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## Preaching on the Augsburg Confession

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your, or rather our, faculty, although with a good deal of difficulty. . . . This I have most certainly in memory, and I am not conscious of an oath." (21a, 15—17.) Luther then, in spite of the correctness of his position in the premises, modestly asks his former teachers to overlook and forgive any transgression of academic custom and usages, since such behavior would have to be charged to ignorance.

It seems that this letter finally settled the controversy, for his later relations with both the university and the convent at Erfurt, though not exactly cordial, were no longer strained. In fact, after Luther had been made *vicarius* of his order, he found no difficulty in appointing his friend Johann Lang prior of the Augustinian convent at Erfurt, as he writes on May 29, 1516. (21a, 25, 26.)

P. E. KRETZMANN.

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### Preaching on the Augsburg Confession.

The four-hundredth anniversary of Luther's Small Catechism, celebrated wherever the name of Luther was known, has undoubtedly been a source of richest blessing. Pastors and people became better acquainted with its history and contents, learned to appreciate this little book the more highly, and thanked God the more sincerely for this precious gift. The sermons preached on the Catechism during 1929 were not in vain, but productive of splendid results, so sure as Is. 55, 10, 11 still holds good. Let us hope that similar streams of blessing will flow from the celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, which rounds out the series of anniversaries begun in 1917. Though last, it is by no means the least in this series and certainly deserves to be celebrated throughout the Lutheran world. The President of Synod has appointed a committee which is to suggest ways and means for a fitting celebration of this important event. This committee has requested the editors to supply sermon material and to encourage the brethren to bring out in their sermons also the great importance of those epochal events of June 1530. True, our church periodicals are bringing interesting articles on the history of the Augustana, yet it is an indisputable fact that most of our people do not read their church-papers. (By the way, ought not and could not the year 1930 be made a banner year for our church periodicals? Would not that be a very fitting manner of celebrating this anniversary?) Yet we should fail to improve on a God-given opportunity if we failed to call the attention of our people also in public worship to this event of outstanding importance in the history of our Church. We therefore heartily endorse the suggestion of our Dr. L. Fuerbringer in the *Lutheraner* of Jan-



uary 14, that every pastor preach a series of doctrinal sermons on the twenty-one fundamental articles of our Augsburg Confession, including in these sermons the abuses mentioned in the concluding seven articles. In preparing this series, the pastor should make it a point to study not only the articles in the confession. He should not neglect to devote some time to a careful reading of the corresponding article of the Apology and in his sermon quote freely from both writings. In this manner the Augustana as well as the Apology will become better known to our people and be more highly appreciated by them. These services should be advertised quite extensively, and the unchurched should be invited to attend them in order that they may become acquainted with the doctrines and confessions of our Lutheran Church. Concordia Publishing House offers the Augsburg Confession in tract form at \$6.67 per hundred. Our congregations should make extensive use of this opportunity to bring this confession into the homes of Lutherans and non-Lutherans especially during this anniversary year.

We naturally cannot furnish outlines on all the doctrinal articles of the confession. We must confine ourselves to supplying outlines for a series of three preparatory sermons, one on the occasion, one on the presentation, and one on the importance of the Augsburg Confession.

Besides the material offered in our periodicals the attention of the brethren is called to the splendid "Historical Introductions" in our *Triglotta*, to Prof. Theodore Graebner's latest publication, *The Story of the Augsburg Confession* (price, \$1.00), and to Dr. F. Pieper's classical *Das Grundbekenntnis*, a new edition of which will shortly be placed on the market by Concordia Publishing House. Brethren, let us implore God to grant His blessing upon our efforts. T. L.

### 1. The Occasion for the Confession.

2 Cor. 4, 13.

The Lutheran Church is celebrating the four-hundredth anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession, an epochal event in the history of our Church. The Augustana, together with the Ecumenical Creeds, is the basic confession of our Lutheran Church and therefore well worthy of our serious consideration and study. The congregation has decided that the pastor preach a series of sermons in order to acquaint its members with the contents and the history of the Augsburg Confession.

The first question naturally asked is, What induced our fathers to write this confession? Had we asked them personally, they might have answered in the words of our text: "We having . . . therefore speak."



**THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION THE FRUIT OF THE  
SPIRIT OF FAITH:**

1. *That faith which believes;*      2. *That faith which speaks.*

1.

Paul says that the selfsame spirit of faith dwells in him that dwelt in the psalmist of old, that spirit which believes, which accepts God's Word as truth, does not doubt or question, but simply says yea and amen to every word of the Lord. This selfsame spirit of humble faith, of unquestioning submission to the word of Scripture as to the infallible Word of God, characterized the confessors at Augsburg, in fact, was the prime motive for their confession. Their purpose in preparing this confession was not personal aggrandizement, much less political advantages, the disruption of the empire, the weakening of the emperor's power, nor was it the desire to air their own views and opinions. All their words and actions leading up to that memorable June 25 bring out clearly their desire to speak what their heart believed, their resolve to confess the whole truth of the glorious Gospel of Christ Jesus. This fact is seen the clearer if we contrast with the words and actions of Luther and his followers the utterances and deeds of the opponents. Then it will become evident that bluff William of Bavaria spoke truly at Augsburg when he told Eck, "Then the Lutherans, I understand, sit in the Scriptures and we of the Pope's Church beside the Scriptures!" (*Trigl.*, 19b.)

Contrast Luther's noble confession at Worms (Quote!) and the emperor's words spoken on the day after Luther's noble confession, "I am ready to exercise all authority for the defense of the Catholic religion, which has been handed down by my predecessors, the kings and emperors, and now is in danger of being brought low by a miserable monk." Lutherans — the Scriptures; Charles V — the religion handed down, tradition.

Compare the vow of Charles V on the day of his coronation with the answer of the Saxon elector when the emperor demanded that Lutheran preaching at Augsburg be stopped. Charles V: "I, Charles, Roman king and soon, by the grace of God, also emperor, promise and swear by God and St. Peter that in the future I shall at all times defend with all my power the papal dignity and the church at Rome, shall injure no liberty of the Church, but shall as much as possible preserve and safeguard its power, jurisdiction, and government." The Elector of Saxony: "I cannot for conscience' sake stop the preaching of the Lutheran doctrine, since nothing else than the clear truth of God and the Holy Scriptures is being preached. Under such conditions it would certainly be horrible to surrender God's Word and His truth."

Contrast the intolerant demand of the papists at Speyer, 1529, that the edict of Worms be strictly carried out because the majority so



ruled with the noble protest of the Lutherans at Speyer that "they herewith protest before God, who shall prove all hearts and judge righteously, and also before mankind and all creatures, that they for themselves and their adherents will never consent to anything that in these matters aforementioned or in other matters has been considered and resolved against God, His holy Word, our conscience, and the salvation of our souls." The papists: Majority rules; the Lutherans: God and His holy Word decides.

Consider that the Lutherans continually pleaded for a general church council while the papists consistently refused to grant this request, knowing that a confession of Lutheran doctrine would open the eyes of the world to the fact that Luther's doctrine agreed with the Scriptures.

Contrast the attitude of Zwingli and his followers, who made reason the norm of doctrine, with Luther's noble stand at Marburg.

Such was the spirit which animated Luther and his followers: "We believe, therefore we speak." This spirit urged them to grasp the opportunity to confess the truth offered by the edict of the Emperor Charles V calling a diet at Augsburg for the year 1530. (Quote!) No sooner was this edict published than the elector conferred with his chancellor, Dr. Brueck, who advised him "to have the opinion on which our party has hitherto stood and to which they have adhered properly drawn up in writing, with a thorough confirmation thereof *from the divine Scriptures.*" Note again: "We believe, therefore we speak."

Now outline briefly the story of the preparation of the Augustana, written by Melancthon on the basis of the Marburg, Schwabach, and Torgau Articles, after the Lutheran theologians had convinced themselves that only the truth of Scripture was being confessed. The Lutheran princes read the confession very carefully before signing it, since they would subscribe to nothing but the truth. On the day before the presentation, Elector John went into the privacy of his chamber, once more compared the confession with the Bible, and being confirmed in his conviction of its Scripturalness, prayed long and fervently for the success of the Lutheran cause.

The motive of our fathers in writing this confession clearly was nothing but the desire to speak because they believed, the fervent wish to effect a union of divided Christendom on the basis of Scripture only. For them no union without unity, no union at the expense of truth. That would have been peace gained, but Christ lost, the Pope acknowledged, but the Savior denied.

We are children of the Reformation. Let us follow in the footsteps of the fathers. May the spirit of faith that dwelt in them rule us also, that spirit which unhesitatingly believes the Word of God, submits to the authority of Scripture, and will know of no other basis of union. "We believe, therefore we speak."



2.

Paul spoke, confessed, boldly, courageously, undaunted by threats of enemies, by dangers surrounding him. Cp. 2 Cor. 4, 8—11. Spite of all dangers he confessed because he had that spirit of faith which believes and therefore cannot but speak. That selfsame spirit dwelt in our fathers who composed this noble confession. True, no longer did Luther stand alone. The number of his followers had increased since the days of Leipzig and Worms. Yet, numerous as his adherents were, and some of them powerful, they seemed a hopeless minority compared with the forces which the enemy could marshal against them. Luther himself had been excommunicated by the Pope and outlawed by the Roman Emperor, and these were the two mightiest rulers of the world. The Edict of Worms was still in force, whereby on pain of the severest penalties everybody was bidden not to house, shelter, feed, water, or in any way help the heretic, but rather take and deliver him to the emperor. His followers were to be arrested, and they were to forfeit their goods. His books were to be burned. In several instances Lutheran books had been cast into the fire, and quite a number of his followers had been burned at the stake.

In 1529, at the Diet of Speyer, the papal forces had endeavored to enforce these edicts, had insisted that Lutheran doctrines no longer should be preached, and no longer should any one be permitted to join the Lutheran Church. The Lutheran princes had protested, had sent a delegation to Charles V, at Bologna. Their delegation had been harshly treated by the emperor, imprisoned, and finally told that the Lutherans must submit to the majority. True, the emperor's chancellor Gattinara favored the Lutherans and had succeeded in inducing Charles to try to effect a union by peaceable means rather than by force. Yet, when Charles V left Italy, he had promised the Pope, by whom he had been crowned Roman emperor, that he would by all means bring back the Protestants into submission to the Pope.

When news of this agreement reached Germany, a number of Protestant princes pleaded with the Saxon elector not to go to Augsburg. It seems as if Charles V himself did not look for him. Eck had prophesied that no Lutheran would dare to appear at the diet since their sentence had already been agreed on and needed only to be executed. They had not taken into account the spirit which dwelt in the elector and the Lutherans. "God forbid that I should permit any one to prevent me from confessing Christ, my Lord!" so spoke noble John. Asking his subjects to pray for him and for the cause of Luther, he requested Luther to preach a sermon on Matt. 10, 32 at Torgau and then set out boldly on the way to Augsburg, being the first prince to arrive there, prepared to speak because he believed.

Soon other Lutheran princes arrived, and Lutheran services were



arranged in the churches of Augsburg, which roused the wrath of the papists. They sent a delegation to Charles V, charging the Lutherans with sedition and rebellion. The emperor demanded that the preaching of the Lutheran doctrine cease. In answer to this the elector wrote the splendid letter quoted above. June 15 the emperor arrived, all princes going forth to meet him on foot, while two cardinals and a papal legate remained seated on their mounts. The Lutherans were willing to honor, and render due homage to, Charles V as their lord and emperor. When, however, Cardinal Campegius stretched forth his hand to impose the papal blessing and all fell down, the Lutheran princes remained standing. They had come to confess Christ, not to submit to the Pope or his blessing.

On the same day the emperor repeated his request that the preaching of Lutheran sermons at Augsburg be stopped at once. Moreover, he demanded that all Lutheran princes participate in the Corpus Christi procession to be held the next day. In vain did the princes plead with him to change his mind. The emperor angrily insisted on obedience. Again that spirit of faith which believes and therefore speaks, asserted itself. Margrave George of Brandenburg boldly told his emperor: "Rather than deny God and his holy Gospel and consent to an erroneous and false opinion, I would at once, on this very spot, kneel before Your Majesty and have my head cut off." "Dear prince," said the emperor, deeply moved, "dear prince, no beheading, no beheading!"

When Wolfgang of Anhalt signed the confession, he said: "Often have I ridden well in the service of others, why should I not, if need be, saddle my horse in honor of, and in obedience to, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and at the sacrifice of my body and life hurry into heavenly life, to the crown of honor?"

Surely, having the same spirit of faith which ruled the apostles, these noble confessors believed, and because they believed, they also spoke. The very occasion of the confession proved it to be the product, the fruit, of faith, living faith in God's Word, faith engendered by the Holy Spirit Himself.

May we like our fathers staunchly, courageously, confess the faith of our hearts! Our day is a day of unionism. Without and within our Lutheran Church, union is demanded, and unions are effected. Any Church standing aloof from such unionistic tendencies is scoffed at, misunderstood, denounced as bigoted, clannish, supercilious; as standing in the way of true progress, as veritable Ishmaels. Undaunted by such criticism, with malice toward none and charity to all, let us at the same time confess and speak and firmly reject any and every attempt at union without unity in the unchanging truths of the infallible Word of God. May God grant this spirit of faith to our Synod and preserve it throughout the ages! T. L.