

36. The Augsburg Confession.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you. 1 Pet. 3, 15.

In the sixteenth century God granted the full light of the Gospel-truth to the nations of Northern Europe, and this truth our fathers laid down in a compendious book, the public Confessions of our Church. The foremost among these is the Augsburg Confession, which was read before Emperor Charles V during the Diet at Augsburg in 1530. This famous document, known the world over as the Augsburg Confession, contains twenty-eight articles.

It seemed as though this Protestant confession would never be submitted to the Diet. When the Protestant princes announced that their confession was ready to be read, His Majesty declined to hear it, saying that too many other matters were pending. The Saxon Elector John now fairly pleaded with the Emperor to grant their request, *viz.*, to grant a hearing to their important cause, as it concerned the eternal salvation of their souls. Hereupon the Emperor consented, and the Confession was read on Saturday afternoon, June 25, at three o'clock, amid profound silence and rapt attention.

The reading of the Confession, which made a deep and favorable impression upon the Catholic princes, consumed almost two hours, and then the Diet knew what the maligned Lutherans truly believed, taught, confessed, and practised in their churches. It was a powerful refutation of the many calumnies spread abroad against the Lutherans. Many Catholic nobles now showed a conciliating spirit. They felt that it was nothing but the truth, and they could not deny it. They saw that the Lutherans are sitting *in* the Bible and the papists aside of it. This confession of faith served the loyal Protestant Church as a banner borne aloft, beneath which her faithful members could rally. To this day it is a solid foundation whereon to build and a wall of defense against the attacks of our enemies.

Prayer.

O Lord, it is Thy holy will that our confession should come from the heart. None other Thou wilt have, saying, "My son, give Me thine heart." A confession without faith is therefore worthless. But, on the other hand, Thou requirest also that we should confess with our mouth that faith which we have in our hearts: "Whoso ever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." Let us, then, always be ready to confess Thee before men. Amen.

From darkest night and cruel plight,
God, in the Reformation;
His Zion freed and forth did lead
To light and consolation;
He gave His Word, which, as a sword,
The binding chains did sever,
And Pope's decree and masses' fee,
Old errors, fell forever.

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You may contact Rev. Ley at: pastorley@leychalet.com.

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