



THE BOOK OF CONCORD: A SOURCE OF HARMONY

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THE BOOK OF CONCORD: A SOURCE OF HARMONY

Preface

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2005 marks the 475th anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession before Holy Roman Emperor Charles V on June 25, 1530 and the 425th anniversary of the publication of the Book of Concord on June 25, 1575. To commemorate these important occasions, 10 essays prepared by seminary professors and theologians from member churches of the International Lutheran Council have been prepared to present an overview of each of the Book of Concord's component parts. A Spanish translation of these essays has been prepared by Rev. Juan Beckmann from the Evangelical Lutheran church of Argentina.



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THE BOOK OF CONCORD: A SOURCE OF HARMONY

Introduction – Book of Concord

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Concord, harmony, is a good title and topic for a book. The Lutheran Confessions, formulated over years and first collected and published in 1580, provide a formula for ongoing concord in our joint walk (synod) as Lutheran Christians.

Historically confessions served three functions. They identify, clarify, and unify. The same principles still apply for Lutherans who worship all around the world.

The “we believe, teach and confess” of the Confessions answer the question, “What does it mean to be Lutheran?” As a particular symbol (sign, watchword, creed) the confessions mark the identity by which people know the Lutheran communion of believers. Their “here I stand” tone reflects a common subscription to them because they are a true exposition of the Bible. The Lutheran Confessions announce to the world that we are neither Reformed nor Roman Catholic, nor anything else. We are Lutherans. We are unique or distinct. Other church bodies may hold to justification by faith as a doctrine, without which the Church cannot exist, but the place and meaning differ. Lutherans insist that Holy Scriptures can only be properly understood in light of the Gospel. “Consequently, the doctrine of justification is the key which ‘alone opens the door to the whole Bible,’” says Hermann Sasse in *Here We Stand*. The Formula of Concord stresses this high Lutheran view:

“We believe, teach and confess that the gospel is not a proclamation of repentance or retribution, but is, strictly speaking, nothing else than a proclamation of comfort and a joyous message which does not rebuke nor terrify but comforts consciences against the terror of the law, directs them solely to Christ’s merit, and lifts them up



again through the delightful proclamation of the grace and favor of God, won through Christ's merit" (Formula of Concord V,7).

The Lutheran Confessions are deeply concerned about the gospel and eager to see it proclaimed clearly and earnestly. They likewise consider the experience of the individual Christian's faith and repentance, deeds and hopes. Thus the Confessions clarify, as precisely as human language allows, what the Bible teaches about God, sin, Christ, justification, church and ministry, repentance, the sacraments, free will, good works and other articles of faith. They identify abuses in doctrine and practice, and most clearly state what Lutherans do not believe, teach, and confess. They are declarations of belief, making clear that Lutherans have convictions which are not open to question.

The Confessions clarify the Lutheran concern that only the Word be taught. Theologian Ernst Kinder noted, "Our preaching must be actually addressed to modern man, but it must be identical in its essence with the preaching of the apostles and prophets! It is this which the confessional statement sets forth." One response to Jesus' directive to make disciples by baptizing and teaching was the development of creeds and rules of faith to clarify the gospel truths upon which the Christian church is founded.

As Luther's Bible united Germans, so the Confessions united Lutherans. In *Studies in the Lutheran Confessions*, Willard Allbeck notes, "The Confessions were, or became, the voice of a group, of a movement to which many persons were committed." Within the boundaries of Lutheranism, the Confessions constitute the basis for Lutheran unity.

"The Lutheran Confessions are those writings which Lutherans in the sixteenth century acknowledged as accurate formulations of their beliefs. Although not all persons who considered themselves Lutherans approved all these documents or agreed as to the precise text, there was, and continues to be, sufficient consensus to permit the designation of the documents as Lutheran confessions. The collection of these doctrinal formulations in one volume bears the name Concordia or Book of Concord." (Allbeck)

Preceded by other writings and collections, the Book of Concord soon became the standard in confrontations with Roman Catholics or Calvinists. Where a Lutheran position seemed unclear or uncertain, the Book of Concord became a reference for the authentic Lutheran view. Whereas the writings of Luther, as notable as they are, reveal the insights of one man, the Confessions are classical expressions of evangelical theology on the whole. They state the full meaning of the doctrine of salvation.

The gospel is good news to be communicated—a message received and handed on. A Christian of necessity must teach a doctrine, bearing witness to the content of the

faith and making known the word of God. The Lutheran Confessions serve this missionary purpose well. We may continually say with the apostle Paul, “What I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3).

Lutheran Church-Canada (LCC) was founded in 1988 when the Canadian congregations of St. Louis-based The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod decided to form an autonomous Canadian church. LCC has 326 congregations, two seminaries, a university college and a network of 14 elementary and high schools. The almost 80,000 baptized members support mission activity in Nicaragua, Thailand and Ukraine. The Canadian church dates back to 1854 when the first congregations were established in Ontario by LCMS missionaries.





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The Apostles' Creed

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The English word "creed" has its roots in a Latin word *credo*, meaning, "I believe." In the language of the church a creed is a statement of belief. The oldest creed in common use by the Christian Church today is the Apostles' Creed.

The Apostles did not write the creed that bears their name. It came into being long after their deaths. The creed passed through some stages of development and gradually grew into its present form. It is called "Apostles' Creed" because it sets forth the central teaching and beliefs of the apostles.

The creed was developed out of a number of brief creedal statements in the New Testament. Some of them were used in Public Preaching, Baptism, Catechetical Instruction and worship before being put together as a single creedal statement. Examples of such creedal statements include:

"... I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37 KJV).

"... If you confess with your mouth (that) Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9 NIV).

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men, the testimony given in its proper time" (1 Timothy 2:5-6 NIV).

"Therefore go and make disciples of all Nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19 NIV).



Other creedal statements are found in passages like 1 Corinthians 15:3–4; Philippians 2:10–11; 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:8; 1 John 5:1; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 6:13–14; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4–5.

According to Dr. Robert Kolb, the text of the Apostles' Creed took its present shape in the eighth century. It represented a final revision of the old Roman Creed which was first used in the west in the early third century.

Latourette equally asserted that: "The present form of what we know as the Apostles' Creed probably did not exist before the sixth century. However, the essential core has a much earlier origin. It may go back to an Eastern development of that formula, but more probably it had its inception in Rome. A briefer form, known as the Roman Creed, was in use in the Church of Rome at least as far back as the fourth century."

The present text of the Apostles' Creed can hardly be attributed to a single author. Equally, no council or group of individuals has been identified with its authorship.

The creed was first a baptismal confession and later developed into a statement for the declaration of faith in Christ—"Jesus is the Son of God." In further development it became an apology, a defense of faith in Christ. Later stages saw it become the refutation of heretical teachings such as Gnosticism, Marcionism, Montanism and used for Christological teaching.

The first article of the creed describes God the Father as Almighty, the maker of all things, provider and sustainer of all things.

The second article describes Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit; he suffered, died, was buried, he resurrected and ascended into heaven.

The third article describes the Holy Spirit, the state of the Church as holy, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of all believers and the gift of everlasting life through Christ righteous suffering.

This creed is of great significance to all Lutherans because it confers to us the idea of one God manifested in three different persons—the Trinity. To Lutherans the creed is a true Apostolic confession, teaching and belief. It gives us the knowledge of creation, redemption and sanctification and the gift of eternal life.

My Ibibio tribe in Africa already had the cultural idea of one God in three persons. The Ibibio of old believed in *Abasi Ukot*, *Abasi Eyeyen* and *Abasi Iman*—God of the inlaw, God of the grandchildren and God of the allied, so the creed gained easy acceptance in the Ibibio area because of the tribe's former cultural religious background.

The Lutheran Church of Nigeria started in 1936 with the rural Ibesikpo clan, the late Rev. Dr. Jonathan Udoekong its pioneering father. The Nigerian church has grown from an initial 16 congregations to 339 in 38 districts. The church is established in 15 states of Nigeria and works in a dozen different languages, with English in common. The church has more than 80,000 baptized members.





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The Nicene Creed

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The Nicene Creed, the second confession of the three ecumenical creeds, is more accurately called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. The latter term was first used in the 17th century with a view to fixing the key dates in the development of the creed. The text we now have is a revision made at the Council of Constantinople (AD381). It confesses the one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, protecting the full divinity of the Son, Jesus Christ, addressing the Christological controversy between orthodoxy theologians and the heretic Arians. The relationship between Father and Son within the Trinity is left within the framework of the economy of salvation, by confessing that Jesus Christ is the true Son of the Father, not a new creation.

The Creed's original Greek Creed begins with "We believe," reflecting the council context, but it was later changed in the Latin translation to "I believe," reflecting the liturgical usage. This Latin reading is adopted in the Japanese translation of our liturgy book.

In the fourth century, the Church experienced an important turning point in her history: a new relationship with the Roman Empire and an unavoidable confrontation between Christian faith and Hellenistic culture, especially its philosophy.

While the Christian church was free from outside persecution after Emperor Constantine established Christianity as the imperial religion, it struggled internally for the integrity of the faith against efforts to distort the nature of Christian faith.



The Arians denied the full divinity of the Son Jesus Christ, persisting in their own theory of Subordinationism—the Son, Jesus Christ, is subordinate to the Father. Responding to Arianism, Athanasius and other orthodox theologians saw that it was threatening the essence of the Christian truth and defended that the Son must be of “one substance with the Father.”

In 325 Constantine called the first ecumenical council at Nicea to formulate the creed of Christian faith. The council formulated and published its statement. The Council of Constantinople (381) found in the Nicene Council a standard of orthodoxy and confirmed its creed with some expansion. Chalcedon validated both decisions in 451.

The Nicene Creed follows the basic outline of the so-called Old Roman Confession familiar to us as the Apostles’ Creed. Adapting a baptismal creed, similar either to one presented by Eusebius of Caesarea or to a creed of Jerusalem (according to Kolb and Wengert), the Council added some anti-Arian phrases such as: begotten, not made and the so-called *homoousios* (of one being with the Father), because the Arians denied that the Son is eternal. The chief concern of the Nicene Council was protecting the divinity of the Son, Jesus Christ. This was made clear by a series of such additional statements.

In AD 381 the Council of Constantinople expanded the third article (on the Holy Spirit), confessing that the Holy Spirit is to be worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son.

Concerning the proceeding of the Holy Spirit, the so-called *filioque* (and from the Son) was later added by the Western church to the third article against the continued influence of Arianism. This addition triggered a Trinitarian controversy between Western and Eastern theology. While the former insisted that the addition clearly reflected the true unity of the Trinity, the latter insisted on its omission. The controversy caused the Great Schism in the 11th century.

The Nicene Creed is a climax in the process of the confrontation between Christian faith and Hellenistic philosophy. It overcame a Hellenization that might have distorted Christianity. Behind any formulations of Christian dogma are influences from its contemporary thought and historical conditions. We have to see through the tradition to truth behind them. The Nicene Creed is significant today because it established the divinity of the Son, Jesus Christ, rather than him simply being a historic figure, or great man, or prophet or charismatic leader as humanists would view Him. But however great Jesus is, He cannot save us if He were only a human being. He is the unique Saviour because He is the true God and true man as the Chalcedonian Definition specifies.

As the Nicene Creed proclaims that Jesus Christ is one being with the Father, we believe in the one God. The one God speaks to us in Jesus Christ. God revealed



Himself through the divine Word, Jesus Christ, once for all, in a way never to be surpassed. The Nicene Creed is accepted today as the essence of Christian faith, proclaiming the unity of the Trinitarian God and the reliable uniqueness of the Saviour.

The mission of the **Japan Lutheran Church** began in September 1948, with the official installation of the first missionary by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod World Mission. In 1968, the self-governing Japan Lutheran Church was established and it became self-supporting in 1976. JLC maintains a close relationship with LCMS through joint projects. The church has almost 3,000 baptized members.





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The Athanasian Creed

By Rev. Reg Quirk

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The Athanasian Creed is the third and longest of the “ecumenical creeds,” those statements of faith widely confessed by Christians of many denominations. Most of us know it best from the custom of using this creed during the service on the Festival of the Holy Trinity.

The precise origins of the creed are somewhat obscure. It was probably written in Southern Gaul (France) at some time in the late fifth or early sixth centuries, but we do not know the name of the author.

Just as the Apostles’ Creed is so named, not because it was written by the apostles, but because it faithfully summarizes their teaching, so the Athanasian creed accurately portrays the position of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, who defended the orthodox view in the great fourth century controversy over the proper understanding of Christ.

We can divide the creed into two parts. The first portion deals with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and the second with the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ. In each case the creed addresses specific errors.

As regards the Trinity, two heresies are tackled, Sabellianism and Arianism. The former bears the name of the third century teacher Sabellius, who taught that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are merely three manifestations of the one God, so that at one time He appears as Father, then at another as Son and at yet another as Spirit. The creed condemns this error as “confounding the persons” of



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the Trinity. Arianism developed from the teaching of Arius in the fourth century that the Son is created and inferior to the Father. This error the creed condemns as “dividing the substance” of the Trinity, stressing that each person is uncreated, each is infinite and each is eternal.

Concerning the incarnation of our Lord, the Athanasian Creed appears to be responding to the danger of Nestorianism. This heresy derives its name from Nestorius, who was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431 for distinguishing the human and divine natures of Christ to the point where he appears to teach that there are two distinct persons. So the creed affirms that “although He is God and man, He is nevertheless not two but one Christ.”

It is possible the creed also has in mind Eutychianism, which goes back to Eutyches in the fifth century. He was so zealous in countering Nestorianism that he was accused of confessing only one nature of Christ, and allowing no room for His humanity. Again the creed declares our Lord Jesus Christ to be “equally both God and man...God from the Father’s substance, man from His mother’s substance”.

The creed’s value is in clearly explaining the Bible’s revelation about the triune God and about the incarnation of Christ. In this it is as relevant and valid today as ever it was. Many Christians, however, feel uncomfortable about confessing the creed in church. There are two reasons for this.

First, the impersonal and philosophical language it uses to describe God, and perhaps especially Jesus, is incongruent with the intimate and personal relationship to which we are invited in Scripture. However, the creed is forced into such precise formulations to resist those false ideas that would rob Jesus of His humanity (Eutychianism), or of His individuality (Nestorianism), or of His proper divinity (Arianism) or would rationalise away what the true God has disclosed about Himself as distinct from every human speculation about our Maker (Sabellianism). Although the names of these “isms” are drawn from centuries past, their ideas are destined to resurface in any generation because they are all, in their way, reasonable and rational, although wrong.

More seriously, Christians may be troubled by the dire warnings this creed pronounces upon those who depart from its teachings. For it says that in order to be saved one must hold the catholic faith it expounds both about the Trinity and about the Incarnation. We might react, this goes well beyond the requirements set down in the reassuring words of St. Paul, “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9, RSV). But the errors rejected in this creed attack the very confession that Jesus *is* Lord. Each one threatens the truth “that *God was in Christ*, reconciling the world unto himself” (2Corinthians 5:19, KJV). The Athanasian Creed is the guardian of this saving truth.



The **Evangelical Lutheran Church of England** began in 1896, when six young bakers from Germany requested a pastor from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, each pledging 20 percent of their income to support him. Their congregations, first in Kentish Town and then also in Tottenham quickly became bilingual and then fully English-speaking, recognizing the importance of the local language for the mission of the church. From 1954 mission activity began in other parts of Great Britain. The church is now spread throughout England, Scotland and Wales. Initially pastors were called from overseas to serve these missions, but increasingly the church looked to its seminary program at Westfield House in Cambridge to supply its pastors. The church has almost 1,500 baptized members.





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The Augsburg Confession of 1530

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Peace/Trinity, Trail/Fruitvale, B.C. Canada

The Augsburg Confession is one of the confessional symbols that identify the Evangelical Lutheran Church. It is like the church's "birth certificate" because it summarizes what Lutherans believe and teach. It shows that the Lutheran Church is an apostolic church, and faithfully and genuinely teaches God's Word and administers the Sacraments in conformity with Christ's institution.

Twenty-five years after Columbus discovered America (1492), Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenburg, Germany. This act, which occurred on October 31, 1517, was the "kick-off" for the Reformation. In the following years other groups arose opposing the Pope (Reformed and radical groups), but Luther and his followers could not come to agreement with them on a number of important doctrinal aspects.

Meanwhile Emperor Charles V, ruler of the greater part of Europe, was seeking unity in his territories to demonstrate a common front against the Turkish advance on Europe. To that end, Charles wanted to end the religious discord that had grown since Luther. In 1530 he summoned all the princes and representatives to the Diet of Augsburg to discuss various issues and reestablish religious peace. His interests, however, were always more political than religious.

The Lutherans already had at hand the *Torgau Articles* which dealt with the abuses and corrupt practices of the Church of Rome and the *Schwabach Articles* addressing



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various points of doctrine. Immediately upon arriving in Augsburg, however, they were confronted with the *404 Propositions Against the Lutheran Heresy* written by John Eck, a Catholic enemy of Luther. The document cited Luther and Phillip Melanchthon out of context, making the Lutherans appear as Anabaptists and guilty of committing every other existing heresy. Therefore the Lutherans resolved to prepare a new document. This document, based on the two previous documents, would demonstrate the harmony between the Lutheran teachings and the early church, and distinguish Lutheran teachings from other Protestant ideas, especially those of the Anabaptists. Thus the Augsburg Confession, written in a conciliatory manner with respect to the Catholics, emphasized the points of agreement with Rome, though clearly noted the differences and abuses. Philip Melanchthon was the principal writer.

The Augsburg Confession was signed by the Lutheran princes and read before the Diet of Augsburg on June 25, 1530. The document contains 28 articles. Articles one to twenty-one present fundamental biblical doctrines. Articles twenty-two to twenty-eight treat some of the more serious abuses that were current in the Roman Catholic Church and which the Lutherans had corrected among themselves.

Noteworthy are the doctrine of original sin; salvation and justification by faith alone; the role of Word and Sacrament; a proper understanding of good works; a correct understanding of the Church and its rites.

The Augsburg Confession has a friendly and conciliatory tone. Truth and love, respect for authority, and yet the courage to confess the faith in the face of mortal danger converge in this document. This teaches us to proceed in the same manner today: loving the people, but never renouncing the truth simply to “get along” or for one’s own benefit.

Some matters treated in the Augsburg Confession refer to situations current at the time of its writing. But, in its essence, the situation today is not much different. For this reason the Augsburg Confession has maintained its importance throughout the centuries. It is like a banner that unites us and a rampart that defends us against error. It serves as a base and as an example for the proclamation and confession of our faith today; for seeking the clear witness of God’s truth and opposing, with courage and firmness, the abuses that continue today, not forgetting the ingredient of love along with truth.



La Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina (IELA) was established in 1905 and this year (2005) celebrates its centennial. The first missionaries were pastors from the United States. Since the 1940s the IELA has trained its own pastors at its own seminary. Today, with 30,000 members, the church can see the fruits of its mission activities in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Paraguay (IELPA), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Chile (IELCHI), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Spain (IELE), and in a mission in Uruguay.





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Apology of the Augsburg Confession 1531

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The Apology of the Augsburg Confession is a confessional document of the Lutheran Church written at an extremely critical point in the history of Lutheranism. The very existence of the Lutheran Church was at stake at that time. To understand the nature of the Apology and how it came about we need to go back to the story of the Augsburg Confession. The public reading of the Augsburg Confession at the Diet of Augsburg, Germany, on June 25, 1530, had significant consequences. Many representatives of German territories and cities now became aware that the Lutherans had been slandered and their teachings misrepresented. Many of them now even expressed openly their adherence to the Reformation.

The Emperor Charles V then appointed a group of Roman Catholic theologians to prepare an answer—a confutation—to the Augsburg Confession that would refute conclusively the Lutheran position as stated in their confession of faith. A text prepared by this group, comprised of some of Luther's fiercest opponents, had to be revised before it was considered acceptable by the emperor and the German bishops, princes and estates. On August 3, 1530, the Imperial secretary read the Roman Confutation, written in the name of the Emperor, in the same hall in which the Augsburg Confession had been read thirty-eight days before. The Lutherans were not given a copy of the Confutation. When they persisted in their request for a copy, the emperor agreed to grant it to them under the condition they would not respond to it in print.



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The emperor demanded the Lutherans accept the Confutation. This meant they would have to give up their confession of faith and return to the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The Lutherans were willing to go a long way for the sake of peace, but they were not willing to act against the Gospel and their conscience. Many now feared that war was inevitable. It actually came about, but much later, in 1547.

The Lutherans felt they had to defend their confession of faith and show the Confutation had not disproved their doctrine on the basis of Scripture. But, how could they do this without a copy of the Confutation? During the public reading of the Confutation, some of the Lutherans had written down as much as possible of its main points of argumentation. On the basis of these notes, Phillip Melanchthon and others prepared a first draft of the Apology (defense) of the Augsburg Confession which they had finished by September 20, 1530. Two days later, the Apology was presented to the emperor but he refused to accept it. The Lutherans were then given until April 15, 1531, to consider whether they would return to the Roman Catholic Church.

After the end of the Diet of Augsburg, Melanchthon continued working on the Apology even while on his way back to Wittenberg. He worked on it intensively and without interruption improving it and expanding some of its articles especially the one on justification. As one story has it, once while he was writing during the meal on a Sunday, Luther took the pen from his hand and told him God could be honored not only by work but also by rest and recreation.

Melanchthon, originally intended to make only some additions to the original draft. But as he worked on it the text grew larger. Then, in late October, someone sent him a copy of the Confutation. This enabled him to do a better job answering it. The completion of the work's revision took him much longer than he had initially anticipated and, thus, the publication of the Apology occurred at the end of April or early May 1531.

Melanchthon wrote the Apology in Latin. A German translation, by Justus Jonas with Melanchthon's assistance, appeared six months after the first publication. This was not simply a translation but a new version. The alterations of the original Latin seem to stem from Melanchthon rather than from Jonas. Melanchthon, meanwhile, had prepared a second edition of the Apology which was published in September 1531. The German translation was partly based on this so-called *octavo* edition, because of its format. Luther seems to have been more pleased with this second Latin edition of the Apology than with its first edition.

The Apology is both a refutation of the Confutation and a defense of the Augsburg Confession. It elaborates on several of the articles of the Augsburg Confession but



it is the article on justification which receives the most thorough and extensive treatment.

The doctrine of justification—the first and chief article of our faith, on which stands all that the Lutheran Church teaches—is not only treated most extensively in one article of the Apology but also forms the basis for all the other articles and sets the perspective from which they were written and are to be understood. The truth it embodies and proclaims—that sinners obtain the remission of sins for Christ’s sake, by grace through faith—is what, above all, makes the Apology still relevant and meaningful for Lutherans and non-Lutherans. That is the clear voice of the Gospel brought again to full light in the 16th century and that never grows old or outdated. The Apology in spite of its substantial theological content is not a treatise of abstract theories but is aimed at the believing, teaching and confessing of the Good News, that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior.

The history of the **Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil (IELB – Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil)** starts in the year 1900 when the LCMS sent Rev. Christian J. Broders to survey the mission field in Brazil. He established the first congregation a short time after his arrival and was instrumental in securing more Missouri Synod missionaries for Brazil. These missionaries started a seminary and began publishing a church periodical in 1903. The next year, the new mission became a district of the Missouri Synod and remained as such until 1980. A protocol document signed that year converted the two church bodies into partner churches in God’s mission in the world. Self-support was achieved only in the year 2000. IELB’s 220,000 members share with the members of its sister churches in the ILC the blessing of knowing Christ and the joy of telling others about Him.





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The Smalcald Articles 1537

By Rev. Dr. Dieter Reinstorf

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The Smalcald Articles were written near the end of 1536 by Martin Luther and submitted to the Smalcald League for adoption early in 1537. They were written as a summary of Lutheran doctrine in preparation for the long-awaited general council of the church.

In keeping with the changed historical context, they offered a further correct explanation of the Augsburg Confession. Luther regarded these articles as his “last testament.” Expecting his own death in the near future, he writes in the preface to the articles: “I have decided to publish these articles so that, if I should die before a council meets...those who live after me may have my testimony and confession...to show where I have stood until now and where by God’s grace, I will continue to stand.”

Only when sterner measures failed to dispose of the religious controversy sweeping Germany, Pope Paul III conceded to the emperor’s pressure and called a general council to meet at Mantua, May 8, 1537. It soon became clear that the purpose of the council was not to discuss and arbitrate questions of doctrine and practice, but to utterly extirpate the “poisonous, pestilential Lutheran heresy.” So there were initial reservations expressed about whether the Lutherans should receive and hear the papal legate delivering the invitation. Luther, however, continued voicing his strong desire for such a council to convene. He expressed the need for a clear confession of faith so those still held captive could be equipped to distinguish between error and truth. Imbued by Luther’s spirit, the elector of Saxony, John Frederick, instructed Luther in a letter of December 11, 1536, to prepare a



statement indicating the articles of faith in which concessions might be made for the sake of peace, and the articles in which no concessions could be made. By December 28, 1536, Luther submitted a draft copy to his colleagues in Wittenberg for further review. The first eight signatures were affixed at that time, Philip Melanchthon's with the reservation that the Pope may continue to hold supreme authority over the church given to him by human right if he would accept the Gospel. Seeking wide-ranging consensus, the elector presented the articles to the Smalcald League on February 8, 1537. The league had been formed in 1531 for mutual protection by five princes and eleven cities. It was renewed in 1536 for the following ten years. The hope that the league would endorse Luther's articles was, however, never realized. This was partly because Luther's continued illness prevented him from attending and partly because Melanchthon argued that the articles would precipitate doctrinal dispute among the league members.

Despite not being officially read at the league, the articles were nevertheless subscribed voluntarily at Smalcald (with the exception of the South Germans), and subsequently became known as the Smalcald Articles. In later years the articles were looked upon with growing favor as a witness to genuine Lutheranism, giving expression to the heart of Martin Luther, and as such were incorporated in the Book of Concord.

The Smalcald Articles are grouped in three parts: Part I treats the sublime articles of the divine majesty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This part is short as it refers to teachings where there are no matters of dispute or contention.

Part II discusses the articles referring to the office and work of Jesus Christ, or our redemption. This part contains the chief and principal teachings of Lutheranism on which no concessions can be made. The first of four articles, *Christ and Faith*, proclaims salvation by grace through faith alone, as a free gift from God. It is hailed as the central article on which everything "we teach and practice" rests. The other three articles address *Mass, Chapters and Monasteries*, and *The Papacy*, condemning unequivocally all man-made traditions as necessary works to merit God's grace.

Part III deals with fifteen articles on which the Lutherans might make concessions. Strikingly, these do not address trivial matters, but issues such as sin, the law, repentance, the Gospel, Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, the Keys, confession and others. Concessions are, however, only possible when discussed with "learned and sensible men, or even among ourselves," based on the careful exposition of Scripture.

For Lutherans the Smalcald Articles are as relevant today as in the 16th century. Furthermore, they are a classic example of what it means to confess Lutheran self-understanding. Confessing what one has perceived to be the truth, should be done boldly and unambiguously as Luther did. Central to Lutheran self-understanding



and Christian faith is the article of Justification (Christ and Faith), where no concession can be made. But notably in all other aspects of teaching, including sin and the Sacraments, Luther remains remarkably open and conciliatory to those who are prepared to engage on the basis of Scripture.

Lutherans confess boldly, but also humbly, continually striving towards confessional agreement and unity within the Church of Christ. Such clear confession is not terminated in the light of adversity, but is spoken for the sake of future generations.

The Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA) was founded in 1892. Descendants of German missionaries were designated to spread the Gospel among the Zulu and the Tswana, and the farmers and craftsmen who accompanied them. They formed the nucleus of the first congregations. As they became independent of the mission, they founded their own German-speaking congregations. They felt strongly about Jesus Christ being the center of their lives and therefore built churches and designated Lutheran pastors. In the aftermath of World War II many industrial developments and changes lured members of the congregations from the country to the cities in ever-increasing numbers. So as not to lose these members, the church made provision for ministering to them. Marriage to a partner speaking one of the official languages often resulted in this language becoming the home language. Today the FELSISA ministers in three languages – German, English, and Afrikaans – and has congregations in all major cities. It remains a small church of approximately 2,600 members and is a member of the International Lutheran Council.





THE BOOK OF CONCORD: A SOURCE OF HARMONY

Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

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Early in February 1537, John Frederick the Elector of Saxony summoned a meeting of the Smalcald League*. There, a proposal was made to write a statement about the power and authority of the pope. For political reasons the Reformers had refrained from saying anything about it at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. However, the question needed immediate discussion as Pope Paul III had summoned the council of the church to convene in Mantua later that year.

Therefore, the League organized a commission of theologians to work out a statement about the power of the pope. Phillip Melanchthon wrote the bold treatise that was sharper than one would expect of him. The theologians accepted the treatise then submitted it for the meeting of the League. It was approved as a supplement to *The Augsburg Confession* and *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*. It was not, as used to be suggested, an appendix to *The Smalcald Articles*.

The treatise focuses on the office and ministry of the pope and bishops. Concerning the power and ministry of the pope, it responds to three claims by the Roman bishop: (1) that the pope is by divine right above all bishops and pastors; (2) that the pope by divine right possesses both swords, that is, the authority to bestow and transfer kingdoms; and (3) that it is necessary for salvation to believe these things, and for such reasons the bishop of Rome calls himself the vicar of Christ on earth.



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These claims are judged to be “false, impious, tyrannical, and injurious to the church.”

The first claim is disproved with testimony of the Scriptures and the testimony from early church history. Besides, the biblical arguments the opponents used to justify the particular power and primacy of the pope prove to have a broader significance than simply being related to popes.

The second claim is rejected because Christ did not give the apostles power over kingdoms of the world. The exercise of this power has caused horrible darkness to descend over the church, and obscured faith and the cause of Christ. Contrary to the third claim, Scripture and the canons teach disobedience to heretical popes.

The next section of the treatise explains why the pope carries the marks of the Antichrist or “an adversary of Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). The pope claims for himself a threefold divine authority: the right to change the doctrine of Christ; the jurisdiction over souls not only in this life but also after this life; and the authority above the decisions of councils and the whole church. A special appeal is made to the chief members of the church, the kings and the princes, to ensure that errors are removed and consciences healed. There are weighty and compelling reasons not to obey the pope.

The second part of the Treatise deals with the power and jurisdiction of bishops. The tasks of preaching the Gospel, administering the sacraments, and exercising jurisdiction belong, by divine right, to all who preside over the churches—pastors as well as bishops. The distinction between bishop and pastor is not by divine right and accordingly an ordination administered by a pastor is also valid. Since the bishops were unwilling to ordain evangelical pastors, the churches retained the right to ordain for themselves, for preaching the Gospel, which is the primary concern of the church, should not be neglected.

The Treatise dismisses the exclusive and abused right of bishops to exercise jurisdiction of excommunication. Jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, especially in matrimonial cases, should be taken over by secular courts. The evangelical churches, therefore, should not recognize the bishops who are adherents of the pope as bishops because of their impious doctrines and refusal to ordain evangelical pastors, the tyrannical exercise of jurisdiction that they have wrested from pastors, and finally, their corruption.

The Treatise gives us a great freedom concerning forms and structures of ordained ministry as long as these serve the Gospel. This freedom allows the creation of new forms of ministry in response to the needs of modern societies. Further, the Treatise encourages and challenges us to consider the ordained ministry as grounded in God’s saving purpose. The ministry is part of God’s intention to realize this saving purpose through outward means. Thus, the Treatise helps us to sail



safely between Roman sacramental hierarchicalism and congregational functionalism.

*A league of faithful Lutheran princes (Dukes and Electors) who pledged their support and military strength to defend Lutheran churches from being overthrown by papal forces.

The Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) was founded as a result of mission work by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and officially organized as a national church in 1971 with five congregations. Since then, the LCK has grown to 35 congregations with about 3,000 baptized members. It aims to have 50 congregations by its 50th anniversary in the year 2008. From 1958 to 1971, the Korea Lutheran Mission developed mass media programs, Christian literature materials and social outreach work, and initiated the training of Lutheran pastors through its Lutheran Theological Academy. This institution has developed into the present Luther University with courses for theology and social workers both at the undergraduate and graduate level. It has its own publishing house – the Concorida-sa.





THE BOOK OF CONCORD: A SOURCE OF HARMONY

The Small Catechism

By Rev. Dr. Wilbert Kreiss

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of France and Belgium*

The work of the Reformation began in 1517 when Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses about indulgences on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. During the fall of 1528, while visiting congregations in Saxony, he witnessed with bewilderment the terrible religious ignorance of most people, including the pastors trained for ministry prior to the Reformation. For them he wrote his *Large Catechism* based on a series of sermons he had delivered that year.

At the same time appeared his *Small Catechism* designed for laypeople and especially for school teachers and heads of households. It was first printed as single posters with the text and explanations of the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments, as well as a set of daily prayers. Posted on the walls of churches, schools and homes, they were a practical and educational way to remind Christians of Christianity's basic truths. In May 1529, *The Small Catechism* was published as a book. The second edition appeared a few weeks later, followed before summer by a third edition, and many more.

The Small Catechism is the personal work of the Reformer, the fruit of his preaching, designed for the humble, modest Christians. It explains in simple, easily understood language the truths revealed in Holy Scripture.

The book begins with the Ten Commandments and their deep spiritual meaning, expressing God's immutable will. They are followed by the three articles of the Apostles' Creed which teach the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator and Redeemer of the world, and He who leads and strengthens the



Christians in the knowledge of and faith in the divine truths. These explanations are especially beautiful and invite believers to personally apply the Gospel promises and to live under them. In the third part Luther shows the beauty and richness of the Lord's Prayer, so that reciting it might not be a simple rite performed automatically, but become the expression of genuine adoration, faith and confidence.

In the chapters dealing with Baptism and the Lord's Supper the Reformer presents the sacraments as authentic means of grace in which God offers to those receiving them with faith, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In a chapter entitled "Confession" Luther speaks about confession and absolution and shows the benefits which believers receive from them when he recognizes the pastor as God's spokesman and that the absolution he pronounces is as true and valid as if the Lord Himself had spoken it. Each statement is clearly enunciated and based on Bible texts to show *The Small Catechism* truly teaches the Word of God.

At the end of the book, after several prayers for the morning, at table and for the evening, there is a "Table of Duties" which reminds Christians of their duties according to their status in society and the responsibilities with which they have been entrusted.

A section called "Christian Questions and their Answers" helps Christians examine themselves and thus commune worthily, acknowledging and confessing their sins and checking the sincerity of their faith.

In a rather lengthy preface, Luther states why he wrote this booklet and how he wants it used. He would like fathers to act as "domestic priests," carrying out their spiritual responsibilities, working closely with the pastors and school teachers. He insists on the need to memorize these fundamental texts so they might permeate the spirits and hearts of the children.

Although *The Small Catechism* is 476 years old, it has lost nothing of its youthful vigour and retains all its validity. It professes eternal truths, deeply anchored in the Word of God, enunciated in a simple, extremely deep and eminently practical way. The careful reader realizes immediately which lessons, encouragements and consolations to draw from it and apply them to daily life. That is why this little book is still used in Lutheran churches around the world. It may be supplemented with other tools using contemporary educational criteria and methods, but it would be a serious mistake to replace it under the pretext that it is out of date. It is no more outdated than the truths for which it stands, and the way it communicates them is still most pertinent.



The **Evangelical Lutheran Church Synod of France and Belgium** was formed in 1927 by congregations founded during the 19th century when people left the State Lutheran Church in Alsace-Lorraine for doctrinal reasons. Outreach started before and after World War II. The church's almost 700 baptized members also support francophone churches in Central Africa and is involved in leadership training in West Africa.





THE BOOK OF CONCORD: A SOURCE OF HARMONY

The Large Catechism

By Dr. Werner Klän

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Luther's Large Catechism, or German Catechism, is meant to be a basic instruction to Christians in the fundamental parts of Christian faith, containing "what every Christian should know." These parts include the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and a treatise, both on Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar. According to Luther's first preface, it is designed as a handbook to the heads of the households to help them teach their families and household. The second preface directs it more to preachers and pastors, providing them a model for Christian education.

The Large Catechism was formulated alongside the Small Catechism, and in a way, can be read as the basic draft to this most successful booklet ever of the reformation era. As in the Small Catechism, Luther treated the basic texts of Christian teaching in the tradition of the medieval church, adding two parts—Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar.

The work resulted from three series' of sermons Luther preached in 1528. For several months that year, Luther replaced John Bugenhagen, the local pastor and superintendent in Wittenberg. He began writing in September 1528, but in January 1529 became ill and resumed his work in March. By mid-April 1529 the Large Catechism was published. The "Brief Exhortation to Confession" was inserted in the 1529 revised edition.



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Catechetical instruction had been taking place in Wittenberg since 1525. The reformers increasingly recognized the need for public and popular information about basic Christian truths. Luther had started treating the Decalogue, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer in sermons as early as 1518, but the disastrous results of the visitation program in Saxony in 1527/28 finally enforced the need to publish a concise synopsis of fundamental Christian doctrine in a clear-cut reformation perspective. The medieval canon had been cleansed from parts like the Ave Maria, and enlarged by the treatises on the two sacraments, as counted from a reformation point of view. (Luther sometimes labels Confession the third sacrament.) These are "in all, five parts covering the whole of Christian teaching."*

The inner structure of the Large Catechism is guided by the idea of God's solemn and sacred self-communication. This theme steers the explanation of the Ten Commandments, as the First Commandment focuses on God's promise: "I, I myself will give you what you need and help you out of every danger." To this promise, God's claim corresponds: "Only do not let your heart cling to or rest in anyone else." In the First Article of the Creed, Luther states that "God has given to us Himself with all creation . . . apart from the fact that He has also showered us with inexpressible blessings through his Son and the Holy Spirit." Thus, in the Second Article, we learn, how God "has given Himself completely to us, withholding nothing." Therefore, the Creed helps "us do what the Ten Commandments require from us."

The petitions in Lord's Prayer, correspondingly request nothing but the fulfillment of what is commanded in the Decalogue; moreover, "God takes the initiative and puts into our mouths the very words." Likewise, the sacraments are regarded as "a treasure that God gives us and faith grasps" or "all the treasures He brought from heaven to us...placed at everyone's door, yes upon the table."

According to the *Binding Summary of the Formula of Concord* (1577), the Large Catechism summarizes Christian teaching as a "Bible of the Laity." The five parts of this work, linked by the principle of God's self-donation willing to communicate His salvation to all humankind, are meant to effectively introduce a fundamental summation of the Christian life, even on a daily basis. With this perspective in mind, the Large Catechism can serve as an exemplary piece of Christian education, motivating us to live our Christian life in the light of the Gospel as rediscovered in the Lutheran reformation.

*Quotations from *The Book of Concord* translated by Kolb and Wengert, CPH 1993.



The Independent Evangelical—Lutheran Church (SELK) was formed in 1972 by most of the confessional Lutheran bodies in Germany. In 1991, the Evangelisch—Lutherische Kirche in the former German Democratic Republic joined the SELK. Today, it has 187 congregations and 37,760 baptized members.





THE BOOK OF CONCORD: A SOURCE OF HARMONY

The Formula of Concord

By Dr. Andrew Pfeiffer

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The last of the Lutheran Confessions, the Formula of Concord, is different from the former confessions in that it has a different focus. The concern is not primarily with Roman Catholic or Reformed theology, but fellow Lutherans confessing together. For that reason alone it is a significant confession for the Lutheran Church today.

The genius of the Formula of Concord is that it shows us how to do theology today. First, it teaches us to define the disputed issues. Then it seeks to find clarity on the controversy by looking at the Scriptures, the early church and the former confessional writings. On that basis it makes a clear confession. "We believe, teach and confess ..." "We reject and condemn ..."

This latter aspect of the Formula sometimes makes us uneasy. We aren't too sure about rejecting and condemning, even when we're talking about theological positions and not individual people. It doesn't sound loving. We aren't comfortable drawing boundaries.

However, the Formula does not draw boundaries to stifle the Gospel. It draws boundaries to safeguard the Gospel so that people with troubled consciences will continue to hear its comfort and be warned of the errors that will lead them back under the law. The Formula has the Gospel at its heart and is a very pastoral document.

In 1537, in his preface to the Smalcald Articles, Luther spoke of his concern that some who claimed to be Lutheran twisted his writings to support their viewpoint.



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He said it didn't really matter while he was alive because he could teach, preach and correct where necessary. But in a prophetic utterance he said, "Imagine what will happen after I am dead."

This period of history is well summarized by William Moorhead.

"After Luther's death (1546) and the Smalcald War (1547), the Lutherans in the Holy Roman Empire were in a precarious position. Without their leader, the pastors and churches faced opposition from the outside and dissension within.

Although the Lutherans achieved appropriate legal status in the Holy Roman Empire through the agreement known as the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 (they could confess and practice their faith freely), they soon were divided over significant doctrinal issues. It was clear that concord was necessary if the Evangelical church was to survive." (W. Moorhead, *The Formula of Concord Study Guide*, CPH, 1999).

The two main workers for unity and chief authors of the Formula of Concord were Jacob Andreae and Martin Chemnitz. Andreae first wrote *Six Christian Sermons* in 1573 which Chemnitz, with the help of others, later reworked into the *Swabian-Saxon Concord*. A revised document was developed at Torgau in 1576 and a summary written soon after. These two documents, the *Epitome* (the smaller summary) and the *Solid Declaration* (the comprehensive confession) were accepted in 1577 as the complete *Formula of Concord*.

While the history is interesting, the Formula's content is more significant. It contains twelve articles and during this 425th anniversary of the Book of Concord I encourage you study the Formula. You can use secondary resources like *One in the Gospel* (Dr.F.Hebart), or the study guide written by William Moorhead referred to above. However it is best to read the Formula itself and especially the Scripture references forming the foundation for what it teaches.

Topics covered are original sin, free will, justification, good works, law and gospel, the third function of the law, the Lord's Supper, the person of Christ, Christ's descent to hell, liturgy and adiaphora, election and foreknowledge, and religious factions and sects.

Why study the Formula? It will help you work with a Lutheran approach to mission and conversion (Article 2); to find the right place for good works in Christian living (Article 4); to find the comfort in being one of God's elect (Article 11); to find the comfort of the Gospel (Articles 3,7,8,11); and to base decision making in liturgical matters on what God has commanded and instituted (Article 10).

Since the early Lutherans had more than their fair share of disputes, they left us a great confessional legacy. We have twelve articles on issues still relevant and alive



in our own churches. We also have a way of proceeding when we face significant conflict:

1. work out what the problem actually is
2. discover from Scripture and the early church what was taught and what was in error
3. reflect again on your current controversy
4. make your own good confession both to what is taught and confessed and what is rejected for the sake of keeping the comfort of the gospel

The roots of the **Lutheran Church of Australia** go back to 1838, when our forebears arrived, fleeing the Prussian union. Our background, therefore, is similar to that of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Post World War II migration also brought a number of Lutherans from other European countries. In more recent years, many Asians have come to Australia. A split in the church occurred in 1846. In subsequent years, pastors came from various sources, including different German missionary societies and a number of the Lutheran synods in the United States of America. A merger took place in 1966 in which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia joined with the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia to form the Lutheran Church of Australia. The church has more than 71,000 baptized members in 540 congregations.





THE BOOK OF CONCORD: A SOURCE OF HARMONY

Peace and a Sword

By Dr. Jeffrey Oschwald

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Through the publication of the Book of Concord the Holy Spirit brought unity to 16th-century Lutherans.

"Don't think I have come only to bring peace," our Lord told His followers. "I have not come to bring only peace, but also a sword" (Matthew 10:34).

For the world, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been both suture and sword; mighty fortress and stumbling stone; the fragrance of life and the odor of death; a word that creates one, holy, united people from all nations and a word that can set father against son and daughter against mother.

What was true in our Lord's day was true in Martin Luther's time and is true today. So it's hardly surprising that not all 16th-century Lutherans welcomed the Book of Concord with shouts of "*Gott sei dank*" ("Thanks be to God"). It was not unity, but the life-threatening *lack* of unity and agreement that called for the book's publication in 1580. And, like every confession of the truth, it brought peace—and a sword.

Three points about the publication of the Book of Concord are particularly relevant in this 425th anniversary year.

First, it is the Book of *Concord*. In their fierce struggle to bring about concordia (harmony) among Luther's followers, men like Jacob Andreae, Martin Chemnitz,



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David Chytraeus, and Nicholas Selnecker did not simply produce a new confessional statement. Rather, they gathered into one volume the confessional writings that had provided guidance and unity through some of the church's most difficult times (e.g., the creeds, the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, the catechisms of Luther) and could help the church address her current divisive issues.

These statements of faith point to the Holy Scripture as the wellspring from which all true and pure confession flows. New challenges had not rendered old statements irrelevant; rather, the ongoing struggle for unity forced the church to return to these earlier statements of faith and, through them, to the Word of God.

The Book of Concord was compiled in the Reformation spirit—this was no attempt to introduce a new teaching, but rather an attempt to understand and apply the self-revelation God gave the world in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Second, the unity sought by the Book of Concord was not simply an agreement among theologians but a true *concordia* among the people of God. The story of the "Formula of Concord" begins and ends with appeals to parish pastors and the members of their congregations. The divisions were serious and the issues literally of vital importance, but the problems could not be solved in the faculty lounges and administrative boardrooms of the day. The battle for harmony had to be waged and won in sanctuaries and living rooms. Andreae's sermons and Caspar Fuger's "A Brief, True, and Simple Report of the Book Called the 'Formula of Concord,'" written as a catechism in order to gain the support of the laity, are evidence that those working for unity and peace realized this truth.

In her study of Fuger's efforts toward unity, Dr. Irene Dingel, professor of church history at the University of Mainz in Germany, notes: "Not only pastors and scholars were to support the new book of confessions, however. The 'simple folk' were also supposed to grasp that what was at stake here was the preservation of the truth of the Gospel and defense against false teaching."

Dr. Robert Kolb, professor of systematic theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, makes a thought-provoking observation in an article on the Book of Concord. He traces the development of the meaning of the phrase "body of teaching." The ten documents composing the Book of Concord were seen as a "body of teaching" that defined the public faith of a particular group of Christians in a particular place. In earlier times, the term had meant those documents in which a particular rule of faith could be found. Earlier still, the term simply referred to that rule of faith, or interpretive principle, by which the faith could be understood, taught, and applied.

The final point is that real *concordia* (harmony) is a matter of the heart. These writings strive to bring about a unity in readers that goes far beyond simply saying, "We accept this and that." It is a unity brought about by making new hearts and transforming minds. It is a oneness coming from being born again, and it shows



itself in a new way of thinking about and understanding creation, the history of the cosmos, the purpose of "it all," and, most important, God's Word.

This oneness of heart and mind arises when we understand that all Scripture testifies of Jesus Christ. It is the oneness coming from believing and confessing that the message of Scripture, expounded in the confessions, is that we are justified by grace through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Such unity can come about only through the reconciling ministry of the Spirit of Christ among us.

In the closing decades of the 16th century, the Spirit brought such unity to thousands of Lutheran pastors and their congregations through the publication of the Book of Concord. But some could not accept this book immediately, and some could never accept it. The Lord's work to unite His people in a faithful confession of His truth would continue—and continues through us.

Let's give the last word to Martin Luther, who closed a letter to fellow-reformer Martin Bucer, sent from Wittenberg and dated Jan. 22, 1531, with these words:

"May the Lord Jesus enlighten us, and may he make us perfectly of one mind; for this I pray, for this I sigh, for this I long. Farewell in the Lord."

On April 26, 1847, 12 pastors representing 15 congregations signed a constitution that established "The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States." Today, **The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod** (the name was shortened on its 100th anniversary) has 6,150 congregations served by more than 9,000 professional church workers. The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod International Center is located in St. Louis, Missouri, USA.

