

Introduction to The Augsburg Confession

2 Corinthians 5:21: *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*

Introduction

Some churches or church bodies don't have written confessions of faith. Sometimes they say that they believe what the Bible says, so why would they need to write out a confession. Our church body believes that having some written confessions of faith is important, perhaps even critical. Decide on three reasons why we might approach written confessions of faith the way that we do.

Looking at the Augsburg Confession

Article II – *About Original Sin*

(Our churches teach) that since the fall of Adam, all human beings who are born in the natural way are conceived and born in sin. This means that from birth they are full of evil lust and inclination and cannot by nature possess true fear of God and true faith in God. Moreover, this same innate disease and original sin is truly sin and condemns to God's eternal wrath all who are not in turn born anew through baptism and the Holy Spirit.¹

1. What are the ways that the concept of "original sin" described here?
2. What implications of original sin do you see Article II list?
3. Article II is really thorough in its description of original sin: 'all human beings,' "conceived and born in sin," "full of evil lust," "condemns to God's eternal wrath," etc. By nature we are oh-so-sinful! Decide on three reasons it's vital for us believers to understand this if we are to make sense out of ourselves or to make sense out of life."

Article IV – *About Justification*

Our churches also teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works but are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven on account of Christ,

¹ Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, *The Book of Concord: the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Augsburg Confession, Article II:1-2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

*who by his death made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in his sight.*²

4. Put in your own words how the Augsburg Confession defines the term “justification.”
5. The statement, “We’re saved because of faith,” is at best unclear, or at worst, is heresy. Decide on two reasons we’d prefer *not* to say, “We’re saved because of faith.”
6. “Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for the whole world.” “We are saved through faith in Jesus.” Both those statements are true! Please give a couple reasons how they can both be true at the same time.

Article V – About the Ministry³

*So that we might receive this faith, God established the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. For the Holy Spirit is given to people through the Word and sacraments, the tools through which God works. Whenever and wherever it pleases God, this ministry creates faith in the hearts of those who hear the gospel. And the gospel message is this: that not because of our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace because of what Christ did.*⁴

7. God uses his Means of Grace (the Gospel in word and sacraments) to create and preserve faith in Jesus. What are three reasons that this is so important to know?
8. God wants all people to be saved and yet not all people are going to heaven. What are some reasons that Article V gives us that explain this?

Article VI – Concerning the New Obedience

*We teach that this faith must bring forth good fruits and that one must do the good works commanded by God, in accord with God’s will. However, one must never rely on such works to earn justification in God’s eyes. For we receive forgiveness of sins and justification only by faith. Christ himself says, “When you have done everything...say, ‘We are unworthy servants’” (Luke 17:10). The church fathers teach this same thing.*⁵

² Thompson, Glen L., trans., *The Unaltered Augsburg Confession*, Augsburg Confession, Article IV:1-3 (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2005).

³ This article might also be entitled “About the Means of Grace,” since the major point of the article is God’s use of means to convey his grace to people.

⁴ Thompson, Augsburg Confession, Article V:1-3.

⁵ Thompson, Augsburg Confession, Article VI:1-2.

9. We are justified before God completely by Christ's work, and yet our good works are still very important. Please use Article VI to give three reasons why this statement is true.

10. Since the Bible describes good works as fruits of faith, what is the only way that we can encourage good works? Why is this so important to know?

11. Read Ephesians 2:8-10 and James 2:14-26. Please give a couple reasons that explain how these passages do not contradict each other but really illustrate exactly what the Augsburg Confession is stating.

Summary and Conclusion

Please write down three reasons that it was important – perhaps even critical – for us to have read these segments of the Augsburg Confession today.