

With the Same Heart

An overview of the Book of Concord

Session 4 - The Defense of the
Augsburg Confession



Warm up question

When have you experienced someone questioning your beliefs (religious or otherwise)?



The Defense

Approximately one month after the Lutheran princes delivered the Augsburg Confession to the Diet of Augsburg (June 25, 1530), the Roman Catholic theologians selected by the Holy Roman Empire delivered the Confutation to the Augsburg Confession on August 3, 1530.

The Lutheran reformers, mostly Philip Melanchthon, then took until late April/early May of 1531 to respond to the Confutation. It appears that the “Apology” (or Defense) was not meant only as a direct correspondence with the Empire, but as an “open letter” explaining the continuing determination of the Lutherans to their point of view.

- *Question:*
- *What do you think Melanchthon’s state of mind or emotions were like during this writing?*



Variations

Determining the “exact” text of the Defense is difficult in that it was published in a two forms with textual differences throughout 1531 - a later edition published in September. To add further to the confusion, many Book of Concord drafts from the 1580’s used a sort of paraphrase or harmony of the two.

In addition to these confusions, Melanchthon also altered the text of the Confession in 1540 - minimizing some Lutheran distinctions hoping that it would draw John Calvin in as a supporter of the Lutherans (it didn’t). This alteration is known as the “variata” and is generally discredited by modern Lutheran denominations but played a large role in the Prussian Unionism movement of the 1800’s.

- *Question:*
- *What is another example of something that might have variations in content or interpretation?*



28 to 14

Melanchthon's Defense of the Augsburg Confession basically condensed the points of the Lutheran faith from 28 (or 21 if you exclude the corrected abuses) to 14 articles.

Some of Melanchthon's condensing comes from the lack of pushback from the Roman Catholic Confutation, others are more of Melanchthon combining certain theological points under a larger umbrella. This was possibly done to make it easier for people to comprehend the points that were being made.



Concupiscence and Grace

The first two “articles” of the Apology (Defense) include the following:

1. Original Sin - This article assumes agreement with the Confutation on God and Christ (Conf. I & III). It starts off spicy, saying that the authors of the Confutation “lack not only judgment but honesty.” It goes on to basically defend the Lutheran idea that “concupiscence” (the lust for sin) remains in a Christian after baptism.
2. Justification - This article more fully argues for justification by faith (not works). It largely does this through an examination of the ideas of “faith” and “grace” as they are defined by Scripture. This is built heavily on the idea of existing human concupiscence.



Love, the Law, and the Church

The next two articles address the following:

3. Love and the Law - In large part this article continues the argument about justification, but on another front. This moves the argument to the effect of justification on the human heart (love). The argument here is essentially that Christians do not merit anything from following the Law, but that their good works (following the Law) arise from the heart set free by forgiveness and owing a debt to Christ.
4. The Church - This article combines Confession articles 7 & 8 (some would say they were always together). The essential argument here is that the Church cannot be holy in and of itself without Christ and therefore, individuals who participate in Church communities cannot be guaranteed salvation for the sake of the Church. Rather, these individuals should look to Christ for salvation which makes them the Church.



Confess your sins!

The last six articles concern the correction of certain perceived abuses of the Roman Catholic church:

... Despite a few issues brought forth in the Confutation, Melanchthon says essentially, “our opponents agree with us on Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and [the necessity of] Confession.”

5. Repentance - But wait! Don’t let the Lutheran/Catholic agreement on the necessity of Confession fool you. Melanchthon goes on a multi-point rant about how the Catholics get confession and repentance wrong and how they are keeping forgiveness away from God’s people, hoarding it for themselves.

6. Confession and Satisfaction - The hits keep on coming as the Defense goes more “practical” and addresses the violations against “repentance” done by Roman Catholics under the guise of confession and satisfaction.



How do you do Church?

Article 7 of the Defense goes into some more practicalities of the Church - addressing Lutheran concerns about the number of Roman Catholic sacraments and their definition of “sacrament”. It also addresses the priest/pastor who is presiding in such a sacrament and makes firm the Lutheran position that a priest may disobey a bishop (by siding with the Lutherans) in cases where the Word of God clearly speaks. It makes the “dig” that Lutherans would be happy to follow bishops if the bishops would allow them to follow the Word of God.



Next Time - Not Until June 19

PJ will be in Kenya on June 5 and June 12.

We will resume our study on June 19th.

