

B.A.S.I.C.

Brothers And Sisters In Christ

The Book of Concord

By Pastor Nathanael Mayhew

What are the Lutheran Confessions? How are documents which were written hundreds of years ago – in another continent across the world – important or valuable for us today? What use should we make of them? In this series we will consider these questions, and evaluate the use and importance of these documents for us today. May the Holy Spirit bless our study!

What are the Lutheran Confessions or the “symbols” of the Lutheran Church? Generally these phrases are used to describe the documents compiled in the Book of Concord. The Book of Concord was compiled and printed under the editorship of Jacob Andreae in the year 1580 for the 50th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. It included:

- *The Three Ecumenical Creeds;*
- *Luther’s Small Catechism (1529);*
- *Luther’s Large Catechism (1529);*
- *The Augsburg Confession (1530);*
- *The Apology (1531);*
- *The Smalcald Articles, including the appendix, “Concerning the Power and Primacy of the Pope” (1537);*
- *The Formula of Concord, both Epitome and Solid Declaration (1577).*

To view a chart outlining the date, author and a brief explanation of each of the above documents, see page 4.

Confessions of faith can be divided up into the following groups:

- **Ecumenical confessions**, which have been accepted by all Christendom (at least in the past), and are still acknowledged by most churches today;
- **Particular confessions**, which have been adopted by various denominations of divided Christendom;
- **Private confessions**, which have been formulated and published by individuals but not officially accepted by a larger group.

Scripture records many private confessions: Moses confessed, **“Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God” (Psalm 90:2)**; Peter said **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16)**; Thomas declared **“My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28)**; and Paul records one of the earliest Christian confessions, **“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory” (1 Timothy 3:16)**. These inspired private confessions (and other parts of Scripture) were the foundation for the many ecumenical and particular confessions which would follow in the years to come.

Within the Book of Concord we have different kinds of confessions. The three Creeds would be Ecumenical confessions, since they were accepted by the Christian Church as an accurate description of what it believed and taught. The Small and Large Catechisms were written as a private confession, but came to be accepted by Lutherans and have been used widely since that time. The rest were written as particular confessions in order to state the beliefs of a large number of individuals, and to point out the errors of others (Romanists, Protestants, and other Lutherans). Since that time other particular confessions have been added (e.g. *The Brief Statement of 1932*).

As we consider the confessions of the church, we will notice how they became longer over time. They began as short and concise confessions, but were added to as false teachings arose within the church, and as it became necessary to clarify the truth and teachings of Scripture.

Our faith is not to be founded on any man-made confession or confessions, but on the Word of God. While such confessions can serve to clarify the teachings of Scripture and instruct, such confessions must always be based on the words of Scripture, and be ever subordinate to Scripture as the only infallible source of truth, doctrine and practice. May our faith and confession continue to rest solely on the Word of God.

The ELCC

Pastor Mutombo Muzakuza, who is the head of one of the CLC's sister churches in Congo, was baptized Catholic and joined a confessional Reformed Church in 1978 and was ordained as a bishop . He left and sought to form a new church in the Lutheran mold, as suggested by a Methodist bishop. We received his inquiry. The chairman of the CLC Mission Board corresponded with Pastor Muzakuza in April 1998. Then the correspondence was turned over to me. We sent a lot of French and English materials to him.

Doctrinal discussions were held on a variety of subjects when we met on May 4, 2001. There appeared to be no doctrinal differences. Previously, questionnaires and specific doctrinal statements had been sent with no disagreement evident. The delay in any face-to-face meeting was due to the civil war raging in the Congo. French catechisms were sent. During this visit a new congregation in Kinshasa was

started. I held two doctrinal meetings with this group to explain our teachings.

In June 2002 the CLC declared itself in fellowship with the ELCC – Eglise Luthérienne de Confession du Congo. Because of the civil war in the country and UN peacekeepers were being employed it was not until October 2002 that I could go to Katanga Province and begin to meet with pastors and congregations there. Otherwise before this we met in the country's capital of Kinshasa.

In 2001 there were 589 members in 18 congregations

Over the many years that we have been in contact with Pastor Muzakuza he has sought to reach out to other provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is not at all an easy task. The country is poorly developed and lacking in its infrastructure even though it is rich in resources. Much of the country is

inaccessible except by plane. Most of the population lives in poverty. Traveling is both difficult and expensive. The church developed the office of 'catechist' to teach the children the catechism and Bible lessons.

Pastor Muzakuza does his best to travel teaching, training, and ordaining pastors for work in their home areas, as well as establishing and building churches. While traveling he also provides marriage classes and ceremonies, evangelism meetings and baptisms.

A task force focused on translation and publication of Lutheran material has provided numerous Swahili and French lessons for the growth of the churches.

Muzakuza is also working on the beginning of a sixth district, expanding the work of the ELCC. On his last visit the current Congo Missionary Ude was able to visit some of the more remote villages of the Congo with Pastor Muzakuza.

The most recent statistics on this sister church are:

5 Districts, 25 Congregations, 31 Called workers, 1,963 souls.

Behold, how
good and pleasant
it is when
brothers dwell
in unity. Ps.
133:1

Name	Date	Author	Summary
Apostles' Creed	2 nd Century A.D.	Unknown	Baptismal Creed used in Rome.
Nicene Creed	325 A.D. 381 A.D.	Assembled church leaders at the Council of Nicea and the Council of Constantinople.	This Creed intends to clearly state on the basis of Scripture that Jesus Christ is true God equal with the Father and that the Holy Spirit is also true God, equal with the Father and the Son.
Athanasian Creed	6th-8th Century A.D.	Unknown. Named after the great church father Athanasius, who was instrumental in the drafting of the Nicene Creed.	This Creed confesses the doctrine of the Trinity and the Person and work of Jesus Christ in detail to refute false teachings concerning those doctrines.
Small Catechism	1529 A.D.	Martin Luther	A short work that was intended by Luther to educate the laity in the fundamentals of the Christian Faith.
Large Catechism	1529 A.D.	Martin Luther	A thorough covering the same chief parts of Christian doctrine as the Small Catechism (the Large Catechism is really a series of re-edited sermons that Luther preached).
Augsburg Confession	1530 A.D.	Philip Melancthon	Often viewed as the chief Lutheran Confession; it was presented by the Lutherans to Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg as a statement of the chief articles of the Christian faith as understood by Lutherans. It also contained a listing of abuses within the Roman Catholic Church.
Apology of the Augsburg Confession	1531 A.D.	Philip Melancthon	After the Roman theologians had condemned many of the teachings of the Augsburg Confession, Melancthon authored this lengthy defense of it.
Smalcald Articles	1536 A.D.	Martin Luther	Articles of faith written by Luther for an upcoming ecumenical council, stating what the Lutherans could not compromise and why.
Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the	1537 A.D.	Philip Melancthon	Was intended to serve as a supplement to the Augsburg Confession, giving the Lutheran position on the Pope.
Formula of Concord	1577 A.D.	Jacob Andreae, Martin Chemnitz, David Chytraeus	A restatement of some teachings in the Augsburg Confession over which Lutherans had become divided. The <i>Solid Declaration</i> is the unabridged version. The <i>Epitome</i> is an abridged version intended for congregations to study. Over 8,100 pastors and theologians signed it, as well as over 50 government leaders.