

**THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION &  
FORMULA FOR THE GOVERNMENT &  
DISCIPLINE OF THE EVANGELICAL  
LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE GENERAL  
SYNOD IN THE UNITED STATES**

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The Augsburg Confession & Formula for the Government & Discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the General Synod in the United States by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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## AUGSBURG CONFESSION.

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ALL regularly constituted Lutheran Synods, connected with the General Synod, "receive and hold, with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of our fathers, *the word of God*, as contained in the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as *the only infallible rule of faith and practice*, and *the Augsburg Confession*, as a correct exhibition of the *fundamental doctrines of the Divine word*, and of the faith of our Church founded upon that word." Constitution of the General Synod, as adopted in 1868 and 1869. See Art. II., Sect. 3.

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### PART FIRST.

#### ARTICLE I.—OF GOD.

OUR churches with one accord teach, that the decree of the Council of Nice, concerning the unity of the Divine essence, and concerning the three persons, is true, and ought to be confidently believed, viz.: that there is one Divine essence, which is called and is God, eternal, incorporeal, indivisible, infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness, the Creator and Preserver of all things visible and invisible: and yet, that there are

three persons, who are of the same essence and power, and are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And the term person they use in the same sense in which it is employed by ecclesiastical writers on this subject: to signify, not a part or quality of something else, but that which subsists of itself.

They condemn all heresies, which have sprung up against this article, such as that of the Manichæans, who maintained the existence of two principles, an evil and a good one. Likewise the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and all such like. They condemn also the earlier and later Samosateans, who, whilst they contend for the existence of only one Person, subtly and impiously assert of the Word and Holy Spirit, that they are not distinct persons, but that the Word signifies the vocal word, and the Spirit the motion created in things.

#### ARTICLE II.—OF ORIGINAL SIN.

Our churches likewise teach, that since the fall of Adam, all men who are naturally engendered, are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God or confidence towards Him, and with sinful propensities: and that this disease, or original sin, is truly sin, and still condemns and causes eternal death to those who are not born again by baptism and the Holy Spirit.

They condemn the Pelagians and others, who deny that natural depravity is sin, and who, to the disparagement of the glory of Christ's merits and benefits, contend that man may be justified before God by the powers of his own reason.



**ARTICLE III.—OF THE SON OF GOD AND HIS  
MEDIATORIAL WORK.**

They likewise teach, that the Word, that is, the Son of God, assumed human nature, in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are two natures, human and divine, inseparably united in unity of person, one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary; who truly suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried, that he might reconcile the Father to us, and be a sacrifice not only for original sin, but also for all actual sins of men. The same descended into hell and truly rose again the third day; then ascended to heaven, that he might sit at the right hand of the Father, might reign forever over all creatures, and might sanctify those who believe in him, by sending into their hearts the Holy Spirit, who may govern, console, quicken, and defend them against the devil and the power of sin. The same Christ will return again openly, that he may judge the living and the dead, etc., according to the Apostles' Creed.

**ARTICLE IV.—OF JUSTIFICATION.**

They in like manner teach, that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works; but that they are justified gratuitously for Christ's sake, through faith; when they believe, that they are received into favor, and that their sins are remitted for the sake of Christ, who made satisfaction

for our transgressions by his death. This faith God imputes for righteousness before him. (Rom. iii. and iv.)

ARTICLE V.—OF THE MINISTERIAL  
OFFICE.

In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry has been instituted, for teaching the gospel, and administering the sacraments. For through the instrumentality of the word and sacraments, the Holy Spirit is given, who, when and where it pleases God, works faith in those who hear the gospel, namely, that God, for Christ's sake, and not on account of any merit in us, justifies those who believe that they are received into favor for Christ's sake.

They condemn the Anabaptists and others, who suppose that the Holy Spirit is given to men by their own preparations and works, without the external word.

ARTICLE VI.—CONCERNING NEW OBEDIENCE.

They likewise teach, that this faith must bring forth good fruits; and that it is our duty to perform those good works, which God has commanded, because it is his will, and not in the expectation of thereby meriting justification before him. For, remission of sins and justification are secured by faith; as the declaration of Christ testifies: "When ye shall have done all those things, say, we are unprofitable servants."

The same thing is taught by the ancient ecclesiastical writers: for Ambrose says, "This has been ordained

by God, that he who believes in Christ shall be saved without works, receiving remission of sins gratuitously through faith alone."

#### ARTICLE VII.—OF THE CHURCH.

They likewise teach, that there will always be one holy church. But the church is the congregation of the saints, in which the gospel is correctly taught, and the sacraments are properly administered. And for the true unity of the church, it is sufficient to agree concerning the doctrines of the gospel, and the administration of the sacraments. Nor is it necessary that the same human traditions, that is, rites and ceremonies instituted by men, should be everywhere observed. As Paul says: "One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all," etc.

#### ARTICLE VIII.—WHAT THE CHURCH IS.

Although the church is properly a congregation of saints and true believers; yet as, in the present life, many hypocrites and wicked men are mingled with them, it is lawful for us also to receive the sacraments, though administered by bad men, agreeably to the declaration of our Saviour, "that the Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat," etc. And on account of the appointment and command of Christ, both the word and sacraments are efficacious, even when administered by wicked men.

They condemn the Donatists and such like, who denied that it is lawful to make use of the ministry of