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Almighty God Has Allowed the Light of His Holy Gospel and His Word that Alone Grants Salvation to Appear

An Introduction to the Book of Concord

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Proclaiming God's Word and Confessing the Faith

Sixteenth-century Lutherans believed that they lived in the shadow of the Last Judgment. Because of that they believed that "in the last days of this transitory world he Almighty God, out of immeasurable love, grace, and mercy for the human race, has allowed the light of his holy gospel and his Word that alone grants salvation to appear and shine forth purely, unalloyed and unadulterated out of the superstitious, papist darkness for the German nation . . . " (Preface of the Book of Concord, 1580[1]). The editors of the Book of Concord reflected the widely held perception of their time that God had sent Martin Luther as his special prophet to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ before his return to judge the world. They also viewed the presentation of Luther's teaching to Emperor Charles V in the Augsburg Confession as a crucial act of God in spreading Luther's message throughout the world. Followers of Luther were convinced that God acts in a fallen world above all through his Word and that the power of the Gospel of Christ rescues sinners from death and restores them to their true humanity as children of God. What the church did with and through God's Word formed the central concern of human history, they believed.

[1] *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930, 1991) [henceforth BSLK], 3, *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 5.

Luther himself could not be present at Augsburg on June 25, 1530, for the presentation of the Confession because he was an outlaw. Charles V had condemned him to death in the Edict of Worms of 1521. But the Reformation that had developed around Luther and under his direction at the University of Wittenberg in the previous decade was a team effort. The team member who served as an ecclesiastical diplomat for the Saxon elector and other Lutheran princes and cities was Philip Melanchthon. He also composed theological statements of various kinds for the Wittenberg team. Most important among them was his treatment of biblical teaching by topic, his *Loci communes rerum theologicarum* (1. edition, 1521). In Luther's absence he was a natural choice to be the chief drafter of the statement which explained the Wittenberg Reformation to the imperial diet and to the world beyond its members in 1530.

Emperor Charles had attempted at a series of imperial diets in the 1520s to resolve the religious division that grew out of Luther's independent movement for the reform of the church. At Speyer in 1529 the emperor had commanded those princely and municipal governments that had introduced Luther's reforms to return to the obedience of the pope. They issued a "Protestatio," the name for a formal statement which defended measures taken by such governments within the imperial system and, in this case, also served as a testimony to their faith. In January 1530, after a consultation with Pope Clement VII in Bologna, Charles summoned the imperial estates to Augsburg for a diet that was to make provision for greater support of the emperor's war against the Turk and to find a resolution to the "Luther affair."

Melanchthon arrived in Augsburg in May 1530 intent on defending and explaining the reform measures introduced by Lutheran governments in defiance of the Edict of Worms, which had forbidden reform according to the Wittenberg model. He immediately encountered a new publication by the leading Roman Catholic critic of Lutheran reform, Ingolstadt professor Johannes Eck. He had assembled "Four Hundred Four Propositions," a catalog of statements by contemporaries whom he regarded as heretics. Some of these statements were accurate quotations from Luther, Melanchthon, and their Wittenberg colleagues. Others quoted them out of context; and still others presented positions which the Lutherans also rejected, positions of Ulrich Zwingli and his allies, as well as Anabaptists and Spiritualists. Melanchthon recognized that the Evangelical political authorities must do more than simply defend reform measures which they had undertaken. He began to compose a defense of the catholicity of Wittenberg reform, an assertion of the place of Lutheran teaching within the tradition of the church and of its faithfulness to God's revelation of his will for humankind in Scripture.

In conversation with other Evangelical theologians and with Roman Catholic representatives as well, Melanchthon drafted and redrafted his statement of the faith, as taught by himself, Luther, and their followers. As he considered what he

was doing, he decided not to call this statement a "defense" (in Latin Apologia) but rather a "confession" (confessio). He was not only defending certain measures relating to the life of the church, but he was also proclaiming the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins; he was affirming the truth of God's Word. That action he regarded as a "confession." This decision bestowed upon that word a new usage in the history of the church. Melanchthon invented a new way of thinking about the public use of God's Word and a new way of defining the church.

"Confession" had been the title of personal statements of faith, from Augustine's autobiographical *Confessiones* to Luther's formulation of his views on the Lord's Supper, his *Confession concerning Christ's Supper* of 1528, which also contained a summary of Luther's theology in his commentary on the Apostles Creed. Melanchthon was in the process of composing an official statement with which the Lutheran churches defined themselves and their purpose. This definition rested upon the Wittenberg presupposition that God's Word is living and active, a Word that accomplishes God's will because he is a Creator, who creates and re-creates by speaking (Genesis 1). Melanchthon scholar Pierre Fraenkel has described the Wittenberg professor's usage of words such as "doctrina" and "confessio" as "verbal nouns." For the Wittenberg team they designated not only the content of the doctrine or the confession but also the human act of teaching and confessing, behind which stands the activity and power of the Holy Spirit, who works through the Word. Melanchthon was defining the church on the basis of the content of biblical teaching, and he was defining it as the assembly of saints, made holy by Christ's death and resurrection, who were gathered by God's Word (in oral, written, and sacramental forms) and who use that Word to deliver the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

The first Lutheran descriptions of what happened at Augsburg in 1530 used the term "confession" for the actions of Melanchthon and his colleagues throughout the negotiations before and after the presentation of the document he was entitling "Confession." The entire series of actions that presented God's Word to the emperor and the members of the diet constituted a "confession." But Melanchthon was also living at a time when Johannes Gutenberg's invention of moveable type permitted documents to be read more widely and used more extensively than ever before. Melanchthon brought the communication tools of his day together with Luther's concept of the speaking and hearing of God's Word as the heart of his way of delivering sinners from their sin into trusting God. That made the printed confession of faith an instrument for spreading the Gospel and governing the church. This contribution was so decisive that it gave its name to the churches that grew up out of reform (in German they are called "Konfessionen").

The Augsburg Confession was also groundbreaking because it marked the first time that a statement of faith presented by lay people, seven princes and municipal representatives from Nürnberg and Reutlingen, defined the public teaching of the church. Indeed, theologians prepared the document, but in line with Wittenberg thinking, lay people gave testimony to their faith in the public

square. Melanchthon and his fellow theologians in Augsburg prepared two versions of their confession, one in German for the general public, which was read to the estates of the diet, and one in Latin, for theologians across Europe. The two versions closely paralleled each other, but each contained specific accents for its specific readers.

Melanchthon did not have to begin drafting the Lutherans' confession ganz von vorne. He brought with him to Augsburg four earlier summaries of Wittenberg theology. The first was Luther's own digest of his teaching at the end of his *Confession concerning Christ's Supper* (1528). Secondly, the visitation of the electoral Saxon parishes held in 1528 had occasioned the publication of *Instructions for the Visitors*, from Melanchthon's pen with revisions from his colleagues, Luther and Johannes Bugenhagen. Third, the Wittenberg professors had represented the elector of Saxony in negotiations with theologians of other Evangelical governments, above all from Brandenburg-Ansbach, in September 1529 in preparation for a defensive alliance of Evangelical princes and cities. Those negotiations had produced "the Schwabach Articles," a summary of Wittenberg doctrine The fourth summary Melanchthon had at hand was "the Marburg Articles," composed at the meeting sponsored by Landgrave Philip of Hesse in October 1529 which brought together supporters of Luther from several territories with a delegation from Switzerland led by Ulrich Zwingli, the reformer of Zurich. In addition to these overviews of the central doctrines of the Reformation, Melanchthon, together with Wittenberg colleagues, had also prepared a series of memoranda regarding the Saxon government's measures undertaken to reform ecclesiastical practices. The Saxon preparation for the diet in Augsburg had not focused on a presentation of doctrine but rather on a defense of those measures. Since the eighteenth century scholars have designated some or all of these memoranda "the Torgau Articles," with some disagreement as to precisely which manuscripts should be included under this title.

The emperor had challenged the right of the Evangelical princes and cities to introduce reform in their churches and thus labeled them heretics, who had placed themselves outside the church. These governments insisted that they were indeed part of the universal church. Their confession demonstrated that by rejecting ancient heresies, above all false teaching on the Trinity and the person of Christ as well as on the sacraments. Melanchthon's confession above all gave witness to the content of Wittenberg theology regarding the message of salvation through Christ that the church had always handed down from one generation to the next. His confession grounded its teaching firmly on the foundations of Scripture. Most of his summaries of the chief articles of faith, or topics in the teaching of the church, as handed down over the centuries, cited at least one Bible passage.

The Augsburg Confession begins where theological instruction had begun throughout the Middle Ages, with the doctrine of the Trinity, as taught by the Council of Nicea (CA I). Melanchthon turned from confessing who God is to a confession of human sinfulness. The root of sin lies in the sinner's failure to truly

fear and trust God. Like Luther, Melanchthon was convinced that disobedience against all other commandments stems from the human refusal to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. All sins arise from the desire to control and determine life apart from faith in him (CA II). To rescue human beings from sin God sent his Son as Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for sin. Risen from the dead, Christ sends the Holy Spirit to make believers holy, purify, strengthen, and comfort believers (CA III).

The fourth article of the Confession addressed the heart of Luther's call for the reform of the church, his insistence that human beings are truly human according to God's design for human life when they trust in him. Medieval theologians had always serious differences in their interpretation of Scripture and the tradition of the church, but they all agreed that the most important question for the life of the church was the question of authority, and they believed that as long as the bishop of Rome as acknowledged as Christ's vicar on earth, other questions would be properly answered. Medieval theologians had explained God's plan for salvation from sin in a variety of ways, but they all agreed that what makes a person truly human, his "righteousness," was the performance of good works, even though truly meritorious works could be performed only with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Luther disagreed on both points. He believed that the critical question for the life of the church was the question of human righteousness, and he believed that what makes a person truly human in God's sight is very different from what human beings are and do in their relationship to God's other creatures. The Wittenberg theologians distinguished the passive righteousness of the human being's relationship to God from the active righteousness of the relationship with other human beings and the rest of what God has made. In the Confession's fourth article, following Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5, Melanchthon defined that no human performance of the law can be regarded as righteousness in relationship to God. God simply bestows life upon his human creatures. In Christ he restores his chosen children to that relationship by the creative act of forgiving sins and giving the gift of life and salvation through oral, written, and sacramental forms of his Word. But like human parents, who give children life but then expect that they will behave according to the rules of the family for daily life, the heavenly Father expects his reborn children to perform his will toward the rest of his creation. Therefore, to be human meant for Luther and Melanchthon to trust God fully and completely, and as the fruit of that trust, to live a life of new obedience.

The original text of the Confession flowed treated the fourth, fifth, and sixth articles into the fifth and sixth as a unit, linking justification directly to the means of grace which cause it and the new obedience which flows form it. Melanchthon explained first how saving faith is created, through the means of grace, delivered by the office of preaching. Luther believed that God acts as Creator through his Word (Gen. 1) and that he accomplishes the new creation of the believer out of the sinner by his Word of Gospel, which brings sinners into death and resurrection

through Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-11). God's Word does not work magically, as popular medieval piety often thought; the Holy Spirit remains lord of the gospel and lets it bestow trust and thus accomplish the salvation of the sinner when and where he wills. But he bestows new life only through the Word, in its oral, written, and sacramental forms (CA V).

The Holy Spirit creates faith not only to establish the proper relationship between the human being and God but also in order to move the children of God to do the good works God has commanded, as fruits of their faith in Christ (CA VI). The Spirit also gathers the children of God around God's Word as it is preached and given in the sacraments, the true marks of the church, Melanchthon insisted, in contrast to the medieval church's insistence on submission to episcopal regulations for the observance of ceremonies. The Justinian Code of the Roman Empire (529) had defined the church for legal purposes as that of true doctrine and proper observance of the sacraments, against those who denied the doctrine of the Trinity and who rejected the validity of the sacraments when performed by unworthy priests. Melanchthon was asserting the legality and churchly character of the Wittenberg Reformation when he used this ancient definition of what the church is. At the same time this definition fit well into the Lutheran understanding of the people of God fathered together by God's saving Gospel through preaching and the sacraments on the basis of Scripture (CA VII and VIII).

Melanchthon treated the sacraments of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution briefly, insisting that the Wittenberg teaching corresponded to the ancient teaching of the church (CA IX-XI). In connection with absolution the topic of repentance had to be treated. Luther and his colleagues in Wittenberg struggled with the mystery of the continuation of sin and evil in the lives of the baptized. Therefore, they emphasized the need for the action of God's law, to terrify consciences with the recognition of sin and bring believers to repentance, and of God's gospel, to absolve and comfort those consciences, to strengthen faith, by pointing to the death and resurrection of Christ (CA XII).

After short statements on the use of the sacraments as signs and testimonies of God's will, to awaken and strengthen faith, which is necessary for a proper use of their benefits (against medieval belief in their power as magical rituals) (CA XIII), and on the necessity of orderly calls into the public ministry of the Word (against Anabaptists who began to preach whenever they felt called to do so) (CA XIV), Melanchthon affirmed that humanly devised ceremonies may be used when they contribute to the peace and good order of the church but dare not be required as if they contributed to salvation (CA XV).

The Confession continued by affirming the Wittenberg belief that God calls people into service to him through service to other people in daily life, through carrying out responsibilities in their families and workplaces and in service to government (CA XVI). Article XVII rejected false views of Christ's return of Christ to judgment. Articles XVIII, on the freedom of the will, and XIX, on the cause of

sin, maintained the Wittenberg belief that the sinful will is bound to create false gods, incapable of turning to God on its own powers, but is at the same time able to make choices within the earthly sphere, and is, along with Satan's will, the cause of evil and sin. The doctrinal section ends with an explanation of how the Lutherans preached on faith and good works (CA XX) and why they rejected prayers to the saints while using these saints as models of Christian love and service (CA XXI).

The second part of the Confession addressed measures of reform that followers of Luther had introduced in their territories and cities. Melanchthon recognized that some of these practices were inextricably connected with proper teaching and some were matters which could be purged of error and properly put to use. To the former belonged the prohibition of the distribution of the blood of the Lord along with his body in the sacrament (CA XXII), the prohibition of the marriages of priests (CA XXIII), and the celebration of the mass as a sacrifice (CA XXIV). To the latter belonged abuses in the practice of confession (CA XXV), rules for fasting (CA XXVI), monastic vows (CA XXVII), and the exercise of secular power by the bishops (CA XXVIII). The Wittenberg theologians recognized how closely practice and doctrine may be related, and therefore they demonstrated in this confession that the life and practice of the church cannot be separated from its teaching.

The Confession was presented orally on June 25, 1530, by the chancellor of the electoral Saxon government, Christian Beyer. He read the German text to the emperor and the estates, and his booming voice broadcast the confession into the streets of Augsburg and the populace waiting to hears these words. About two weeks later Ulrich Zwingli sent the emperor a personal explanation of his teaching, his *Ratio fidei*, and under the leadership of Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito of Strassburg, that city Memmingen, Lindau, and Constance sent Charles their "Confessio Tetrapolitana." Not read aloud to the estates, these two statements of faith were also rejected by the emperor's theological advisors.

Emperor Charles V had grown up in the Low Countries of his grandfather, Emperor Maximilian I. There he had been educated by tutors influenced by the ardent desire for the reform of morals and ecclesiastical practices that had grown up in these lands in the late fifteenth century and found expression in the writings of Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam. Luther's proposal for the reform of doctrine of the church, however, did not fit into the emperor's conception of permissible change. He was particularly concerned that disobedience to the pope in the church could lead to disobedience to the emperor in the political realm. Therefore, he was displeased with what he heard from the Lutherans when their confession was read on June 25, 1530. He appointed a commission of theologians loyal to the pope to draft a reply to the Lutherans' confession. It included a spectrum of theological opinion, from the conservative court preacher of Elector Johann's cousin, Duke Georg of Saxony, Johannes Cochlaeus; Johannes Eck; the somewhat reform-minded bishop of Vienna, Johann Fabri, the Erasmian-inclined Julius Pflug, and

others. By July 12 they had prepared a document that was harshly critical of the Augsburg Confession. Charles decided that this effort would destroy any hope of reconciliation with the adherents of the Confession and sent them back to draft another analysis of its contents. The commission entitled this work a "Confutatio." This refutation was prepared by August. It accepted the wording of several articles of the Augsburg Confession, expressed reservations about several others, and sharply rejected still others, especially Melanchthon's definition of sin and of justification.

The Emperor had this Confutation read to the diet. He refused to give Melanchthon and his colleagues a copy unless they would agree in advance not to respond publicly to it. He wanted them simply to recognize it as a proper exposition of the church's teaching. The Evangelicals declined to accept those conditions and instead took notes, notes so good that when the Roman Catholics did publish the text in 1559, the Evangelical reconstruction proved to be very accurate indeed.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession

Melanchthon drafted a response to the Confutation. A Saxon official tried to present it to the emperor on September 22, but Charles refused to accept it. Melanchthon left Augsburg for Wittenberg the next day, and there he returned to expanding and improving the text of his response. With this document he returned to his title "Defense" (Apologia). He had his *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* ready for publication with the text of the Confession itself, the first official printed version, in April 1531. The emperor had commanded the Lutheran governments to return to obedience to the pope by April 15, 1531, in a renewal of the Edict of Worms, and Melanchthon wanted to counteract this reinforcement of the decree of outlawry against the Lutherans with proof that they indeed confessed the biblical truth as handed down in the church through the ages. Luther offered a series of suggestions when he read the text, and Melanchthon followed his advice in shortening and rephrasing parts of his *Defense* for a second edition. It appeared in September 1531. Justus Jonas, Luther's and Melanchthon's colleague on the Wittenberg theological faculty, translated the *Apology*, for the most part from the second edition. His translation was placed in the Book of Concord in 1580 along with the German version of the Augsburg Confession.

Melanchthon not only taught theology. He also taught rhetoric and dialectic; his textbooks on these topics were reprinted into the eighteenth century (even in some Roman Catholic lands although there without his name on the title page). He had used the so-called "genus iudicale," the rhetorical form for effective presentation of ideas in a courtroom, as a model for conveying God's Word in public preaching and teaching. He used this literary form in constructing his *Apology*. He appealed to the emperor against the accusers who were condemning Lutheran teaching. He followed the rules for oral argument before a judge in sometimes repeating his points from different angles. Particularly in regard to the articles on

sin, righteousness in God's sight, good works, repentance, and the mass Melanchthon laid out his defense of the Wittenberg teaching, with extensive biblical analysis and with reference to the witness of the ancient Fathers of the church. Some scholars have argued that his chief concern was the regulation of church life in a way that would permit free preaching of the Gospel, and therefore his hope for evangelically-minded bishops controlled his argument. However, the amount of attention he paid to passive and active human righteousness – to God's action of re-creating sinners into the new creatures who trust in him and therefore produce the fruits of faith in good works of love toward the neighbor – shows that the biblical teaching of justification by faith lay at the heart of his understanding of God's revelation as he composed the *Apology*.

The Smalcald Articles

Emperor Charles had failed in his attempt to reconcile the religious parties within his empire. A new pope, Paul III, became bishop of Rome in 1534, a stronger man, of greater vision, than his immediate predecessors. He began immediately to try to return his rebellious children in Germany to the Roman obedience. He appointed a commission to propose reform measures, and he supported its suggestions to call a council to deal with pressing issues, including the Lutheran Reformation. It was originally scheduled to meet in Mantua in May 1537 (but actually began its sessions in December 1545). Pope Paul sent an emissary, Peter Paul Vergerio (who later converted to Lutheranism and became a counselor of the dukes of Württemberg), to Wittenberg in November 1535 to invite Elector Johann Friedrich (who had succeeded his father, Johann, upon the latter's death in 1532) to participate in the council. Luther dressed up with fine clothes in an effort to make Vergerio think that he was young and vital and would be proclaiming reform for a long time to come.

For some time Johann Friedrich had wanted Luther to compose another summary of his faith, like the one he had written in 1528, so that after his death his followers would have a specific statement of what he had taught. In late 1536 the Elector asked Luther to head a commission which should prepare an agenda for the Lutheran position that could be presented in a papal council. Johann Friedrich apparently hoped that this statement would also serve as the reformer's doctrinal last will and testament. Luther was seriously ill at the time but undertook most of the writing or dictating of the document himself. Assisting him were Wittenberg colleagues Melanchthon, Jonas, Bugenhagen, and Caspar Cruciger, as well as long-time associates Nikolaus von Amsdorff from Magdeburg, Georg Spalatin from Altenburg, and Johann Agricola from Eisleben.

Whereas his confession of 1528 had followed the outline of the Creed, Luther's 1537 statement of faith was designed for guiding public testimony at the papal council, as his preface for its first printing in 1538 makes clear. He divided the document into three sections. In the first he presented "the lofty articles of the divine majesty," that is, the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ, which

were "not matters of dispute or conflict, because both sides confess them." No further discussion was necessary on these topics.

The second section treated "the office and work of Jesus Christ, or our redemption." For Luther, as for Melanchthon in the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, the heart of God's Word and the church's life lay here. "On this article stands all that we teac and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore we must be quite certain and have no doubt about it. Otherwise everything is lost, and the pope and the devil and whatever opposes us will gain victory and be proved right. " This section consisted of four articles. The first presented the center of the faith simply, largely in words from Bible passages. Christ, as God and Lord, died for our sins and rose for our justification (Rom. 4:25) as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), and who bore all human sin (Isa. 53:6). Thus, sinners become righteous before God without any merit of their own works, by his grace, through the redemption won by Christ's blood (Rom. 3:23-25). "Nothing in this article can be conceded or given up, even if heaven and earth passed away," for there is no other name by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12). In order to make clear that sinners can become righteous before God only through the gift of passive righteousness, given through the action of God's Word as it creates faith on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection, Luther added three articles against elements of late medieval religion that threatened reliance on God alone. The first was the doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass and associated practices and ritual exercises that distracted from what Christ had done for his people and from their faith in God alone. These included the teaching on purgatory and the means of escaping it through masses for the dead, and other customs, the use of evil spirits, pilgrimages to attain grace, brotherhoods (organizations dedicated to winning release for deceased members from purgatory), relics, indulgences, and adoration of the saints. The second of these articles of rejection condemned reliance on monastic vows and monastic practices for salvation. The last criticized the pope for his tyranny over the church and for his false teaching.

The third section of Luther's agenda for the council treated topics that were worthy of theological discussion. In fifteen articles he laid out his objections to medieval teaching and practice and confessed his own faith in brief form. In each of these articles connections between doctrine and practice were made clear. The topics included sin, the law, repentance (the longest of these articles, it contained an exposition of the proper distinction of law and gospel in daily life and a critique of papal practices around confession and absolution), the means of grace, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the office of the keys, confession and absolution, excommunication, ordination, clerical marriage, the church, the distinction of active and passive righteousness, monastic vows, and human ceremonies and regulations.

This agenda for council gained the name "Smalcald Articles" because in early February 1537 it was considered by the princes and municipal representatives at Smalcald in a meeting of the Smalcald League, a defensive league of Evangelical

governments formed in 1531. They decided not to use it as the basis for their confession of the faith at the council but instead to use the Augsburg Confession, as the confession of their churches which already had an official status as their testimony to biblical teaching presented to the emperor. In part, the reluctance to accept the Articles arose from concern over the preservation of the agreement on the Lord's Supper reached between Wittenberg and Strassburg on the Lord's Supper in the "Wittenberg Concord" of the previous year. In the Smalcald Articles Luther had simply confessed, "the bread and wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ and they are not only offered to and received by upright Christians but also by evil ones." In spite of their princes' declining to accept the Articles officially, more than thirty theologians at Smalcald subscribed to Luther's confession. During the 1540s and 1550s several territorial churches adopted this document as an official confession of faith alongside the Augsburg Confession and its Apology.

The official text of the Smalcald Articles is that printed in 1538, with Luther's preface and with significant expansions of his treatment of the mass in section two, and of repentance and of confession and absolution in section three. The added paragraph on repentance was aimed against his former student Johann Agricola, who taught that the law had no place in the Christian life. Because Luther understood that law and gospel must be defined both according to their content and according to their function or effect, he rejected Agricola's position. He insisted that the law must continue to accuse Christians of their sin and bring them to repentance. To his treatment of the confession and absolution, the reformer added a strong repudiation of the view that the external forms of the Word of God, oral, written, and sacramental, do not work his saving will but that the Holy Spirit works from within a person apart from such means. For Luther the assurance of God's promise of life and forgiveness in a word from outside himself was vital for his peace of conscience. From his agenda for the papal council had emerged a doctrinal last will and testament that his disciples recognized as a valuable guide to their further confession of biblical truth.

The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

The decision to use the Augsburg Confession instead of the Smalcald Articles left the Lutheran princes and cities with one gap in the presentation of their faith for the papal council. The council would certainly have to discuss the place of the pope in the church, and the Augsburg Confession contained no article on the subject. Because Luther became quite ill with kidney stones during the meeting at Smalcald. Melanchthon was commissioned to write a supplementary article to the Augsburg Confession on the power and primacy of the pope. He did and later commented that he had written more sharply than was his custom. He believed that this situation demanded a strong critique of papal claims. This document is filled with the same careful biblical and patristic argument that marks the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*. On the basis of evidence from Scripture and the history of the church he rejected papal claims that the bishop of Rome is superior

by divine right to all bishops and pastors, that he possesses by divine right power over secular as well as ecclesiastical authorities, and that it is necessary for salvation to submit to him as Christ's vicar on earth. The assembled theologians subscribed to this statement at Smalcald.

This document and the fact that it had been written by Melanchthon for the purpose of discussion at the Council were ignored by the time of the beginning of the Council in Trent in 1545, and by the time of the preparation of actual Evangelical participation at the Council's second session in 1551-1552. That participation did not come to pass because war in Germany interrupted plans for Saxon and south German representation in Trent. The document appeared in German translation with some printings of the Smalcald Articles and was thus placed in the Book of Concord, but until the past century the significance of the Tractatus was largely ignored. Although it focuses specifically on the papacy in its sixteenth century context, believers in every age need to hear Melanchthon's warning against the abuse of human power within the church and against the danger of trying to secure the Gospel and the church through any other means apart from the Word of God.

Luther's Catechisms

Luther placed all life under God's Word as he composed his confession of faith for the children of Germany in his *Small Catechism*, originally called simply a *Handbuch* (*Enchiridion* in Greek). "Catechism" was the medieval word for the program of basic instruction in the Christian faith. Since the early church such programs had existed, some focusing on instruction in doctrine, in the Christian faith, others on moral or ethical instruction. The two forms of instruction were used in tandem, for as people came to faith in God, they had to change the way they lived. In the culture of ancient Rome and other empires into which the biblical message quickly spread, the lifestyle of people outside the faith did not fit the message that "Jesus Christ is my Lord."

Throughout the Middle Ages the "catechism" as a program of instruction shaped the teaching of the basics of the faith. Augustine had suggested that the Christian life can be summed up in faith (expressed in the Creed), hope (expressed in the Lord's Prayer), and love (expressed originally in the lists of seven virtues and seven vices, later in the Ten Commandments). To these three was added the "Ave Maria," a keystone of popular devotional practice in the Late Middle Ages. Catechetical instruction was not conducted in special classes before Luther's time but normally through preaching, often the preaching of mendicant monks, who wandered from village to village, but also through resident preachers in the towns.

Early in his career, in 1518 and 1518, Luther began also to preach on parts of the catechism. In 1522 he proposed a change in the traditional order of the parts of the catechism. First, sinners should diagnose what is wrong with them, through the law in the Ten Commandments. Second, healing must come through

the Gospel, summarized in the Creed, which describes God's actions in behalf of his human creatures. Third, believers are set on the proper path for life through the Lord's Prayer. The "Ave Maria" did not fit Luther's concept of proper devotion, which concentrated human attention on God alone. Luther urged his colleagues to prepare a handbook for this catechism, or instruction, but his high standards for this vital tool for introducing his Reformation and for promoting Christian piety discouraged his disciples from undertaking this task. After he had experienced the low state of biblical knowledge in the villages of Saxony during the Visitation of parishes in 1528, he turned to the task himself. After preaching three series of sermons on parts of the traditional catechism, he began to write in early 1529. In rapid succession three forms of this instruction appeared in print, a poster with the texts of catechism (January); his *German (or Large) Catechism*, a collection of sermons edited out of those he had preached in the preceding months, treating the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, with an appendix added later on confession and absolution (April); and his *Enchiridion* for children, later called the *Small Catechism* (May). His primer for the youth was entitled an *Enchiridion*, but Luther's handbook found such a success that it transformed the word "catechism" into the name not only of the general program of instruction, that had previously often been found in oral form, but also into the name of a literary genre, the printed text of such instruction. The *Large Catechism* offers parents, pastors, and teachers a kind of guide for cultivating the faith and life of the young. Its wording often echoes that of the *Small Catechism* and thus gives those who are instructing the young hints at how to expand on what their children learn by heart.

Luther's handbook served not only to introduce biblical teaching to the young. It also led them into the practice of the Christian life. Luther advised readers of the *Small Catechism* that it was only a first step in learning to know God's Word and to live according to it. He followed the model of late medieval instruction by taking over the core of the Ten Commandments, Creed, and Lord's Prayer. His additions to these three parts also followed medieval models. For instance, many fifteenth century instructional handbooks had included a list of the sacraments. Luther expanded such a list to include questions and answers about baptism and the Lord's Supper, and later in 1529 he added a short model for confession and absolution. To these five or six "chief parts of Christian teaching" he added a plan for daily meditation and prayer, with texts for praying mornings, at mealtime, and evenings. The *Small Catechism* closes with a "chart for household living," a table of Christian callings, which used Bible passages to demonstrate how God calls people to serve their neighbors within the medieval walks of life: household (family and economic life), secular government (political life) and congregation (life in the church).

One of the functions that the catechism had performed in the Middle Ages was to prepare the people for proper repentance and use of the confession and absolution. Luther had radically transformed the medieval concepts of repentance und penance. At the beginning of his 95 Theses he wrote, "The whole life of a

Christian is a life of repentance." His views of repentance changed after 1517 but this definition of the Christian life remained. By 1529 his understanding of that daily repentance reflected his belief that the Christian life arises out of baptism and consists in a daily dying and rising with Christ, as Luther applied Romans 6:4 to the believer's struggle against sin in the mystery of the continuation of evil in the lives of the children of God.

His *Small Catechism* began with the Ten Commandments in order to convict sinners of their failure to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. His explanation of each of the Commandments was based on the presupposition that keeping God's commands can flow only from trust in him. The *Catechism* finds its heart in the person of the God who has created human creatures and all else that exists. Luther's concept of passive righteousness brought him to confess that even as a creature, before sin entered the world, human beings exist "without any merit or worthiness" in themselves, but rather on the basis of the pure fatherly divine goodness and mercy, which produce thanks and praise, service and obedience in believers. Sin has entered the world, and in explaining the Second Article Luther centered upon Christ as "Lord," truly God, truly human, who has purchased and won his chosen people back from Satan and sin. Especially in the *Large Catechism* the reformer emphasized Christ's battle with Satan and the triumph of his resurrection against sin and every evil. Luther's explanation of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit reminds those who learn it by heart that they are totally dependent on God's mercy, for on their own power they are unable to believe in Christ. The Holy Spirit calls and gathers believers into his church and there gives them forgiveness of sins, their justification in God's sight.

The Christian life that the Holy Spirit cultivates reacts to God's goodness in faith, and faith expresses itself first of all in conversation with the heavenly Father, who has first spoken to us. Luther recognizes that God manages his universe without our prayer, but God made us to be his conversation partners. He wants to hear us, just as a loving father wants to hear his children. Therefore, we pray that God will deal with us in moving us to hallow his name, to experience his rule and his will, to enjoy temporal blessings, to live in the forgiveness of sins and to battle against temptation and evil in every form. The Christian life consists further in regular use of the sacraments. Baptism shapes the life of daily repentance on the basis of the new birth God gave us when his re-creating Word made us anew as his children. He feeds us regularly through the gift of the body and blood of Christ, given under bread and wine, for the forgiveness of our sins, which is the renewal of life and salvation from all evil. Because, as Luther once wrote, "it is wonderful to receive God's goodness in so many ways," Christians also rejoice in the opportunity to receive forgiveness from other believers in confession and absolution as well.

Luther then gave his young pupils models for daily meditation on the catechism and for prayers of response to the Word of God they found there. He also presented a framework in the table of Christian callings for thinking about God's calling them to specific places and tasks of service. The Creator provides for

his creation through these callings, which set people in relationships of care and concern for one another, when he calls them to be pastors and members of congregations, subjects or citizens and rulers, husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees. With a brief, biblical description of these callings and a general admonition to love the neighbor, Luther brought his instruction for the life of repentance to a close.

The appearance of the *Small Catechism* launched a revolution in popular piety. Short enough to be memorized (it was introduced to a society in which literacy was still relatively rare), it met the need of the believer to know the fundamentals of biblical teaching which enable people to live out their Christian life. The *Small Catechism* has been translated into more than two hundred languages and is learned today by children around the world. Other theologians from all confessions followed Luther's model in composing catechisms, but none of their work has had as wide influence as the little book in which Luther confessed his faith before the children of Germany.

The Formula of Concord

Every movement which propagates a new view of the world and seeks to change the way people live experiences a crisis comes of age. After the leaders of such a movement have laid down their fundamental ideas, changing times, maturing institutions, and deeper thinking in the key categories of the movement's founders force re-examination and re-formulation upon those who follow those leaders. That process took place also among Luther's and Melanchthon's followers. Already in the late 1520s one of their best students, Johann Agricola, objected to their view that the law had to be preached to believers. This dispute arose a second time in the late 1530s, when Luther decisively insisted on the proper distinction of law and gospel as God's instrument for fostering the life of daily repentance. About the same time Melanchthon had a series of unpublicized disagreements with his old friend, Nikolaus von Amsdorff. The two had stood by Luther's side in the earliest days of the Reformation, before Amsdorff became superintendent of the church of Magdeburg in 1524. In the 1530s and 1540s they disagreed on the "necessity" of contrition and good works for salvation, on the role of the human will in conversion and repentance, on the relationship of church and secular government, on the relationship of the Lutheran churches to Rome, and on the proper definition of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

In some way these differences and others would have been discussed within the Lutheran churches of the second half of the sixteenth century. The way in which they were actually discussed was determined by the outbreak of the war against the Evangelical estates that Emperor Charles V had planned since the Edict of Worms ordered the eradication of Luther's followers in 1521. Luther died in February 1546. By the summer of that year Charles had marshaled forces from papal service, from his own lands in Spain, and from his German domains. He attacked the forces of the leading Lutheran princes, Elector Johann Friedrich of

Saxony and Landgrave Philip of Hesse and finally defeated them on April 24, 1548. The two princes were condemned to death; although that sentence was not carried out, they remained in jail for several years. It appeared that Charles had mastered the "religious problem" that had plagued him for almost three decades.

In Saxony Johann Friedrich's cousin, Moritz, who had fought on Charles' side despite the fact that he had followed his father, Heinrich, into the Lutheran faith, took over the electoral title and much of the Elector's territory. Wittenberg and its university fell under his control. Moritz believed that Charles had guaranteed him the right to continue the Lutheran Reformation in his lands. Charles and his brother Ferdinand could not remember giving such a guarantee. To preserve his fresh hold on his cousin's title and lands, Moritz needed to find a way out of being caught between emperor and strongly-committed Lutheran leadership among the nobles and burghers of his electorate. He turned for a solution not only to his secular advisors but also to his theological counselors, among them the professors at his newly acquired university in Wittenberg.

Charles' troops had driven several hundred pastors from their pulpits in southern German villages and towns in the first stage of his re-catholization efforts. Melanchthon and his colleagues feared that the same thing could happen in Saxony if the emperor should attack Moritz. They were therefore willing to assist their new political overlord in formulating some kind of religious policy that would prevent invasion by imperial forces. Charles proceeded to have a policy composed for the return of Evangelical territories and towns to the Roman obedience. At the imperial diet that began in Augsburg in late 1547, the emperor appointed a commission to shape a plan that expressed the doctrine of the church and dictated reform of church practices along lines prescribed by an Erasmian model for the improvement of the moral and organizational life of the church. The document that Karl's commission issued in April 1548 made two concessions to Evangelical reform, the marriage of priests and communion in both kinds. Its position on justification brought faith and works together as the grounds for human righteousness before God. It preserved the doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass and other elements of medieval theology. Called "the Augsburg Interim" by its foes because it was intended only to remain in force until the Council of Trent had made permanent disposition of the issues raised by the reformers, it was subject to sharp criticism from Melanchthon and other theologians in the Wittenberg circle.

The emperor put intense pressure on Elector Moritz to introduce the Augsburg Interim into his lands. Saxon theologians and nobles, citizens in the towns and peasants in the countryside opposed it fiercely. Moritz's government tried to find a middle way between the two sources of pressure. In a series of meetings filled with tension and dispute a draft of a new religious policy emerged. This Resolution was presented to the Saxon diet in the last week of December 1548 and was rejected. An excerpt from it was published, and an agenda based on the practices it proposed was imposed on some towns. But the chief importance of this Leipzig Interim or Resolution lay in the fact that those who regarded it as a

compromise, a betrayal of God, the gospel, and Luther, circulated its text among the pastors in Saxony and neighboring lands. within a few weeks it fell under sharp criticism. The text, on which Melanchthon, his Wittenberg colleague Georg Major, and other theologians worked attempted to preserve the Lutheran doctrine of justification although it also emphasized the necessity of the works that faith produces in order to satisfy Roman Catholic fears that the Lutherans were promoting licentious and society chaos. To meet imperial demands the document also intended to show the emperor that electoral Saxony was in at least partial compliance with the practices demanded in the Augsburg Interim. This compromise was formulated in accord with the principle that Melanchthon had espoused in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, that "adiaphora," neutral practices neither forbidden nor commanded by God, could be accepted, even though burdensome, for the sake of peace and unity in the church.

Many of Luther's and Melanchthon's students, already angered by Moritz's betrayal of the Evangelical cause and Johann Friedrich, were deeply offended by what they saw as Melanchthon's complicity with the prince they were calling the "Judas of Meissen" (the area of his origin) They felt betrayed by Melanchthon's willingness to compromise with the papal foe. Melanchthon felt betrayed by these students and old friends, who were criticizing his best-faith efforts to prevent the destruction of his church and university, the eradication of his confession of the faith, through imperial invasion and occupation. The two sides fell into a cycle of mistrust, bitterness, and rancor bred by the feelings of betrayal on each side. These critics of the Wittenberg professors were led by one of their own number, a young Italian-Croatian named Matthias Flacius Illyricus, who gave up his professorship of Hebrew at the university in protest against the Leipzig "Interim," as he called it when he published the text that Moritz's government had not made public.

With support from Nikolaus von Amsdorff and a significant group of his (Flacius's) younger contemporaries, Flacius began a war of words against what he and his comrades believed to be the Wittenberg betrayal of the Gospel itself, of Luther's legacy, and of the Lutheran confession of the faith. Controversy whirled around the claim by Flacius, his friend Nikolaus Gallus, the leading spokesman of the church in Hamburg, Joachim Westphal, and others that "in a time of persecution there are no adiaphora." The dispute over "adiaphora" was never concerned with which adiaphora were acceptable and which were not. It was a dispute over the proper way in which to confess the faith. It boiled and then simmered for twenty years and became the occasion for other controversies. In these controversies two "parties" emerged. Since the end of the eighteenth century scholars have labeled the partisans of Melanchthon "Philippists" and their opponents "Gnesio-Lutherans." It must be remembered that all members of both parties were influenced by both Luther and Melanchthon and that the lines between the two groups were somewhat fluid. Furthermore, within each group there were some significant differences on certain key issues. Many pastors and professors within the Lutheran churches were associated with neither group. But much of the

sharpening of the definition of what it means to be Lutheran did take place in the context of the disputes between these two groups in the period between 1549 and 1577.

In the effort to defend the religious policy of Moritz's government, particularly its explanation of the relationship between faith and good works, Georg Major asserted that good works are necessary for salvation. He explained that believers cannot live the saved life without doing the works that faith produces. Amsdorff remembered that when he and Major had served the church of Magdeburg together in the 1520s and 1530s, Roman Catholic foes had tried to have them both executed as heretics for refusing to teach that good works are necessary for salvation. Amsdorff could not imagine that Major had used the phrase for any other reason than to undermine Luther's doctrine of justification and restore papal teaching. Major insisted that he only wanted to affirm the sanctified life of believers. Both Luther and Melanchthon had taught that God is totally responsible for all that takes place in creation and that he holds his human creatures totally responsible for all that he places within their sphere of taking care of his world. The Wittenberg theologians always tried to hold these two concepts of divine and human responsibility in tension rather than to homogenize and harmonize them as medieval theologians had done. To maintain this tension Luther and Melanchthon insisted that all theology be practiced within the framework of the distinction of law and gospel. Major and Amsdorff were struggling over the proper and clear way to express these two aspects of God's Word for human beings in this controversy named for Major, the "majoristic controversy."

Out of this controversy grew another, largely among Gnesio-Lutherans, who divided over Melanchthon's formulation of a "third use of the law," that is, the instructional use of the law for Christians. Anton Otto of Nordhausen, Andreas Poach of Erfurt, and others were labeled "antinomian" even though they practiced the second, theological, accusing use of the law. But they feared that the suggestion of a positive use of the law in the Christian life would lead to a dependence on good works for salvation. Flacius and others rejected this view. A similar debate occurred at the faculty of Frankfurt an der Oder, in the late 1550s, when the Gnesio-Lutheran Andreas Musculus argued against the use of the word "necessary" in connection good works, while his Philippist colleague Abdias Praetorius argued that parishioners must be told that their faith in Christ will of necessity produce good works.

Flacius also exchanged written tracts with Wittenberg students and professors over the proper definition of "repentance" and "gospel." He conceded that Melanchthon's later usage of these terms in a broader sense, which embraced the entire biblical message and plan for human life, was not wrong. But he insisted that the proper or narrow sense of repentance described the working of the law that brings remorse and regret, and that the term Gospel should generally be reserved for the message of the forgiveness of sins wrought by Christ's death and resurrection solely on the basis of God's grace and mercy.

A dispute related to these discussion of the proper balance between God's responsibility for human salvation and human obedience and integrity as a creature of God burst into public view in 1558. Amsdorff criticized the view advanced by a Leipzig pastor and professor, Johann Pfeffinger, that seemed to make coming to faith dependent on an act of the human will, even though it was so weak that it could not consent to God's offer of grace without the aid of that grace. Pfeffinger insisted that only God's grace saves, but he also attempted to defend the integrity of the human being as a willing and thinking creature. He failed to make clear that the willing and thinking of the child of God is moved by the Holy Spirit. Similar views were defended against Flacius by his colleague at the University of Jena, Viktorin Strigel, in 1560 in a formal academic disputation at Weimar, and this "synergistic controversy" opened up more than a decade of dispute. Strigel proposed defining what it means to be human and to be a sinner within the framework of the Aristotelian philosophy that they had both learned from Melanchthon. Aristotle taught that all things consist of a defining "substance" that determines the basic nature of an individual object and individual characteristics of the specific object, which he called "accidents." Because he believed the latter term too weak for what original sin has done to the human creature, Flacius said that original sin forms the "substance" of the sinner. Strigel rejected that idea because he believed it sacrificed the integrity of the human being as a creature of God, even after the fall. Flacius alienated himself from a majority of other Gnesio-Lutherans with his unyielding defense of this terminology. A bitter controversy erupted between him and former friends, such as Johannes Wigand and Tileman Hesshus, over the way to describe original sin properly.

In the continuing dispute over the freedom or bondage of the will a Mansfeld pastor, Cyriakus Spangenberg, developed elements of Luther's thought into a doctrine of God's election or predestination of those human beings whom he chose to be his own believing children without any condition in them. His sermons *On Predestination* of 1567 launched a small dispute with the professors at Wittenberg, who feared that talk of predestination would lead either to arrogant refusal to obey God's commands (by people who believed they were elect and could therefore do anything they pleased) or to despair (in people who believed that they were not elect and therefore felt totally alienated from and rejected by God). Martin Chemnitz intervened with a published sermon of his own on the subject. Like Spangenberg, he affirmed that God is not responsible for evil in any form, also not for human unbelief. He also confessed that salvation lies alone in God's decision, made before the foundation of the world independent of any human performance or merit (Eph. 1:3-14). Both Spangenberg and Chemnitz insisted that the doctrine of election can only be used as an affirmation of God's unshakable commitment to those to whom he has promised salvation in Christ through the means of grace.

Although Gnesio-Lutherans and Philippists disagreed with each other on these issues, they were united in their opposition to the definition of justification by faith advanced by Andreas Osiander in Königsberg. Osiander had fled Nürnberg in 1548 when imperial troops enforced the Augsburg Interim in the city. He had

promoted the Reformation there as preacher and pastor for a quarter century. But it became clear in Königsberg that he had constructed his interpretation of Luther's thought upon foundations laid by his early training in Hebrew studies, specifically the method of interpretation called the Kabbala. This method gave him presuppositions from the followers of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato. Plato's spiritualizing thought did not have a place for a strong Creator, who created all things through his Word, and therefore, Osiander could not believe that the word of forgiveness was enough to make a real change in sinners. He rejected Luther's belief that God's Word does create a new reality in the person in whom the Holy Spirit effects trust. Osiander taught instead that the divine nature of Christ comes to dwell in believers, and that this divine nature makes them righteous in God's sight. Nearly all contemporary Lutheran theologians rejected this idea of salvation by the indwelling of Christ's divine nature. They insisted that his sacrifice, death, and resurrection atone for sin and lay the basis for forgiveness and new life as a child of God.

Another set of controversies developed around the definition of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Against the Genevan-French theologian Jean Calvin the Hamburg pastor Joachim Westphal wrote a series of treatises (1553-1557), defending Luther's understanding of the true presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacramental elements. Westphal also opposed a pastor in Bremen, Albert Hardenberg, who followed Martin Bucer in ambiguously formulating how Christ is present in the Lord's Supper. Hardenberg's colleague Johannes Timann joined Westphal in criticizing Hardenberg. Their dispute came to a head at a meeting of Lower Saxon ministeria in Lüneburg in 1561. There the theologians of Braunschweig, Joachim Mörlin and Martin Chemnitz, took the lead in arguing against Hardenberg's position and defending Luther's. That defense rested primarily on the argument that Christ's words, "this is my body" and "this is my blood" should be interpreted literally because there is no reason not to interpret them so. God indeed has the power to give his people the gift of life and salvation through a sacramental action which mysteriously brings the saving body and blood of Christ to the communicants. Chemnitz also developed a supporting argument that Westphal and Timann had taken over from Luther. Because in the one person of Christ the divine nature and the human nature are united, remaining distinct, but inseparable, the characteristics of each nature may be shared with the other nature. This had been an important part of the argument against Calvin's and Zwingli's followers in the theology of Württemberg church leaders Johannes Brenz and Jakob Andreae, theologians outside the two parties of north German Lutheranism.

Parallel but not identical ideas were developed out of some of Melanchthon's later discussion of Christology and the Lord's Supper by his followers in Wittenberg. By 1569 the leadership of Wittenberg's theological faculty was passing to a new generation. Its new leader, Christoph Pezel, had not known Luther at all and hardly knew Melanchthon. With support from the medical professor Kaspar Peucer, Melanchthon's son-in-law, Pezel taught a spiritualizing view of Christ's presence in

the Lord's Supper that resembled in some ways the position of Calvin although it grew out of some of Melanchthon's own ideas at the end of his life. This new theology of the Lord's Supper attracted attacks from Gnesio-Lutheran theologians in the late 1560s and early 1570s.

Nonetheless, the participants in these disputes longed for harmony with others in the Wittenberg circle, and they sought resolution of their differences and agreement on pure doctrine. Since 1553 princes, particularly Duke Christoph of Württemberg, had been trying to draw theologians of the churches of the Augsburg Confession together. Similar efforts had grown somewhat independently out of the desire of theologians to reach reconciliation that would clearly confess the truth of God's Word. Representatives of Gnesio-Lutheran ducal Saxony and Philippist electoral Saxony met in a new series of conversations in Altenburg in the fall of 1568 and the spring of 1569 to resolve differences. When the talks broke off in early 1569, the prospects of reconciliation among the feuding theologians of that time seemed very dim. But just this time Christoph sent his foremost theologian, Jakob Andreae, north, to aid in introducing the Reformation into the lands of his cousin, Duke Julius of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. The duke also commissioned his foremost ecclesiastical diplomat to try to interest theologians and governmental leaders in north Germany in a new approach to settling the disputes.

Andreae worked with Martin Chemnitz and a theologian on loan from Elector August of Saxony (Moritz's brother, who succeeded him when he died in battle in 1553), Nikolaus Selnecker. Although these three churchmen did not always get along with each other, they did learn to work together during the introduction of Lutheran reform in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, and that proved helpful a few years later as they contributed to the drafting of the Formula of Concord. In 1569 and 1570 Andreae worked tirelessly to create agreement among te disputing parties, using as his instrument of concord five brief articles, treating justification, good works, the free will, adiaphora, and the Lord's Supper. Philippists had placed their hopes on reconciliation efforts led by the princes, with short definitions of pure teaching and no condemnations of false teaching. Andreae's "Five Articles" fit this approach. In contrast, Gnesio-Lutherans favored efforts led by theologians, with detailed definitions of pure teaching, and explicit condemnations of false teaching and false teachers. They were therefore suspicious of Andreae's efforts. These efforts failed because the Philippists rejected Andreae's views of the Lord's Supper and Christology, and the Gnesio-Lutherans regarded him as untrustworthy because he was too willing to compromise to attain a common agreement. In 1570 Andreae returned to Württemberg without success in achieving concord among the Lutheran parties.

He was not to be discouraged, however. In 1573 he composed *Sechs Christlicher Predig Von den Spaltungen so sich zwischen den Theologen Augspurgischer Confession . . . erhaben*. A new confession written in 1567 by Mörlin and Chemnitz for the church of Prussia and recent attacks from electoral Saxony on the Gnesio-Lutherans had expanded the agenda of controversy, and this

work's table of contents included 1) justification, 2) good works, 3) original sin and the freedom of the will, 4) adiaphora and confessing the faith, 5) the proper distinction of law and gospel and the use of the law in the lives of the regenerate, and 6) Christology. This book contained much more detail on the controversies and listed the names of those whose positions Andreae wished to reject. They were almost without exception either electoral Saxon Philippists or supporters of Flacius's view of original sin. Andreae had moved into the Gnesio-Lutheran orbit. He asked Chemnitz and other north German theologians to join him in an appeal for Lutheran concord on the basis of these sermons. He was told that the sermonic form was not wissenschaftlich enough to settle the differences and that he should ask his colleagues at the University of Tübingen to join him in constructing a more suitable formula for concord. He assumed the task alone, sending Chemnitz and David Chytraeus of the University of Rostock his "Swabian Concord" in November 1574. Chemnitz and Chytraeus led discussions of this document throughout north Germany and produced a revision entitled the "Swabian-Saxon Concord." While this process was going on, the princes of Baden, Württemberg, and Henneberg commissioned their own theologians to compose an alternate settlement, which they did at a meeting at Maulbronn Abbey in January 1576.

Several princes were engaged in support for these efforts at achieving theological concord among the Lutheran churches. Key at this point became Elector August of Saxony. In April 1574 he had discovered that some of most trusted advisors, including Kaspar Peucer, had been working behind his back to replace Luther's view of the true presence of Christ's body and blood in the teaching of the Saxon church with the teaching that Christ is spiritually present in the sacrament. He sent those whom he felt had deceived him most treacherously to jail and dismissed a number of others from their posts at the university or in the church. In trying to reconstruct his church he borrowed Andreae from Württemberg. Together the Elector and the Swabian professor led an effort that produced the Formula of Concord. Chemnitz and Chytraeus joined two representatives from Brandenburg, Andreas Musculus and Christoph Körner, and a number of Saxon pastors, including Selnecker, and Andreae at a meeting in Torgau in late May 1576. They composed the "Torgau Book" on the basis of the Maulbronn Formula and the Swabian-Saxon Concord and circulated to all evangelical ministeria in Germany for critique.

A year later the committee of Chemnitz, Andreae, Chytraeus, Selnecker, Musculus, and Körner met again at Bergen Abbey near Magdeburg, incorporated some suggestions from the ministeria, and prepared the document which came to be known as the "Solid Declaration" of the Formula of Concord. It contained twelve articles, on original sin, the freedom of the will, justification, good works, the distinction of law and gospel, the use of the law in the Christian life, the Lord's Supper, the person of Christ, the descent into hell (a Christological question associated with the rejection of Calvinist arguments against Lutheran insistence that Christ's divine attributes are shared with his human nature), adiaphora, and Gnadenwahl. The twelfth article rejected errors of Anabaptists, Spiritualist, and Anti-Trinitarians. This "Solid Declaration" was circulated for subscription by clergy

in about two-thirds of evangelical Germany. The princes believed that the "Solid Declaration" was too long for easy use, so Andreae composed a summary of it, the "Epitome" of the Formula of Concord.

The death of the Calvinist elector of the Palatinate, Friedrich III, the Pious, brought his Lutheran son Ludwig VI to the electoral throne. Delicate negotiations with Ludwig led to Andreae's writing a preface explaining the development of the Formula of Concord in historical context in a manner designed to win Ludwig's support. The effort succeeded, and Ludwig joined Johann Georg of Brandenburg and August of Saxony, the three temporal electors of the empire, in support of the publication of the Formula together with other confessions of faith regarded universally among Lutherans as authoritative interpretations of Scripture in *The Book of Concord*. It appeared on June 25, 1580, the fiftieth anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession.

The Book of Concord

The Book of Concord took the form of a new literary genre, the collection of confessional documents. In 1560 Philip Melanchthon edited a collection of his own writings, including the Augsburg Confession and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, which was entitled a *Corpus Doctrinae*. Since the 1530s Wittenberg usage had designated the central ideas or topics of the biblical message a "body of doctrine," an expression for what the ancient church called the "rule of faith" (*analogia fidei*). The term became more specific by the 1550s, when Wittenberg professors began listing documents that contained this body of doctrine or rule of faith, the Augsburg Confession, its Apology, the Saxon Confession of 1551, and Melanchthon's *Loci communes*. With the appearance of the collection of these and other documents in the *Corpus doctrinae Philippicum* the term took on the meaning of such a compilation of documents intended to determine the standards for public teaching. Several principalities took this work as such a standard, while other territories and cities produced their own "bodies of doctrine." Martin Chemnitz had edited three himself, for Braunschweig-Lüneburg, Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, and, with Mörlin, Prussia. Although the term "body of doctrine" did not occur in its title, the Book of Concord was such a book.

The Lutherans had always presumed that their teaching was in accord with that of the ancient church, and therefore they included the three ancient creeds in their new "body of doctrine," *The Book of Concord*. The Apostles Creed came into use in Rome around the year 200 and served as a public statement of faith, a guide for catechetical instruction, a liturgical confession, and a guide for witnessing to those outside the faith. The Nicean Creed reached its official form in the 380s although much of its text was decided upon at the Council of Nicea of 325, which affirmed the divinity of Christ against the heretic Arius. The Athanasian Creed was originally a litany for public worship. Named after the defender of the doctrine of the Trinity at the Council of Nicea, Athanasius of Alexandria, who died in 373, it was composed, probably in Gaul, around 600. It incorporates not only the Trinitarian

theology of Athanasius but also the further development of the expression of the doctrine of the person of Christ that was completed at the Council of Chalcedon of 451. To the three ancient creeds the editors of the Book of Concord added the Augsburg Confession, its Apology, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Luther's catechisms, and the Formula of Concord.

Although criticism of the Formula of Concord and the Book of Concord arose from followers of Flacius because of the rejection of his views of original sin, and from Calvinists and certain followers of Melanchthon because of the Christological and sacramental teaching of the Formula, the publication of the *Book of Concord* initiated in a more settled time in the history of Lutheran theology than the thirty years preceding its publication. The century-and-a-half long period often designated "Lutheran Orthodoxy" produced much more lively discussions of biblical teaching and much more pastorally sensitive training of pastors than is usually recognized in the scholarship of the last one hundred fifty years. The *Book of Concord* did define certain basic lines of thought which have guided the further proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Lutheran churches throughout the world ever since.

As Lutherans seek to give witness to that Gospel in the twenty-first century, for people outside the faith, who need to be called to trust in Jesus for the restoration of full human life as God designed it, and for others within the household of faith, their gaze must be drawn back to the *Book of Concord* and through it "to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments, as to the pure, clear foundation of Israel," (FC SD, Concerning the Binding Summary §3). There we find the Word of life that comes from Christ's cross and empty tomb, the Word that alone creates new life in him, life that lasts forever.