

We Believe, Teach and Confess

**A Study of the Formula of Concord
through the eyes of a Missionary**

Contents

Contents	2
Suggested Resources and Sources Cited	3
Session 1: We Believe, Teach and Confess	5
Session 2: Article I - Original Sin	15
Session 3: Article II - Free Will.....	31

Suggested Resources and Sources Cited

The Book of Concord (various editions)

Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions—A Readers Edition of the Book of Concord McCain, Paul T, General Editor.

Concordia Triglotta Dau, William.

This edition contains three languages (“tri-glotta”), an english translation, the original 1580 German edition and the first edition of the 1584 Latin edition. The text is in the public domain and is the source of quotations in this study.

The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert, Charles P. Arand

The Book of Concord, Theodore G. Tappert

Online Resource of the Book of Concord

The Book of Concord Website ... www.bookofconcord.org

Historical Background

Historical Introductions to the Lutheran Confessions, Gerhard Friedrich Bente

This book is filled to the full with historical background and provides a thorough context to the events, persons and texts of the *Book of Concord*.

PDF version from the Book of Concord Website ... click [here](#).

<https://bookofconcord.org/historicalintros.php>

Studies of the Book of Concord (all resources are available from Concordia Publishing House at www.cph.org)

Lutheran Confessions: Augsburg Confession and Its Apology Study Guide

Lutheran Confessions: Formula of Concord Study Guide

Klug, Eugene. *Getting into the Formula of Concord*

Preus, Robert. *Getting into the Theology of Concord: A Study of the Book of Concord*

Text of the *Book of Concord* Cited in this Study

The texts used here are from *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church: German-Latin-English*.

Published as a memorial of the quadricentenary jubilee of the Reformation anno Domini 1917 by resolution of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921). The texts of this edition of the *Book of Concord* are in the public domain and may be freely copied.

Text of the Scriptures Used

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible

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Session I: We Believe, Teach and Confess

Readings from the Book of Concord: Session 1

- *Formula of Concord, Epitome, The Summary Content, Rule and Norm*
- *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, The Summary, Rule and Norm*

If you are using the *Concordia: A Reader's Version of the Book of Concord*, **Paul T. McCain** the contents for discussion can be found at the following:

- *Editor's Introduction* (helpful historical context) from pp. 441-472
- *The Summary Content, Rule and Norm of the Epitome* ("reader's digest version") from pp. 473-474.
- *The Summary, Rule and Norm of the Solid Declaration* ("longer version") pp. 503 -510.

Everyone has a Confession

Everyone **believes** something.
Everyone **teaches** something.
Everyone **confesses** something.

But not everyone believes, teaches or confesses
true or right things.

The Proverbial Coal Miner's Faith (Luther Story):

"The story is told that a doctor of theology, meeting a charcoal-burner on the bridge at Prague and taking into account that he was but a poor layman, asked him: 'My good man, what do you believe?'

The charcoal-burner answered: 'I believe what the Church believes.'

The doctor: 'And what does the Church believe?'

The charcoal-burner: 'The Church believes what I believe.'

Later, when the doctor came to die, the devil so severely troubled him as to his faith that he knew not where to turn and found no rest until he said: 'I believe what the charcoal-burner believes.' "

Referenced by Francis Pieper in *Christian Dogmatics*,
Volume 1 p. 429, footnote 55)

Everyone has a "god".
Everyone put's their faith in something.
But is their faith in the **true God** or a **false god**?

Example: Large Catechism: Part 1, The Ten Commandments

16] *Lo, here you have the meaning of the **true honor and worship** of God, which pleases God, and which He commands under penalty of eternal wrath, namely, that the heart know no other comfort or confidence than in Him, and do not suffer itself to be torn from Him, but, for Him, risk and disregard everything upon earth.*

17] *On the other hand, you can easily see and judge how the world practices only **false worship and idolatry**. For no people has ever been so reprobate as not to institute and observe some divine worship; every one has set up as his special god whatever he looked to for blessings, help, and comfort.*

18] *Thus, for example, the heathen who put their trust in power and dominion elevated Jupiter as the supreme god; the others, who were bent upon riches, happiness, or pleasure, and a life of ease, Hercules, Mercury, Venus, or others; women with child, Diana or Lucina, and so on; thus every one made that his god to which his heart was inclined, so that even in the mind of the heathen to have a god means to trust and believe.*

19] *But their error is this, that their trust is **false and wrong**; for it is not placed in the only God, besides whom there is truly no God in heaven or upon earth. 20] Therefore the heathen really make their self-invented notions and dreams of God an idol, and put their trust in that which is altogether nothing.*

21] *Thus it is with all idolatry; for it consists not merely in erecting an image and worshiping it, but rather in the heart, which stands gaping at something else,*

and seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints, or devils, and neither cares for God, nor looks to Him for so much good as to believe that He is willing to help, neither believes that whatever good it experiences comes from God.

Faith's Rule and Norm

**The Scriptures speak first.
A Confession follows.**

2 Timothy 3:15-17: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (NIV)

Psalms 119:105: “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and light for my path.” (NIV)

Galatians 1:8: “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!” (NIV)

Example: Formula of Concord, Epitome, Summary

1] 1. We **believe, teach, and confess** that the **sole rule and standard** according to which all dogmas together with [all] teachers should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone, as it is written Ps. 119:105: Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. And St. Paul: Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed, Gal. 1:8.

7] *In this way the distinction between the Holy Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament and all other writings is preserved, and the Holy Scriptures **alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard**, according to which, as the **only test-stone**, all dogmas shall and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they are good or evil, right or wrong.*

Example: Formula of Concord, The Solid Declaration, Summary

3] 1. *First, then, we receive and embrace with our whole heart the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the **pure, clear fountain of Israel**, which is the **only true standard** by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged.*

We Teach Nothing New the one, universal and “catholic” faith “always and everywhere”

the “pattern of sound words”

2 Timothy 1:13-14: “What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Jude 3-4: Dear friends, although I was eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”

Appendix A: The Catalog Testimonies

1] *Since, especially in the article of the Person of Christ, some have without reason asserted that in the Book of Concord there is a **deviation** from ... phrases and modes of speech of [received the and approved by] the ancient pure Church and fathers, and that, on the contrary, **new, strange, self-devised, unusual and unheard-of expressions** are introduced; and since the testimonies of the ancient Church and fathers to which this book appeals proved somewhat too*

extended to be incorporated in it, and having been carefully excerpted, were afterwards delivered to several electors and princes, —

*2] [Therefore] they are printed in goodly number as an appendix at the end of this book, in regard to particular points, for the purpose of furnishing a correct and thorough account to the Christian reader, whereby he may perceive and readily discover that in the aforesaid book **nothing new has been introduced either in rebus (matter) or in phrasibus (expressions)**, that is, neither as regards the doctrine nor the manner of teaching it, but that we have taught and spoken concerning this mystery just as, first of all, the Holy Scriptures and afterwards the ancient pure Church have done.*

the Symbols, Witnesses, Testimonies

Three Ecumenical Creeds

Apostles Creed

Nicene Creed

The Creed of Athanasius

Augsburg Confession (1530)

Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531)

The Smalcald Articles (1537)

The Power and Primacy of the Pope (1537)

The Small Catechism (1529)

The Large Catechism (1529)

quia = “because”

quatenus = “in so far as”

Example: Ordination Vows for LCMS pastors (*Lutheran Service Book: Agenda* p. 161-ff)

1. *Do you acknowledge that the Lord has called you through His Church into the ministry of Word and Sacrament?*

I do.

2. *Do you believe and confess the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?*

Yes, I believe and confess the canonical Scriptures to be the inspired Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

3. *Do you believe and confess the three ecumenical Creeds, namely, the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds, as faithful testimonies to the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and do you reject all the errors which they condemn?*

*Yes, I believe and confess the three Creeds **because they are in accord** with the Word of God. I also reject all the errors they condemn.*

4. *Do you confess the Unaltered Augsburg Confession to be a true exposition of Holy Scripture and a correct exhibition of the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church?*

And do you confess that the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Small and Large Catechisms of Martin Luther, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Authority and Primacy of the Pope, and the Formula of Concord — as these are contained in the 1580 Book of Concord — are also in agreement with this one scriptural faith?

*Yes, I make these Confessions my own **because they are in accord** with the Word of God.*

The Concord Way ("with one heart")

The desire for concord (godly unity)

right teaching
right living

The path to concord

pure doctrine rightly presented
false doctrine reproved

The practice of concord

avoid unnecessary and useless wrangling
confront controversy when necessary

"able to teach, not resentful"

2 Timothy 2:22-26: "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.

Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. (NIV)

“refute and encourage”

Titus 1:9-14: “He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group.

They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach-- and that for the sake of dishonest gain. Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."

This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. (NIV)

“watch your life and your doctrine closely”

1 Timothy 4:13-16: “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. (NIV)

Example: Small Catechism: The Lord’s Prayer, Hallowed Be Thy Name

Hallowed be Thy name.

What does this mean?

Answer: God's name is indeed holy in itself; but we pray in this petition that it may become holy among us also.

How is this done?

Answer. When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God also lead holy lives in accordance with it. To this end help us, dear Father in heaven. But he that teaches and lives otherwise than God's Word teaches profanes the name of God among us. From this preserve us, Heavenly Father.

Example: Formula of Concord, The Solid Declaration, Summary

*14] Moreover, since for the **preservation of pure doctrine** and for **thorough, permanent, godly unity** in the Church it is necessary, not only that the pure, wholesome doctrine be **rightly presented**, but also that the opponents who teach otherwise be **reproved**, 1 Tim. 3 (2 Tim. 3:16); Titus 1:9, — for faithful shepherds, as Luther says, should do both, namely, feed or nourish the lambs and resist the wolves, so that the sheep may flee from strange voices, John 10:12, and may separate the precious from the vile, Jer. 15:19, —*

*15] Therefore we have thoroughly and clearly declared ourselves to one another, also regarding these matters, as follows: that a distinction should and must by all means be observed between **unnecessary and useless wrangling**, on the one hand, whereby the Church ought not to be disturbed, since it destroys more than it builds up, and **necessary controversy**, on the other hand, as, when such a controversy occurs as involves the articles of faith or the chief heads of the Christian doctrine, where for the defense of the truth the false opposite doctrine must be reproved.*

Recurring Pattern and Phrases in the Formula

“Status of the Controversy”

“The Chief Questions in This Controversy”

“Affirmative Statements”

“We believe, teach and confess.”

“Negative Statements”

“We reject and condemn.”

Example: Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article I: Original Sin

Affirmative Statements

2] 1. **We believe, teach, and confess** that there is a distinction between man's nature, not only as he was originally created by God pure and holy and without sin, but also as we have it [that nature] now after the Fall, namely, between the nature [itself], which even after the Fall is and remains a creature of God, and original sin, and that this distinction is as great as the distinction between a work of God and a work of the devil.

Negative Statements

11] 1. Therefore **we reject and condemn** the teaching that original sin is only a reatus ("charge) or debt on account of what has been committed by another [diverted to us] without any corruption of our nature.