

5-1-1930

## Outline for a Sermon on the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession

W G. Polack  
*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Polack, W G. (1930) "Outline for a Sermon on the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 47.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol1/iss1/47>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

## Outline for a Sermon on the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession.

Ps. 119, 46. 106.

The circumstances leading up to the completion of the Augsburg Confession have been discussed in the foregoing sermon of this series. We shall therefore turn our attention to the events connected with its presentation at the Diet of Augsburg June 25, 1530.

This convention had originally been called for April 8; but there were many delays, and the formal opening did not take place until Monday, June 20, with the celebration of a solemn mass in the cathedral. The Lutheran representatives attended, but did not take part in the service. The rest of the week was consumed with bickerings between the two parties until the imperial consent was obtained allowing the Lutherans the privilege of a public reading of their confession. The Lutheran princes and delegates of cities solemnly signed the document, which had been written in German and Latin, on Thursday, June 23. The time and place for the public reading was set for Saturday, June 25, at 3 P. M., in the chapel of the palatine palace.

This room, holding about 200 persons, was filled before that hour. A great crowd was to be seen surrounding the building and thronging the court, all hoping to be able to hear the proceedings. The emperor was seated on his throne. The electors or their representatives were on his right and left hand; after them, the other princes and states of the empire.

When all was in readiness, the Lutheran representatives arose. They were John, Elector of Saxony, with his son, John Frederick; Philip, Landgrave of Hesse; the Margrave George of Brandenburg; Wolfgang, Prince of Anhalt; Ernest, Duke of Brunswick-Lueneburg, and his brother Francis; and the deputies of Nuremberg and Reutlingen. D'Aubigné tells us "their air was animated and their features radiant with joy." May the memory of these brave men ever be held in high esteem among us!

At a sign from the emperor they resumed their seats. Then the two chancellors of the elector, Brueck and Beyer, advanced to the middle of the chapel and stood before the throne, holding in their hands, the former the Latin, the latter the German, copy of the Augustana.

Upon the imperial request to read the Latin copy the Elector of Saxony said: "We are Germans and on German soil; I hope therefore Your Majesty will allow us to speak German." The elector's purpose was that the confession be understood by all present. The emperor graciously complied with the request.

Outline for Sermon on Presentation of Augsburg Confession. 869

Then Chancellor Beyer read in so clear and loud a voice that he was heard also by the overflow crowd in the court below. The reading lasted two hours. The silence and serious attention of the assembly were not once disturbed. Thus these bold confessors spoke the Lord's testimonies before their emperor and were not confounded.

As we are commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of this event with thanksgiving and praise to our God, let us consider

**THE PRESENTATION OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION  
A DECLARATION OF LUTHERAN ORTHODOXY—**

1. *For the brave confessors who presented it;*
2. *For ourselves, who have vowed to abide by it.*

1.

The Lutherans had been summoned to Augsburg for the purpose of considering "what might and ought to be done and resolved upon regarding the division and separation in the holy faith and the Christian religion" within the empire. They had at first intended simply to present a statement to the convention, explaining their position over and against certain abuses current in the Church, such as the sale of indulgences, clerical celibacy, the profanations of the Mass, and the like.

In the mean time, however, Dr. John Eccius, one of the most zealous enemies of the evangelical cause, the man who had for the purpose of calumny coined the nickname *Lutherans*, published an attack against the Reformer in which, in 404 propositions, Luther was accused of being a false teacher and was "charged with every conceivable heresy"; and he maintained that the Lutherans were spreading those ancient errors which had long ago been rejected by the Church Catholic. Thus the orthodoxy of the Lutherans was challenged.

To these serious charges the Lutherans replied with the Augsburg Confession. It was the declaration of orthodoxy which the Lutherans made four hundred years ago. It was a statement to the world that they were not heretics or enthusiasts, but rather conservative Christians, who accepted and taught the old Christian doctrine laid down in Scripture by Christ and His apostles.

This evident intention of the Augsburg Confession was thus stated in the introduction: "We offer . . . the confession of our preachers and ourselves, showing what manner of doctrine from the Holy Scripture and the pure Word of God has been up to this time set forth in our lands, dukedoms, dominions, and cities and taught in our churches."

Consequently the entire first part of the confession concerned itself with the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity. On the basis of the Scriptures, which self-evidently are accepted as the pure

## 370 Outline for Sermon on Presentation of Augsburg Confession.

and infallible Word of God, the apostolic and orthodox faith is clearly and concisely presented on such points as the doctrine of the Trinity; of Creation; of Preservation; of Man's Total Depravity since the Fall; of Regeneration through Baptism and the Holy Ghost; of the Son of God, His Virgin Birth, His True Godhead and Manhood, His Vicarious Atonement, His Resurrection from the Dead, His Sending of the Holy Spirit; of Justification by Faith in Christ; of the Means of Grace; of Good Works; of the Church; of Infant Baptism; of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper; of Repentance; of the Ministerial Office; of Civil Affairs; of Christ's Return to Judgment; of the Resurrection of all Flesh; of Heaven; of Hell; and others.

The various ancient, medieval, and contemporary heresies against these doctrines were summarily rejected, and definite proof from Scriptures for the Lutheran position was clearly adduced. The testimony of the Fathers was quoted from time to time, not as though that were on a par with the Bible, but as proof that the Early Church taught the same doctrine which the Lutherans were defending. And then, at the conclusion of the doctrinal section, the declaration was made: "This is about the sum of our doctrine, in which, as can be seen, there is nothing that varies from the Scriptures or from the Church Catholic or from the Church of Rome as known from its writers. This being the case, they judge harshly who insist that our teachers be regarded as heretics."

By this pure doctrine the Lutherans purposed to abide with God's help. As Christians and Christian teachers who had vowed faithfulness to God's Word they could not do anything else. "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Thy righteous judgments."

Indeed, even their adversaries had to admit, after they had heard the confession, that it was in accord with God's holy Word. Bishop Stadion of Augsburg declared: "It is the truth, the pure truth; we cannot deny it!" Duke William of Bavaria asked Dr. Eccius, "Can you refute this doctrine?" Eck answered, "With the Church Fathers I can, but not with the Scriptures." The Duke retorted, "Then I see that the Lutherans are in the Scriptures and we outside!"

No wonder Professor William A. Curtis, in his *History of Creeds*, can say: "No one can read the Augsburg Confession without being deeply impressed by the sincerity of its effort to conserve the Scriptural and spiritual essentials of traditional Christianity and by the utter absence of any traces of the spirit of wanton innovation."

In short, the Augsburg Confession proved to the world that, while the Church of Rome had deviated from the faith once committed to the saints and had become guilty of innumerable unscriptural innovations, the Lutheran position was conservative, orthodox, Scriptural.

2.

This year we are commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession. As Lutheran pastors, congregations, and individuals we have accepted this confession as the basic charter of our Church. With the Lutherans of 1580, who drew up and signed the Formula of Concord, we confess "the first, unaltered Augsburg Confession as our symbol for this time, not because it was composed by our theologians, but because it has been taken from God's Word and is founded firmly and well therein."

Let us, in the first place, thank God for having made us the spiritual heirs of such a glorious heritage. It was His work. Luther himself repeatedly testifies that he would have been lost if it had not been for the power of God working in and through him, guiding and sustaining him. The Augsburg Confession was God's way of restoring anew to the world the great fundamentals of our holy religion. And so we must likewise acknowledge in all humility that it is God who brought us to the acceptance of, and strict adherence to, this great confession. Is. 63, 7.

In the second place, let our celebration mean a bold reaffirmation on our part of the principles of this confession. We are living in an age in which the old fundamental doctrines are being assailed on every side. Rationalism, skepticism, Liberalism, materialism, unionism, atheism, and many other "isms" are taking issue with us on these questions. The doctrine of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the vicarious atonement, justification, the Real Presence,—all these doctrines that are dear to the Christian heart are denied. Those who cling to them are denounced and ridiculed as moss-backs, old fogies, enemies of progress, and what not! We would therefore declare to all the world, without any reservations, mental or otherwise, that we cherish the ancient landmarks, that we do not wish to deviate even a hair's breadth from the old "rule of faith," that,—

Though devils all the world should fill,  
All eager to devour us,  
We tremble not, we fear no ill,  
They shall not overpower us.  
This world's prince may still  
Scowl fierce as he will,  
He can harm us none,  
He's judged; the deed is done;  
One little word can fells him.

We are, by God's grace, and wish to remain, true Lutherans, loyal followers of our Savior, who love His Word and who desire nothing more than to abide in it faithfully to our end. Ps. 119, 106.

And lastly, the propagation of this orthodox faith should lie close to our hearts. If our Lutheran fathers boldly confessed their

faith even before kings, when dangers beset them on all sides, how much more should we do so in our day of religious freedom! Ps. 66, 16; Acts 4, 20; 2 Cor. 4, 13; Matt. 10, 32. As we owe a debt of gratitude to our forebears for having brought us up in this doctrine, we face the obligation of handing it down to our children and children's children—in our schools, colleges, and seminaries and in our mission-fields at home and abroad.

Let us all take this to heart—pastors, teachers, Sunday-school leaders, Bible-class instructors, parents, grandparents, young men and young women—and pray God daily for the grace to remain loyal to this faith and Church.

God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure  
Shall now and evermore endure! W. G. POLACK.

## **Suggestive Material for Song Service Address.**

**For National Lutheran Music Sunday, May 4,  
or for Cantate Sunday.**

The Lutheran Church possesses in its beautiful hymns a priceless treasure. This fact is often attested to by non-Lutheran authorities on hymnology. On a recent lecture tour through the United States the greatest living authority on Bach, Dr. Terry, of Edinburgh, referred to the Lutheran hymnal as "that precious legacy of the Reformation." The man who gave the Church of the Reformation her first hymnal is the same who gave the Church the open Bible by putting the Word of God into the vernacular, the same who summed up the fundamental teachings of the Holy Book in that marvelous "Laymen's Bible," the Small Catechism, the great Reformer himself.

### ***LUTHER IS THE FOUNDER OF CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.***

Before the Reformation the singing in the public services was carried on by the clergy. Choristers and priests chanted Latin hymns, which the people did not understand. Hymns in the vernacular existed, but only on rare occasions were the people permitted to sing them in public worship. When the Reformation restored the doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers, the Christian congregation was given its full rights again, also the right actively to take part in the services. To make such participation possible, Luther provided an order of worship in the language of the people. In this service congregational singing became an integral part of public worship. Instead of Latin hymns, Luther substituted German hymns. Thus the Reformer became of necessity the founder of congregational hymn-singing, an undertaking for which he was eminently fitted both as poet and as musician.