statement, beside an elaborate enumeration of abuses, is urged. The stay of a day at Nürnberg doubtless impressed upon them the importance of repudiating certain extremists from whom the churches there had recently suffered.

The Saxons had the honor of being the first participants in the Diet to reach Augsburg. They entered May 2; the emperor did not appear until June 15. The interval gave time for perfecting their plans. Even before the arrival of the other Protestant princes and representatives, Melanchthon resumed the work that had been interrupted by the journey. The revision of the memorandum in accordance with the new conditions he found at Augsburg now occupied all his attention. The preparation of what he calls the “exordium” (i.e., the doctrinal statements preceding the enumeration of abuses complained of) gave him at Augsburg the most concern. The advice of Luther at Coburg was repeatedly sought, and drafts sent to him for his criticism.

When the Saxons had arrived on May 2, they found that, notwithstanding their early appearance, there was one who had anticipated the representatives of the various states, if not in person, nevertheless by his published attacks. The indefatigable opponent of Luther, John Meier von Eck, generally known as Dr. John Eck, Professor at Ingolstadt, once on friendly terms with Luther, until the publication of the Ninety-five Theses, which he answered with his “Obelisks,” regarding himself as the chief support of the Papacy in its struggle in Germany, was on the scene. He had prepared and