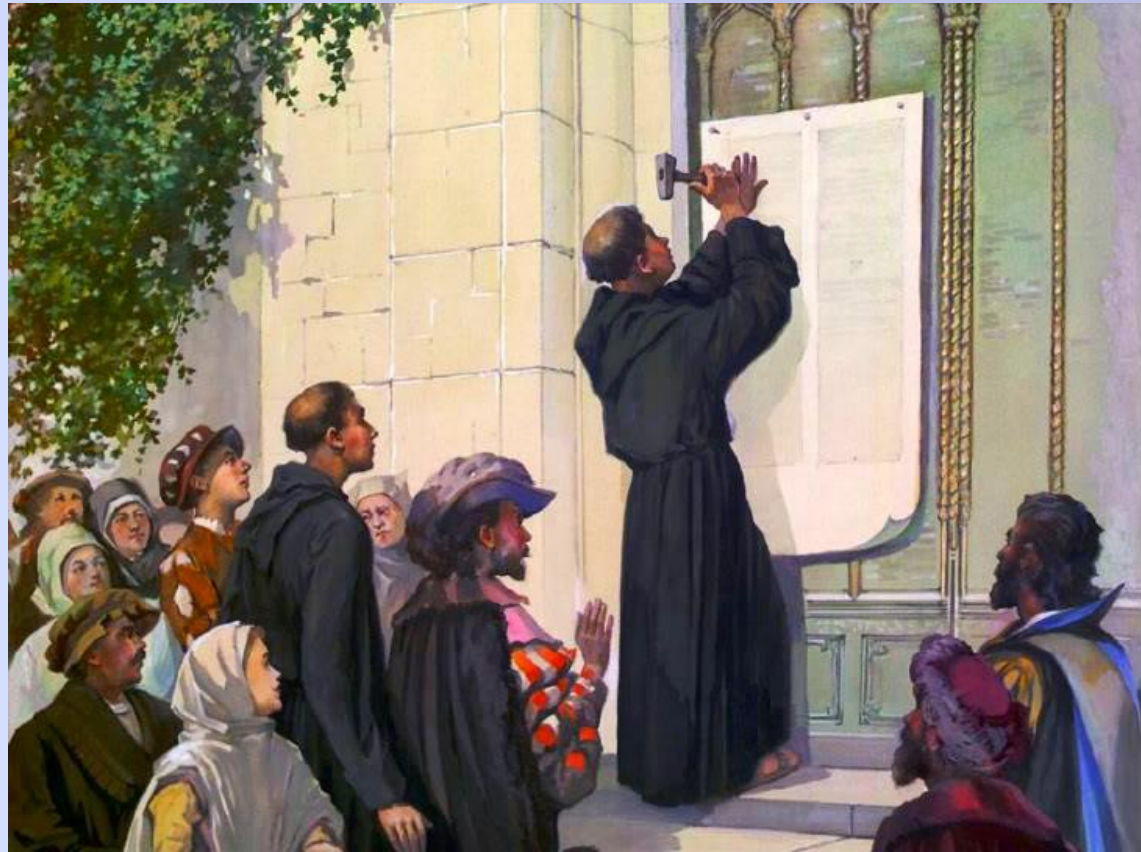


The Augsburg Confession

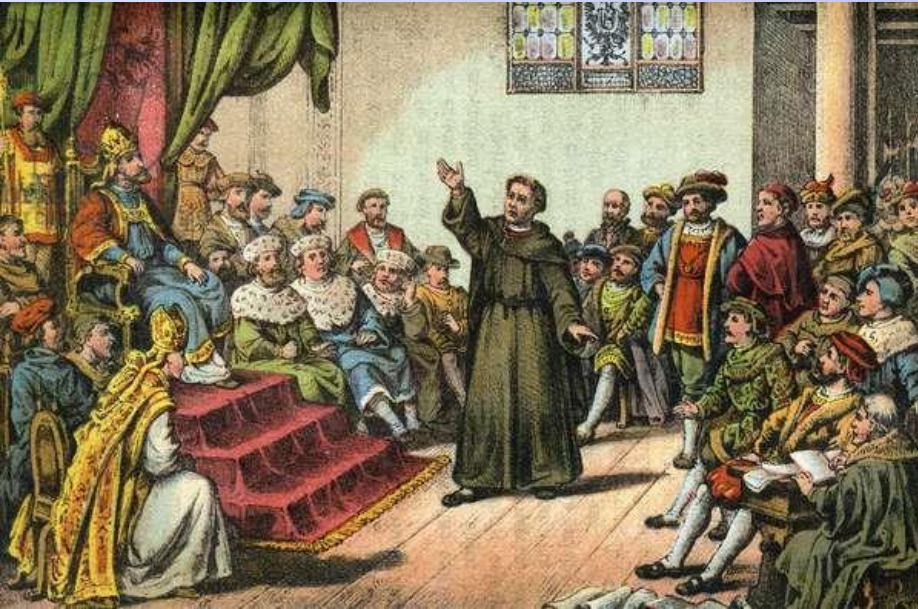
October 31, 1517

Martin Luther posted 95 Theses concerning a disputation on the theology of indulgences on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg.

This heralds the beginning of the Reformation.



May 25, 1521

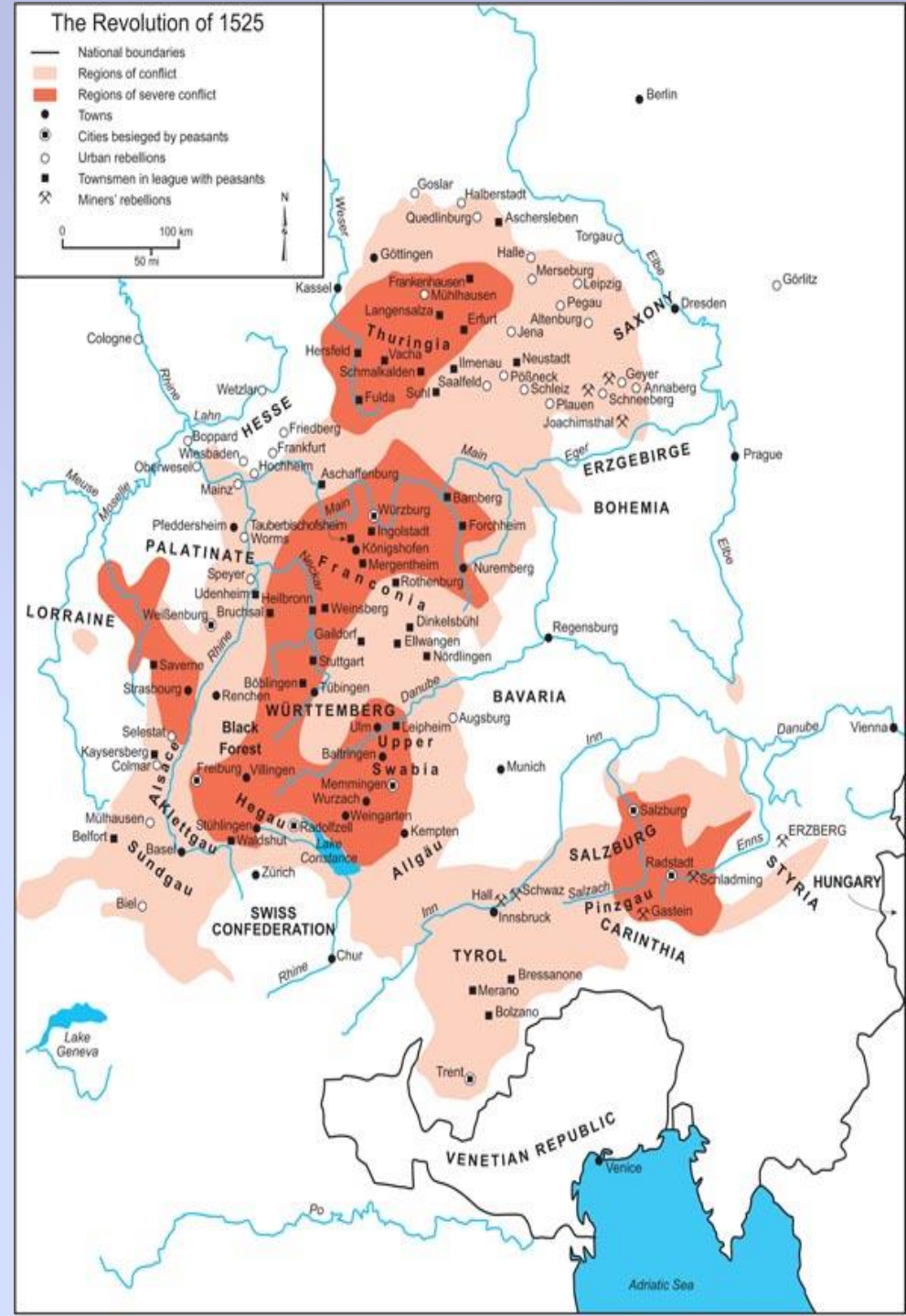


The Edict of Worms is signed by Charles V, which declared Luther a heretic and placed him under an imperial ban. Under the

protection of Prince Frederick III, Elector of Saxony, Luther is hidden away at Wartburg Castle. It was during this time that Luther began translating Holy Scripture from Greek into German.

1524-1526

June 1524: German peasants, who were angered by rising prices and the feudal system, revolted. Initially, the revolt was “peaceful” but in 1525, the revolt turned violent. Over 40 monasteries and castles were burned. Martin Luther opposed the Peasant’s Revolt.



Charles V

Charles V, the Holy Roman emperor and the most powerful man of his time, failed to achieve his dream of a universal empire, thwarted by the political realities of Western Europe. He was fighting against the Turks and the French. By 1530, Charles, a devout Catholic, finally realized that it was imperative that he consolidate his Empire or he would be defeated by the Turks. Therefore, on January 21, 1530, Charles called for a Diet to be assembled in Augsburg on April 8, 1530. At the Diet, Charles wanted to know the reasons for religious division and to gain support from the Princes and Free Territories in Germany.



Charles V

The German Princes and the Evangelicals were very suspicious of Charles' invitation and decided to draft the Torgau Articles (March 27, 1530), which was the beginnings of the Augsburg Confession. The German Princes and the Evangelicals arrived at the Diet on May 2. They petitioned for the reading of their Confession on June 25th and Charles granted their request. By God's grace, June 25, 1530 was a very hot day and in an effort to "keep secret" the Confession, Charles moved the Diet from the courtroom to the large meeting hall of the Bishop's palace.

The Presentation

At 3:00 p.m., the Confession was read before Charles. Though Melanchthon had written it in Latin (the scholarly language of the day), a German translation composed by Justus Jonas, another co-worker of Luther, was read, thanks to Prince Elector John. The Emperor desired to hear the Latin text. But when Elector John had called

attention to the fact that the meeting was held on German soil, and expressed the hope that the Emperor would permit the reading to proceed in German, it was granted.



The Presentation

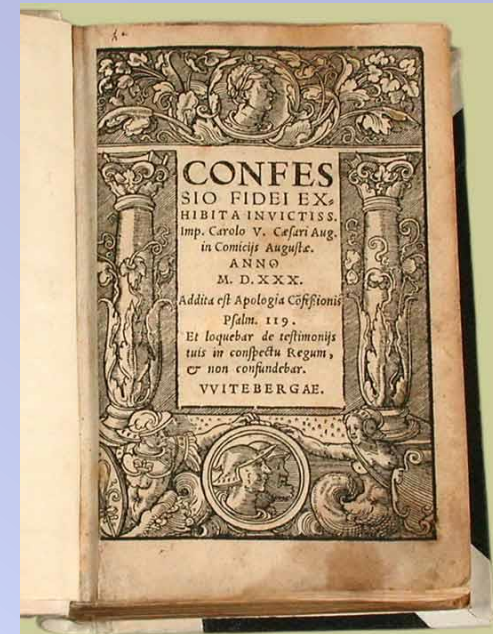
God, in His wisdom and providence, allowed the German people, outside the hall to hear the reading of the Augsburg Confession. As stated, June 25th was an unusually hot day, so Charles ordered that the great windows of the hall be opened. Dr. Beyer, a large, robust man with a loud booming voice, (that's why he was chosen to read the Confession), slowly and clearly read the Confession. The reading lasted about two hours; yet he read with a voice so clear and loud that the multitude, which could not gain access to the hall, understood every word in the courtyard.

The Augsburg Confession

It must be stressed that this was not the confession of theologians only. It was the confession of all those who believed the Gospel that Luther had preached. So that the Emperor would know this, during the reading of the Augsburg Confession, Elector John and other Lutheran princes and officials came and stood before the assembly. This was their confession and they wanted all, especially Charles, to know it! After the Confession was read the German Princes and other officials signed it. This was a courageous act, for by doing so, they were siding with the outlaw and heretic Martin Luther against their Emperor and the pope.

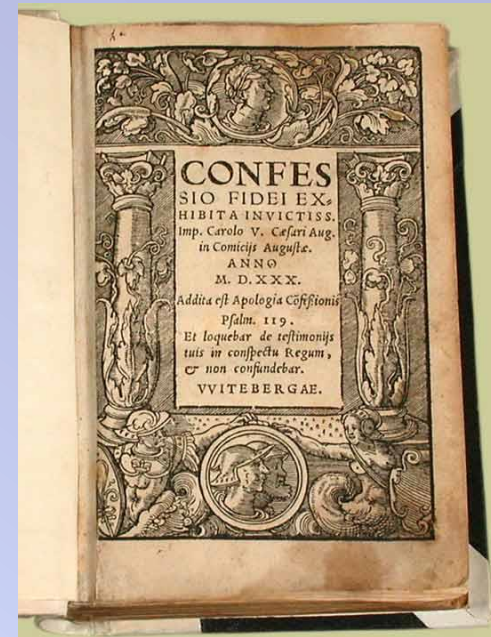
The Augsburg Confession

The Augsburg Confession is divided into two sections. The first section contains 21 articles (doctrinal statements) on core teachings of the Christian Faith: God, Original Sin, Jesus, Justification by Faith, Ministry, New Obedience, Church (2), Baptism, The Lord's Supper, Confession, Repentance, Use of the Sacraments, Ecclesiastical Order, Ecclesiastical Usages, Civil Affairs, Christ's Return to Judgment, Free Will, Cause of Sin, Faith and Good Works, and Worship of Saints.



The Augsburg Confession

The second section addresses seven teachings or practices in the Roman Church that the confessors believed were abuses: withholding the cup from the laity, celibacy, false ideas on the Mass, the enumeration of all sins in confession, compulsory regulations concerning foods and traditions, monastic vows, and the power of bishops.



The two teachings that are the hallmark of Lutheranism stand out boldly in the AC: (1) The Scriptures as the Word of God are the source of all doctrine in the Church; and (2) Justification by faith in Christ as the most important teaching of the Bible.

Conclusion

There were many confessions published by Protestants in the 1500s. But the Augsburg Confession has been universally recognized as the pivotal one. Its structure and many of its articles were copied over into other confessions. Its influence on all of Christendom has been profound. But far more than a historical document, for Lutherans it still is a statement of what we believe, teach, and confess on the basis of Holy Scripture. It still is our confession today.

Being Lutheran means being able to confess clearly what you believe from Holy Scripture. Do yourself a favor and read (or reread) the Augsburg Confession, so that you might be reminded what it is that we Christian Lutherans believe, teach, and confess!