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## • Historical Introduction •

Martin Luther's study of the Bible in the years leading up to 1517 caused him to see God's grace clearly for the first time. He gradually came to see that sinners are saved by the grace of God, as a result of Jesus Christ's perfect life and perfect death on the cross.

When Luther learned this, he came to see more clearly the false teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. False teaching about repentance and forgiveness of sins led Luther to write his Ninety-five Theses. As time went on, he spoke out more and more boldly for reforms. Early in 1521 he was excommunicated from the church. That same year he lost his citizenship in the Holy Roman Empire because of his defense of biblical teaching.

However, Luther's teachings continued to spread throughout Europe. Many attempts were made to reunite the church. The emperor was worried because the Turkish army (made up of Muslims) was attacking Austria and threatening to overrun Europe. The emperor thought that his army could defeat the Turks only if the church was first reunited.

In 1530 Emperor Charles V tried one last time to reunite the followers of Luther with the Roman Catholic Church. He commanded the Lutherans to appear at a *diet* (or council) in the southern German town of Augsburg. Since Luther was still considered an outlaw, he was not able to go. Philip Melancthon took Luther's place as the chief Lutheran theologian.

An official from Saxony wrote the preface. Melancthon wrote the rest of the Augsburg Confession, basing it on other writings of Luther and his followers (the Schwabach Articles, Torgau Articles, and other writings). The first 21 articles (or chapters) explained the faith and doctrine of the Lutherans. These were followed by seven more articles explaining some of the false practices that the Lutherans had corrected.

After much discussion, seven Lutheran princes and representatives of two German cities decided that the Augsburg Confession was an accurate explanation of their faith and practice. The princes and representatives then signed the document to show their approval of it. They were

John, the duke of Electoral Saxony (the territory where Luther lived and worked)

George, a prince of Brandenburg (a territory in northeastern Germany)

Ernest and Francis, both dukes of Lueneberg (a territory in northern Germany)

Philip, ruler of Hesse (a territory in north central Germany)

John Frederick, the duke of Ducal Saxony (a territory east of Luther's part of Saxony)

Wolfgang, prince of Anhalt (a territory north of Saxony)

Representatives of the town council and leaders of Nuremberg (an independent city in southeastern Germany)

Representatives of the town council of Reutlingen (an independent city in southwestern Germany)

The Augsburg Confession was written in both German and Latin (our translation follows the Latin more closely than the German). The German copy was read to the council at Augsburg on June 25, 1530. The Catholics condemned the confession, and they wrote a long response to it. Melancthon then wrote a much longer Apology (meaning "defense") of the Augsburg Confession. This was given to the emperor in September of 1530 and later expanded further by Melancthon.

Years later, Melancthon made significant changes that weakened the truth of the Augsburg Confession, especially in its teaching on the Lord's Supper. After Luther's death these changes caused confusion and conflict among his followers. In 1580 the original Unaltered (unchanged) Augsburg Confession (the version of 1530) and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession were included as part of the *Book of Concord*, the official book of confessions of the Lutheran church.

The translation presented here is based on that of F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau, published in 1921 in the *Concordia Triglotta*. Our version attempts to update the English and simplify it for general congregational use. Marginal notes have been added to explain the technical terms, proper names, and historical references. The sentence numbering of the *Triglotta* has been retained for easy reference.

Today when Lutheran pastors and teachers enter the ministry, they still swear to uphold the teachings of the Bible as explained in the *Book of Concord*, including the Augsburg Confession.

# The Augsburg Confession of 1530

Study edition

## Preface to Emperor Charles V

**1]** All Powerful Emperor, Caesar Augustus, Most Merciful Lord: Your Royal Majesty has called a **council** of the empire here at Augsburg to discuss what to do against the **Turks**, that most fearful and longtime enemy of our Christian name and religion. You wish us to agree on a strong and lasting military action that can successfully defeat their furious attacks. **2]** You also called this meeting to consider the disagreements about our holy religion and Christian faith. In these religious matters you wished the opinions and judgments of the different sides to be heard in each other's presence. **3]** You wanted us to consider and discuss these matters among ourselves with both sides showing love and kindness. Then, you wished us to settle these matters by removing and correcting those things that were described and understood in different ways in the writings of both sides. Only then will Christians again find agreement on a single simple truth. **4]** Christians could then also be able to accept and hold onto one pure and true religion in the future. Since we are all under one Christ and fight under him, we should also be able to live in unity and agreement in the one Christian church.

**5]** We, the undersigned **electors**, princes, and other leaders who joined with us, have been called to this council just like the other electors, princes, and authorities. We have obeyed your royal command and promptly come to **Augsburg**. Although we don't want to boast, we were among the first to arrive.

**6]** Among other things, which at the very beginning of the council Your Royal Majesty proposed to the electors, princes, and other authorities of the empire here at Augsburg, was this: That the various authorities of the empire, in response to your royal decree, should write down and submit their opinions and decisions in both the **German and Latin** languages. **7]** So on the first Wednesday, after careful consideration, we told Your Royal Majesty that we would submit the statements of our side's confession on the following Wednesday. Now, in order to obey Your Royal Majesty's wishes in these religious matters, **8]** we here present the confession of our preachers and of ourselves. This shows what kind of doctrine from the Holy Scriptures and the

**Charles V**—King of Spain; became emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1519.

**council**—A meeting of princes from around Germany; called a *diet*.

**Turks**—Powerful members of the Ottoman Empire were trying to invade Europe at this time. Having already overrun Hungary, they were now threatening Austria. They were seen as an especially dangerous threat since they were Muslims who worshiped Allah rather than the triune God.

**electors**—Two of the German princes were among the seven men who elected the emperor.

**Augsburg**—The city in southern Germany where this meeting was held.

**German and Latin**—Latin was the official language of the empire; but since this was a meeting of German princes, the writings were made available in both languages.

pure Word of God has been preached up to this time in our lands, territories, and cities, and what is taught in our churches.

**9]** The other electors, princes, and authorities of the empire may wish, according to the royal decree mentioned above, to present similar writings in Latin and German, giving their opinions about these religious matters. **10]** If so, then we, with the princes and friends listed above, are prepared for a friendly meeting with them here before Your Royal Majesty, our most merciful lord. We can then discuss all the possible ways and means through which we might be united, as far as this may be done with honor. After this matter has been peacefully discussed between us on both sides without giving offense, may it be brought to an end with God's help, and may we all agree again to one true religion. **11]** For just as we are all under one Christ and fight under his command, we ought to confess the one Christ, in agreement with Your Royal Majesty's decree. Everything ought to be handled in agreement with the truth of God. With earnest prayers, we ask God to do this.

**12]** Now we turn to the other electors, princes, and authorities on the opposing side. Your Royal Majesty has ordered each side to present its case in writing and then to calmly discuss it with each other. But if this produces no progress, or if we reach no solution after handling the matter this way, **13]** at least we will show you clearly that we are making every effort to bring about Christian harmony. And we will do so as far as God and a good conscience allow us. **14]** Your royal majesty and the other electors and authorities of the empire, and everyone who has a sincere love and zeal for religion and who will listen honestly to this matter, will graciously notice and understand our good faith efforts from this **confession** of ours and our associates.

**confession**—Since this document was a confession of faith and teaching, it became known as the Augsburg Confession.

**Council of Speyer**—The council at the city of Speyer in 1526 had decided that each prince could decide whether his territory would be Catholic or Lutheran. A second meeting there in 1529 overturned that decision and again made the Catholic faith the only legal religion.

**general council**—A council of church leaders from all parts of the church.

**15-16]** Your Royal Majesty, not just once but often you graciously informed the electors, princes, and authorities of the empire that in dealing with this religious matter, you were not willing to and would not decide anything on your own. You had this proclaimed publicly in your royal decrees, as well as at the **Council of Speyer** in A.D. 1526. Instead, you used your office to encourage the Roman pope to call a **general council**. **17]** The same thing was announced publicly in greater detail a year ago at the last council at Speyer. **18]** There Your Royal Majesty, through his highness Ferdinand, King of Bohemia and Hungary, our friend and merciful lord, as well as through the official speaker and royal commissioners, had presented the following points, among others: that Your Royal Majesty had read and considered the decision of Your Majesty's representative in the empire, and of the president and royal counselors, and the representatives from other authorities gathered at

**Regensburg** as to the calling of a general council; **19]** that Your Royal Majesty also thought it proper to call a council; and that Your Royal Majesty thought the Roman pope could be persuaded to hold a general council, **20]** because the other matters that needed settling between Your Royal Majesty and the Roman pope were nearing agreement and Christian reconciliation. Therefore, Your Royal Majesty promised that you would yourself try to obtain the pope's consent for calling a general council and that Your Royal Majesty would send out letters to announce it as soon as possible.

**21]** So, if the differences between us and the other parties in this religious matter cannot be settled peacefully and in love, then here, before Your Royal Majesty, we agree to the following. In addition to what we have already done, we will all come and defend our position before such a general, free, Christian council. For at all the royal councils held during Your Majesty's reign, the electors, princes, and other authorities of the empire have voted in favor of calling a general council. **22]** Already previously we have in a lawful manner taken a stand and urged that a general council be called in Your Royal Majesty's presence to settle this most important and serious matter. **23]** We remain firm in seeking support from Your Royal Majesty and in seeking a general council. We do not intend nor would it be possible for us to give up our position by this or any other document, unless the matter between us and the other side is settled in a friendly way, the tensions are lessened, and Christian peace is restored, as called for in your latest royal decree. **24]** We hereby solemnly and publicly testify to this.

**Regensburg**—A city in southern Germany where a royal council was held in 1527.