

2-1-1945

## The Marburg Colloquy of 1529: A Textual Study

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### Recommended Citation

Beto, George John (1945) "The Marburg Colloquy of 1529: A Textual Study," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 16 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol16/iss1/8>

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# Concordia Theological Monthly

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Vol. XVI

FEBRUARY, 1945

No. 2

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## The Marburg Colloquy of 1529: A Textual Study

### Sources

The primary sources on the Marburg Colloquy are comparatively numerous. While an official transcript of the proceedings was not kept, certain observers took notes and immediately after the conference supplemented these notes with the material they had retained in their memories. All of the sources are untranslated and are found in either German or Latin.

The most valuable and the most complete account of the Colloquy is the *Itinerarium Hedios*. Hedio was a Zurich theologian who accompanied Zwingli to Marburg. His account was written on the basis of copious notes taken during the debate. The account is subjective, patently championing the cause of the Swiss. The original has been lost, but copies are found in the Weimar Edition of Luther's Works,<sup>1)</sup> in Koehler's classic work on the Marburg Colloquy,<sup>2)</sup> and in *Die Zeitschrift fuer Kirchengeschichte*.<sup>3)</sup>

The account of Rudolph Collin, professor of Greek at Zurich, ranks second in importance. Some scholars, particularly Erichson, are of the opinion that Hedio and Collin met immediately after the Colloquy or during the recesses and supplemented each other's notes. Kidd,<sup>4)</sup> the Weimar Edition, and Koehler have copies of Collin's account.

Not as complete as the above-mentioned, but not wholly lacking in value is the account of the so-called Anonymous. He states that his words are *a quodam qui interfuit*. The author is evidently

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1) *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, Weimar, 1910, Band 30, Dritte Abteilung.

2) Walther Koehler, *Das Marburger Religionsgesprach*.

3) *Die Zeitschrift fuer Kirchengeschichte*, IV, 414f.

4) Kidd, *Documents*, p. 247.

a Lutheran; perhaps he was Friederich Myconius, Lutheran pastor at Gotha, who was present at the Colloquy. Koehler, the Weimar Edition, and Schirmmacher carry his account.<sup>5)</sup>

In the Stadtbibliothek of Nuernberg reposes the original account of Osiander, the Lutheran. He came to Marburg sometime after the Colloquy began. Therefore the forepart of his account has hearsay as its basis. The rest of his account was written on the basis of recollection or perhaps notes. A transcript is reprinted in Koehler and in the Weimar Edition.

Bullinger, Zwingli's successor at Zurich, in his *History of the Reformation* has an account of the debate. It is evident that Bullinger used Collin as his source. Koehler also has this account.

Brenz, the precocious student of Luther, wrote three reports of the debate. Koehler has all the accounts. Pressel has two of the three.<sup>6)</sup> The importance of the Brenz accounts lies in their emphasis on Zwingli's citations from the Church Fathers.

There is also the *Rhapsodie colloquii ad Marburgum*. The author is unknown. Luther is largely ignored throughout the account. In spite of its paucity of details, the account cannot be discarded. A copy is found in Koehler.

Koehler also lists the account of Heinrich Utinger. It is evident that this work does not have notes taken during the Colloquy as its basis.

Letters pertaining to the debate are found in almost every edition of Luther's works, particularly the St. Louis Edition.<sup>7)</sup> The articles of faith, framed at the close of the debate and signed by the participants, are found in the Weimar and St. Louis editions.

Secondary accounts of the debate itself are poor. The standard biographies of Luther and Zwingli briefly discuss the Colloquy. German scholars have done some work in this field. At the present time there is no English monograph on the Marburg Colloquy available.

#### Marburg, October 1, 1529

After the Zwinglians and the Lutherans arrived at Marburg, Zwingli with Melanchthon, and Luther with Oecolampadius held private discussions before the general colloquy began.

Zwingli and Melanchthon have written detailed accounts of their preliminary discussion.<sup>8)</sup> On the basis of the notes which Zwingli took during the preliminary discussion, the letter which

5) F. W. Schirmmacher, *Briefe und Acten zu der Geschichte des Religionsgespraches zu Marburg, 1529*.

6) Pressel, *Anecdota Brentiana*, p. 63ff.

7) *Dr. Martin Luther's Saemmtliche Schriften*, St. Louis, 1901, Band XVII.

8) Koehler, *Das Marburger Religionsgesprach*, pp. 40-48.

he wrote to Vadian shortly after the Marburg Colloquy, and the two letters which Melanchthon wrote to the Elector and to the Duke of Saxony, we can fairly accurately reconstruct their private debate, especially since Zwingli rewrote his notes in the form of a dialog. Bullinger has a lengthy account of this preliminary conference in his *History of the Reformation*, but he merely restates that which Zwingli has in his account.<sup>9)</sup>

Zwingli states that he and Melanchthon discussed the doctrine of Original Sin, the part the Word and Sacrament play in the operation of the Holy Spirit, and the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Melanchthon also states that these three doctrines were discussed, but he adds a fourth—the Deity of Jesus Christ. Bullinger also lists this doctrine as having been discussed. Zwingli probably failed to list it because he felt it to be a matter of course that Christian theologians should agree on that cardinal doctrine. Both disputants state that they agreed on all doctrines save that of the Lord's Supper. Melanchthon in his accounts simply states that the doctrine was discussed and takes for granted that unanimity was not reached. Zwingli's account is more detailed. In arguing with Melanchthon he used the same proofs which he had been wont to use in his previous polemical writings—John 6:63 and the local presence of Christ at the right hand of the Father. According to Zwingli, Melanchthon's repeated retort to these "proofs" was Matt. 26:26—"This is My body." Zwingli finally accused the Wittenberg theologian of begging the question.

While Melanchthon and Zwingli were disputing, Luther and Oecolampadius were also carrying on a private discussion. Though letters were written in October of 1529 by Zwingli, Luther, Melanchthon, and though Bucer mentions this private debate, no account mentions the subject discussed.<sup>10)</sup>

#### The Participants

Osiander, Brenz, and Bullinger state that a number of people were excluded from the colloquy. None, save Osiander, gives a motive for the exclusion. Osiander attributes the exclusion to the sweating plague which was rampant at that time. But he is not sure; he merely offers that as a probable reason. Evidently the disputants felt that nothing could be gained by permitting the attendance of a large number of onlookers.

Brenz, Bucer, and Jonas agree on the composition of the group finally admitted. It consisted of Philip of Hesse, his chancellors, some lesser nobles and learned men. Brenz states that there were fifty or sixty people present. Zwingli in his letter to Vadian says

9) *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 44.

10) *Ibid.*, p. 48.

there were at the most twenty-four. Brenz undoubtedly more closely approximates the truth, since Jonas lists by name nineteen individuals who were present. And he admits that he is listing only prominent personages.<sup>11)</sup>

### The Colloquy

Philip's chancellor, Feige, formally opened the colloquy in the name of the prince. He stated the purpose of the meeting and thanked the participants for coming to Marburg. Hedio, the Swiss, and Osiander, the Lutheran, add that Feige instructed the disputants not to seek their own glory, but rather the glory of God. Osiander speaks from hearsay, since he did not arrive at Marburg until some time after Feige delivered his opening remarks. In all probability Feige so warned the theologians. That expression was a commonplace in theological discussion of that day.<sup>12)</sup>

While all accounts agree in stating that Luther made a few introductory remarks after Feige's speech, only two, Hedio and Anonymous, approximate completeness. Hedio says that Luther demanded that the doctrines of the Trinity, the Person of Christ, Baptism, Original Sin, and Purgatory be discussed first. He claimed that the Swiss had been in error on these points. Anonymous, whom on the basis of internal evidence we would judge to be Lutheran, lists in addition to the above-mentioned doctrines the doctrine of the Function of the Word of God and the doctrine of Justification.<sup>13)</sup>

According to Anonymous, Hedio, and Brenz, Zwingli answered Luther by saying that these doctrines had been discussed by himself and Melancthon and an agreeable settlement had been reached. Furthermore, Zwingli stated he had come to Marburg for the purpose of discussing the Lord's Supper. Hedio and Anonymous state that Oecolampadius concurred with Zwingli in these sentiments.<sup>14)</sup>

Then, according to all accounts save the so-called *Rhapsodie colloquii ad Marburgum*, Luther contended that the fundamental thesis of the colloquy must be the words of Christ "This is My body." As the writer of the *Rhapsodie* consistently excludes Luther from his account, his omission does not militate against the authenticity of the contention.<sup>15)</sup>

At this juncture, according to one eyewitness, Collin, Luther wrote the words *hoc est corpus meum* on the table before him. Osiander, who was not present at the time, supports Collin. It is

11) *Ibid.*, pp. 49—51.

12) *Ibid.*, p. 52.

13) *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 54.

14) *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 55.

15) *Ibid.*, pp. 55—57.

strange that this more or less dramatic episode in the debate is not noted by more than one eyewitness.<sup>16)</sup>

For the next few hours the colloquy assumed the form of a debate between Luther and Oecolampadius.

According to Hedio, Collin, Anonymous, and Bullinger (whom we can exclude from consideration since he merely copies Collin) Oecolampadius endeavored to show Luther that the words "This is My body" could be understood figuratively. Collin and Anonymous state that Oecolampadius, in proof of this thesis, cited John 15:1, where Christ's words "I am the true Vine" are recorded. Hedio does not list this passage, but it is evident from Luther's answer that the passage was cited.<sup>17)</sup> Luther in his answer was willing to admit that the Bible uses figures of speech, but he was unwilling to admit that John 15:1 and the words of institution were such figures. He appealed to the Church Fathers for support. Hedio and Collin, the Swiss representatives, are alone in recording this reply of Luther. Later, however, Anonymous, in summarizing this phase of the debate, puts essentially the same words into Luther's mouth which Collin and Hedio do.<sup>18)</sup>

According to Hedio and Collin, Oecolampadius reiterated that "I am the true Vine" could be interpreted figuratively.<sup>19)</sup> That this statement is authentic is shown by Luther's answer, which is chronicled by three eyewitnesses. In his answer Luther maintained that before any passage of Scripture could be interpreted figuratively, it must be proved that such an interpretation is the only possible one.<sup>20)</sup>

Then Hedio, Collin, and Anonymous state that Oecolampadius tried a new approach in order to prove that "This is My body" could be interpreted figuratively. He read passages from the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel in which Christ speaks of a spiritual eating. In this chapter is found the *locus classicus* of the Swiss: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."<sup>21)</sup> By this passage, according to Hedio and Collin, Oecolampadius contended that Christ for all time rejected a carnal eating of His body.<sup>22)</sup> The authenticity of the citation of John 6 is substantiated by the immediate context, which shows that the subsequent discussion between Luther and his Swiss opponent revolved around the interpretation of John 6 and the difference between an oral and a spiritual eating and drinking.

Hedio, Collin, and Anonymous chronicle Luther as remaining with John 6 and interpreting it in such a manner as not to violate

16) *Ibid.*, p. 57.

19) *Ibid.*

17) *Ibid.*, p. 58.

20) *Ibid.*

18) *Ibid.*, p. 59.

21) John 6:63.

22) Koehler, *Das Marburger Religionsgespräch*, pp. 59, 60.

his doctrine of the Real Presence. Luther maintained that in John 6 the Lord is speaking of the Jews of Capernaum and is trying to impress upon their all too carnal minds the fact that His body was not to be eaten as meat on a plate but in a more spiritual manner.<sup>23)</sup>

Then Oecolampadius, according to Collin and Anonymous, claimed Luther had admitted in his previous writings that the Scriptures could be interpreted in a dual fashion.<sup>24)</sup> The other eyewitnesses do not have this charge of Oecolampadius. Probably they well knew that Luther never denied the dual interpretation. Anonymous makes much of Oecolampadius' charge. It seems that he sets up a straw man for Luther to demolish.

Anonymous (whom we believe to be Lutheran) alone lists Luther's answer, in which the German Reformer stated that the elements in the sacraments — bread, wine, and water — are indeed ordinary things, but that when they are associated with God's word, they assume a higher, a nobler aspect.<sup>25)</sup> It is a passage such as this one which makes it evident that Anonymous is a Lutheran; for nowhere do the other chroniclers ever state Luther's tenets as clearly and as completely as Anonymous does in this passage and in others. In this particular case the Reformed eyewitnesses ignore Luther's answer.

While Collin and Hedio do not list Luther's answer, they do carry Oecolampadius' rebuttal to Luther's statement, which Anonymous alone has. Oecolampadius told Luther that Christ's presence in the bread and wine was not a matter of faith but rather a matter of opinion, and that it was dangerous to attribute too much to the elements.<sup>26)</sup> According to Hedio he cited a passage from Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*<sup>27)</sup> in substantiation of his thesis. The authenticity of the citation from Augustine is shown by Luther's answer.

Hedio, Collin, and the *Rhapsodie* list Luther's answer, in which he again pointed out that common things become worthy of awe and reverence because of their association with God's Word. Augustine's opinion made little impression upon Luther. According to the *Rhapsodie* he stated that if Augustine taught that bread and wine were mere symbols, he had better walk in Christ's footsteps and teach as He taught.<sup>28)</sup> This is a statement which is characteristically "Lutheran."

The next interchange of arguments is chronicled by Hedio alone. The other writers probably felt that the discussion was merely

23) *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 61.26) *Ibid.*, p. 62.24) *Ibid.*, p. 61.27) *Lib. III*, chapter 9.25) *Ibid.*, p. 61.28) Koehler, *Das Marburger Religionsgespräch*, pp. 62, 63.

a restatement of what had been said previously, and therefore failed to list it. Oecolampadius accused Luther of teaching that the word of God brings the body of Christ into the elements. Luther admitted that to be his view.<sup>29)</sup>

Then, according to Collin, Anonymous, and the *Rhapsodie*, Oecolampadius asked whether a spiritual eating did not exclude a bodily eating.<sup>30)</sup> Hedio does not have the question, but he does list Luther's answer.

Luther evidently saw that Oecolampadius implied a denial of a spiritual eating and drinking on Luther's part, for the Wittenberger emphatically protested, saying that he did not deny a spiritual reception. However, he maintained that a bodily eating and drinking is also taught, as evidenced by the words "Eat, this is My body." According to Collin, Luther asserted that he would and could eat manure for his spiritual edification if God so commanded.<sup>31)</sup> This outburst must not be disregarded because a single eyewitness records it, and he a Swiss; for we know that Luther was capable of statements even more earthy in content. This spirited reply of Luther, exclusive of the manure item, is chronicled by Hedio, Collin, Anonymous, and the *Rhapsodie*.

#### Luther and Zwingli

Luther and Oecolampadius closed their argument by a restatement of their *loci classici*, Matt. 26: 26 and John 6: 63, respectively.<sup>32)</sup>

Oecolampadius then retired for a time from active participation in the colloquy, and Zwingli took his place.

Zwingli began by accusing Luther of being motivated by a preconceived bias. Comparing Luther with the heresiarch Helvidius,<sup>33)</sup> the Zurich theologian asserted that Luther was unwilling to withdraw from an erroneous position even after his error had been made evident. Hedio, Collin, and Bullinger list this comparison. Bullinger was not present; he uses his co-religionists as his source. The inept character of the comparison is undoubtedly a factor in the Lutheran failure to list it.

Two Lutherans, Brenz and Osiander, briefly summarize Zwingli's lengthy speech. Hedio and Collin are more detailed. Zwingli's opening argument can be divided into three parts. In the

29) *Ibid.*, p. 63.

31) *Ibid.*, pp. 64, 65.

30) *Ibid.*, p. 64.

32) *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 66.

33) Helvidius was a heresiarch of the fourth century, a layman who opposed the growing superstitions of the Church, especially the worship of Mary. He maintained that Mary had other children besides Jesus. The Greek sometimes uses the same word for brother and for cousin. Therefore, when the New Testament speaks of the brothers of Jesus, some commentators translate it as cousins. (McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*.)



first place, he reiterated John 6:63, quoting the original Greek, and emphasized that the words "The flesh profiteth nothing" exclude a bodily eating. In the second place, he chided Luther for his emphasis on a literal interpretation, claiming that it was childish of Luther to say that he would eat manure if the Lord so commanded. Finally, he excused himself for speaking harshly and pleaded for union. He claimed that agreement in all points of doctrine was not essential for unity.<sup>34)</sup>

Collin, Hedio, and Anonymous agree essentially in regard to Luther's answer. According to Collin and Hedio, Luther first disposed of the Helvidius reference by pointing out that when the New Testament uses the word brother, it often means cousin.<sup>35)</sup>

The Zwinglians had previously argued that God never presents man with anything incomprehensible; Luther's doctrine of the Lord's Supper is incomprehensible; therefore it could not be of God. Luther cited the doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sins and the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, both of which voided the major premise in this syllogism.<sup>36)</sup>

The German Reformer then assumed a more positive attitude and stated the place of faith in his doctrine of the Supper. He asserted that while the mouth received the body of Christ, the soul accepted by faith the words of Christ. Anonymous agrees with Collin and Hedio here, but he brings in a new idea. He quotes Luther as saying that an unbeliever, one without faith, in receiving the Lord's Supper, also eats the Lord's body and drinks his blood—but to his damnation. While Luther taught that an unbeliever ate and drank the Lord's body and blood to his damnation, there is no reason to believe that he stated that view here. Anonymous in his Lutheran zeal is evidently moved by a desire for completeness in stating what happens when both believers and unbelievers partake of the Lord's Supper.<sup>37)</sup>

Hedio, Collin, and Anonymous record Zwingli as having cited Ezek. 5:5—a passage in which a symbolical act on the part of the Prophet Ezekiel represents Jerusalem—to prove that the symbolical meaning is often found in Scripture. The three Reformed writers Hedio, Collin, and the author of the *Rhapsodie* further record Zwingli as having accused Luther of investing the word of God with magical qualities when he claimed that a recitation of the words of institution over the elements brought the body and blood therein.<sup>38)</sup> Bullinger and Osiander do not list Zwingli's charges. However, their accounts are *résumés*. Brenz also fails to

34) Koehler, *Das Marburger Religionsgespräch*, pp. 66—69.

35) *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 70.

37) *Ibid.*

36) *Ibid.*

38) *Ibid.*, pp. 71—73.

record; probably because no essentially new arguments were offered by the Zurich theologian.

According to all the commentators except Brenz and Osiander, Luther differentiated between an allegorical and a literal interpretation of the Bible. He claimed that most of the Old Testament passages which the Zwinglians had cited to prove that Scripture, particularly the words of institution, could be interpreted figuratively were allegorical passages. The three Reformed writers Collin, Hedio, and the author of the *Rhapsodie* have Luther close his statement with the argument that the Zwinglian key passage: "So, then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God"<sup>39)</sup> could as well be interpreted figuratively or symbolically as the words of institution could.<sup>40)</sup>

Only the Swiss writers Hedio, Collin, and Bullinger list Zwingli's reply. According to Hedio, Zwingli asked Luther not to commit the logical error of *petitio principii* by asking for a symbolical interpretation of Mark 16:19. All the writers assert that Zwingli cited John 6:63 and averred that he would not retreat from that stronghold. Bullinger merely translates the Latin of Collin into old German. He piously adds, however, that John 6:63 is the only passage which can give man a correct conception of the true eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood. Again, the other chroniclers drop Zwingli's answer, the cause probably being that his argument was an oft-repeated one.<sup>41)</sup>

Luther retorted by saying that Zwingli's tone was becoming bitter. There is no conclusive evidence that this remark was uttered. Only Collin and Hedio list it, and they collaborated.<sup>42)</sup>

Zwingli again referred to John 6. This and the following remarks of Zwingli are chronicled by Hedio, Collin, and, of course, Bullinger.<sup>43)</sup> The other writers ignore them, either because they were lost to them in the quick interchange of remarks or because of their inconsequential character.

Luther answered by maintaining that John 6 was not pertinent to a discussion of the Lord's Supper.<sup>44)</sup> Incidentally, this is the argument which Lutheran theologians use today in discussing the Lord's Supper with Reformed churchmen, namely, that the Savior is not speaking of the Eucharist in John 6:63. Modern Lutherans have often wondered why Luther failed to stress this point to a greater degree at Marburg.

39) Mark 16:19.

40) Koehler, *Das Marburger Religionsgespräch*, pp. 73—75.

41) *Ibid.*, p. 75.

43) *Ibid.*, pp. 75, 76.

42) *Ibid.*, p. 75.

44) *Ibid.*, p. 76.

According to Hedio, Zwingli told Luther it remained for him to prove his previous assertion in regard to John 6.<sup>45)</sup> Luther then accused Zwingli of resorting to sophistical dialectic. Again only Hedio lists this charge.<sup>46)</sup> Zwingli's answer proves its textual authenticity, for Collin, Hedio, and Bullinger record Zwingli as having observed that it was not the "sophistical dialectic" which irked the Wittenberger, but rather the fact that John 6 was a "neck breaker" for him.<sup>47)</sup>

All the writers save Brenz and the author of the *Rhapsodie* list Luther's answer. Osiander, who was present by this time, gives more personal and intimate details in his narrative account. He points out that after the last comparatively bitter interchange of remarks, Luther in a friendly fashion urged Zwingli to keep rancor out of the debate and to refrain from "tedious, unnecessary, irrelevant, and disgusting drivel" (*lanng, unnoetig, undienstlich, und verdriesslich geschwetz*).<sup>48)</sup>

The burden of Luther's answer, however, concerns itself with Zwingli's oft-repeated charge that according to Luther's interpretation the ungodly, or unworthy, eat the Lord's body and drink His blood. Luther admitted the truthfulness of the charge, but he added that in so doing they eat and drink to their damnation.<sup>49)</sup>

It must have been apparent to Zwingli that the noon hour was near. He answered Luther's last speech with an apology for his bitterness in debate by saying that such bitterness was a characteristic of the Swiss. Only Collin and Bullinger, the secondary source, record this remark.<sup>50)</sup>

At this point Landgrave Philip of Hesse accepted Zwingli's apology and at the same time urged Luther to be more calm. The disputants then stopped for the noon meal.<sup>51)</sup>

At the beginning of the afternoon session Zwingli opened the debate by quoting a section from Luther's Septuagesima sermon in which he spoke of a spiritual eating and drinking in — what seemed to Zwingli — a rather carnal manner. In opposition to Luther's view Zwingli then quoted a section from Melanchthon's exegesis of St. John's Gospel in which Luther's co-worker had stated that Christ was not eaten in a fleshly manner by the faithful and that the words of institution were to be interpreted symbolically. He insisted that the two Lutherans contradicted each other.<sup>52)</sup> This speech of Zwingli is found in all the accounts save those of Osiander and Brenz. Perhaps these two Lutheran chroniclers were reluctant to record this discrepancy in the views of their leaders.

45) *Ibid.*49) *Ibid.*, pp. 76—78.46) *Ibid.*50) *Ibid.*, p. 78.47) *Ibid.*51) *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 79.48) *Ibid.*, p. 77.52) *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 80.

Luther dismissed the apparent or real contradiction between his and Melancthon's statements with few words and returned again to his prime proof text: "*Hoc est corpus meum.*" He again stated that whenever bread and wine were offered according to the institution of Christ, there also, because of Christ's promise, would be His body and blood. He also repeated that doctrine which was particularly offensive to the Zwinglians, namely, that even when an unbeliever acts as the officiant in the Sacrament of the Altar, the body and blood are still present. He stoutly maintained that the validity of the Sacrament was not dependent upon the righteousness or faith of the officiant, as the Donatists<sup>53)</sup> and Anabaptists<sup>54)</sup> had maintained. Again, only Brenz and Osiander omit this section.<sup>55)</sup>

Zwingli countered by branding the idea an absurdity and an impious thought that unbelievers could cause the body and blood to be present in the Sacrament. No account of any importance omits this retort.<sup>56)</sup>

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53) Donatism originated in Carthage, North Africa, shortly after the Diocletian persecution. The Donatists took issue with the Catholic Church in matters of church discipline and martyrdom. The schismatic party held that the *traditores*, or those who had surrendered copies of Scripture during the recent persecution, had committed a mortal sin. In 311 Caecilian was hastily elected and consecrated Bishop of Carthage. The consecration service was performed by Felix of Aptunga, whom the Donatists declared to be a *traditor*. This offense, they declared, rendered all the official acts of Felix invalid, including the ordination of Caecilian. A group of 70 bishops assembled at Carthage and elected Majorinus as rival bishop in 312. He died the following year and was succeeded by Donatus the Great, from whom the schismatic party took its name. For many years there were two warring factions in the North African Church. After Augustine had been elected Bishop of Hippo in 395, he tried to effect a reconciliation between the factions. He entered the controversy on the Catholic side and declared that the character of a minister does not affect his official acts, though the official may be an unworthy man. Augustine's opposition gave Donatism its deathblow. The Donatists disappeared in the turmoil surrounding the Vandal invasion of North Africa. (McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature.*)

54) Anabaptism was a collective name for a wide variety of religious opinions held by various groups. All groups held at least three things in common: they rejected infant baptism and rebaptized members who had been baptized as children (Anabaptists means Rebaptizers); they avoided state or national churches because these, they claimed, numbered many nominal Christians, while a true church should be an association of believers only; they subordinated the outward Word of God and the Sacraments to the subjective experience of the "inner light" of the Spirit. There were two types of Anabaptists, the quietists and the revolutionaries. The quietists believed in passive resistance to temporal authority when it conflicted with their beliefs. The revolutionaries were fanatics who advocated the overthrow of the authority of Church and State. (McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature.*)

55) Koehler, *Das Marburger Religionsgespräch*, pp. 80—83.

56) *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Luther retaliated by citing both Scripture and the Church Fathers in order to prove that the faith or lack of faith of an officiating clergyman in no way affects the validity or efficacy of a Sacrament. *E. g.*: Paul's statement regarding the baptism of Gaius and Crispus in 1 Cor. 1:14-16; the Savior's words regarding the Pharisees in Matt. 23; the discipleship of Judas, the betrayer; and Augustine's polemic against the Donatists. He closed by saying that God's words were efficacious (*wirkungskraeftig*) at all times, regardless of the speaker of the words. Only Brenz and Osiander, together with Bullinger, whose account is secondary, omit this part of the debate.<sup>57)</sup>

In his answer, which Hedio, Collin, and the anonymous Lutheran have, Zwingli distinguishes between the act, or office, or administering a Sacrament and the act, or office, of preaching. He classified Luther's "*Hoc est corpus meum*" text under the office of preaching.<sup>58)</sup> What he implied by that remark becomes clear by noting Luther's answer, in which he was unwilling to admit any subtle distinction between the act of preaching and the act of administering the Sacraments.<sup>59)</sup>

Zwingli was willing to agree that the efficacy of God's Word was not dependent upon the righteousness or unrighteousness of the preacher or speaker. However, he was unwilling to admit that the Sacrament of the Altar or the Sacrament of Holy Baptism became efficacious wherever and to whomever it might be administered in spite of the faith or lack of faith of the officiating clergyman; hence the attempted distinction between the two offices.

Next follows an interchange of remarks between Zwingli and Luther which is chronicled only by Anonymous.

In this section the two disputants repeated, to a greater or lesser degree, what had been said before.

Zwingli attempted to identify Luther's contention that the efficacy of the Sacraments was not dependent upon the faith of the officiating clergyman with the view held by the Church of Rome. Luther answered by saying that since no one could be sure of the faith of the officiant, the efficacy of a Sacrament must rest with God's word. Concerning that there could be no doubt, he held.

Then Zwingli turned from the faith of the officiant to the faith of the recipient. He argued that if the word of God was the criterion for judging the validity of the Sacrament of the Altar, then even the unbelieving recipients would of necessity receive not only the body and the blood but also the benefits of the Lord's Supper when it was administered according to Christ's institution.

57) *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 84.

59) *Ibid.*

58) *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Luther agreed that the unbelieving recipients of the elements and the body and blood were affected by their eating and drinking. However, they were affected in a manner wholly different from that in which the believers were affected. The unbelievers, instead of receiving the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of faith, eat and drink to their damnation.<sup>60)</sup> He evidently based his remarks on that portion of the Letter to the Corinthians where Paul in his discussion of the Lord's Supper said: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."<sup>61)</sup>

On the basis of both external and internal evidence we are forced to reject this last interchange of remarks as an integral part of the debate. In the first place, only Anonymous records the remarks. The Hedio and Collin accounts, the most complete of all, are silent on this point. It might be argued that since they were Reformed, they intentionally dropped these decisive remarks of Luther. However, no other Lutheran eyewitness lists them. The remarks themselves do not appear authentic. They contain an argument which Luther hitherto in his writings and in the debate had not used and which was frequently used later. We refer to his reasoning regarding the Christian's lack of certainty concerning the efficacy of the Lord's Supper when such efficacy was dependent on the faith of the officiating clergyman. Perhaps Anonymous, composing his account some time after the Marburg Colloquy, felt that this argument had been used or should have been used.

#### Oecolampadius — Luther — Melanchthon

Afternoon of October 2, 1529

At this juncture in the Colloquy, Zwingli, for reasons not given, turned the defense of the Reformed tenets over to Oecolampadius. Luther and Melanchthon (briefly) continued the defense of the German position.

Oecolampadius opened the second phase of the debate by expressing dissatisfaction with Luther's exposition of John 6. In fact, he accused Luther of violating Scripture. He cited Christ's conversation with Nicodemus in John 3. In that chapter Christ demands rebirth, or regeneration, as the prerequisite for entrance into the kingdom of God. That prerequisite, Oecolampadius asserted, makes actual reception of Christ's body in the Sacrament of the Altar unnecessary and useless. Only Brenz and Osiander fail to list the statement. Their accounts make no claim to completeness.<sup>62)</sup>

60) *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 86.

61) 1 Cor. 11:29.

62) Koehler, *Das Marburger Religionsgespräch*, pp. 86, 87.

According to two Zwinglian eyewitnesses and one Lutheran, the Wittenberger responded by heartily agreeing with Oecolampadius regarding the inviolability of Scripture. But he was unwilling to agree that John 3 rendered his view of the bodily reception untenable. On the contrary, he maintained that God had set up three means, or methods—the Word, the Sacrament of Baptism, and the actual reception of the Lord's body and blood—for the purpose of working and effecting saving faith, rebirth, or regeneration. Therefore, instead of being "useless and unnecessary," the reception of the body of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar strengthened the faith of the reborn, or regenerated, man.<sup>63)</sup>

The fact that four accounts do not list this statement of Luther does not militate against its authenticity. Two Reformed writers and one Lutheran are agreed in their presentation. Moreover, the statement is a distinctly Lutheran view. Repeatedly, before and after the Marburg Colloquy, Luther expressed these sentiments in regard to the means of grace.

One chronicler, Anonymous, lists an interchange of remarks between Luther and Oecolampadius which is undoubtedly authentic. According to Anonymous, Oecolampadius cited John 16:28, a passage in which Christ said that he was leaving the world to return to the Father. Luther retaliated with Luke 24:44, a passage which he claimed correctly interpreted Oecolampadius' citation.<sup>64)</sup>

We are forced to admit these remarks into the colloquy despite the fact that only one writer lists them. The unity of the immediate and remote context demands that the passage be accepted as genuine.

Oecolampadius continued by chiding Luther for placing too much emphasis on the words "This is My body." He added that there were passages which stated that Christ was living and reigning in heaven.<sup>65)</sup> Only Hedio and Collin list this remark. However, other writers show by Luther's immediate answer that the remark was made.

Luther's answer is lacking only in the Brenz and Osiander accounts; they are both skeletal accounts. In his answer Luther admitted that he emphasized the passage "This is My body"; but he maintained that such emphasis did not preclude his believing that Christ was also sitting at the right hand of the Father. That his view was irrational and contrary to the laws of nature did not bother him. His faith was great enough to believe both statements.<sup>66)</sup>

In rebuttal Oecolampadius listed one of the properties of

63) *Ibid.*, pp. 87, 88.

65) *Ibid.*, p. 89.

64) *Ibid.*, p. 88.

66) *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 90.

matter—a body can be in only one place at any given time.<sup>67)</sup> Only two men, both Lutherans, Brenz and Anonymous, list this rejoinder. Again the reply of Luther and the subsequent remarks attest to its authenticity.

Luther called Oecolampadius' last remark "mathematical hair-splitting" and would have none of it. He maintained that that which was physically impossible with man was possible with God.<sup>68)</sup> Two Lutherans and one Zwinglian, the writer of the *Rhapsodie*, admit the answer of Luther. Perhaps Collin and Hedio felt that Luther's remarks were of too little importance or that Luther's trust on faith in God's Word and power had been stated often enough.

When he continued, Oecolampadius qualified his previous statement regarding Christ's departure from this world and his session at the right hand of the Father. He explained that while Christ as a member of the Trinity, or Godhead, was all-pervasive, He nevertheless, according to His human nature, had departed from this world and therefore could not be bodily present in the elements of the Lord's Supper. Oecolampadius admitted that Christ was present in the elements, but only in the same manner in which He is all-pervasive, not bodily (*leiblich*).<sup>69)</sup> Only Brenz and Osiander omit this phase of the argument. The reasons for their omission have been listed above.

Luther refused to agree to this peculiar division of the two natures of Christ. He held that the words of institution required the type of faith which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews extols in his eleventh chapter, a faith in things not seen.<sup>70)</sup> Again Brenz, Osiander, and Bullinger fail to list the answer of Luther. Bullinger has Collin as his source; therefore his omission is inconsequential.

Oecolampadius then warned Luther not to emphasize the humanity of Christ to the exclusion of His deity.<sup>71)</sup> Luther curtly answered that he knew only of a God who became man. He would have no other.<sup>72)</sup>

Only one Zwinglian and one Lutheran, both eyewitnesses, have this interchange of remarks. Nevertheless we are compelled to accept these remarks because of external and internal evidence. One writer is a Zwinglian, the other a Lutheran. The type of language and expression used by both men shows that they are expressing the same idea independently.

Oecolampadius countered with a new approach. He cited 2 Cor. 5:16, a passage in which St. Paul states that we cannot know

67) *Ibid.*, p. 90.68) *Ibid.*, pp. 90, 91.69) *Ibid.*70) *Ibid.*, pp. 92, 93.71) *Ibid.*, p. 93.72) *Ibid.*



Christ according to the flesh.<sup>73)</sup> All except the *Rhapsodie* and Bullinger have this citation.

According to Hedio and Collin, Melanchthon entered the debate at this point for the purpose of correcting the faulty exegesis of Oecolampadius in the case of 2 Cor. 5:16. The two Reformed writers claim that Melanchthon pointed out that the passage in question teaches that we cannot know Christ according to *our* flesh, not *His* flesh.<sup>74)</sup> However, Brenz and Anonymous assert that Luther made the correction in exegesis.<sup>75)</sup> We are inclined to agree with Collin and Hedio. Their accounts were written on the basis of notes. Moreover, a careless observer would naturally assume that Luther would make the correction since he was leading this section of the debate.

Ignoring the correction, Oecolampadius tried another approach. That Christ had a mortal body was his major premise; his minor premise — that mortal body was sacrificed on the cross of Calvary. He concluded that the mortal body became valueless at Christ's death.<sup>76)</sup> Two writers, one Lutheran and the other Zwinglian, have this syllogism, together with Luther's answer. The German claimed that the question of the mortality of Christ's body was irrelevant; the promises of God caused the body to be present in the Holy Eucharist.<sup>77)</sup>

#### Zwingli and Luther

Afternoon of October 2, 1529

Apparently, noting that his colleague was not faring too well in his encounter with the Wittenberger, Zwingli again took the field.

He returned to the physical impossibility of Christ's body occupying two places at the same time. He cited Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:6 ff.; Heb. 2:17; 4:15; 1 Cor. 15:48 to prove that Christ had a mortal body. He added that all men have mortal bodies, which cannot occupy two places at the same time. Therefore Christ's body is incapable of being in heaven at the right hand of the Father and in the bread and wine simultaneously. He concluded by adding that Augustine and Fulgentius<sup>78)</sup> supported his conclusion.<sup>79)</sup> No eyewitness fails to list these remarks in one form or another.

73) *Ibid.*, p. 94.

76) *Ibid.*, p. 95.

74) *Ibid.*

77) *Ibid.*

75) *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 95.

78) Ferrandus Fulgentius was a deacon in Carthage. He died in 551 A. D. He was active in the controversy at that time agitating the Church whether it was orthodox to say, "One person of the Trinity has suffered." He defended this expression, but recommended to add "in the flesh which he assumed." His writings are numerous, the most outstanding being his polemic against the Arians and other heretics. (McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature.*)

79) Koehler, *Das Marburger Religionsgesprach*, pp. 97—99.

Luther dismissed the citations from Augustine and Fulgentius by saying that both parties in the debate could find supporters for their views among the Church Fathers. He partially admitted the validity of the Scripture passages which Zwingli adduced. He was willing to admit that Christ had a mortal body similar to ours. However, he maintained that since Jesus was God, His body was invested with a power which transcended any "mathematical propositions," namely, the power of ubiquity.<sup>80)</sup> Again, no eyewitness omits this passage.

At this point the debate was closed for the day. On the following morning, Sunday, October 3, argumentation was resumed, Zwingli and Luther holding the floor.

Zwingli began by again citing Phil. 2:6: "Who [Christ], being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." It was Zwingli's contention that if Christ had form (*morphe*), he must of necessity occupy space and therefore could not be ubiquitous.<sup>81)</sup> Anonymous, Hedio, Collin, and Bullinger are agreed on the substance of Zwingli's remarks. Only Osiander, Brenz, and the *Rhapsodie* (all short accounts) are silent on this point.

In answering, Luther reiterated his previous argument that God's power is not limited by physical laws. He asserted that God could make a body ubiquitous if he would.<sup>82)</sup> Brenz, who is silent on the rest of the debate, and the author of *Rhapsodie*, who generally ignores Luther, do not list Luther's reply.

Zwingli accused Luther of missing the mark, of arguing the possible rather than the actual. No one, he said, had laid any limitations on the power of God.<sup>83)</sup> Again, the *Rhapsodie*, Brenz, and the incomplete account of Osiander are silent.

Luther then again quoted his classic proof text: "This is My body."<sup>84)</sup> The passage is well authenticated, since the *Rhapsodie* is the only writer of consequence who drops it.

In answer to Luther's literal interpretation of the words of institution Zwingli again cited Fulgentius and Augustine in order to prove that the Swiss theologians were not the originators of the doctrine that Christ's body is locally confined in heaven.<sup>85)</sup> No consequential chronicle omits Zwingli's speech.

It is in this section that one account, in reporting the debate, unconsciously strikes a humorous note. In reporting Zwingli's apparently lengthy citation from the Fathers, Osiander says: "Welliches gar lanckweylig zu hoeren war."<sup>86)</sup>

Luther was unwilling to admit the validity of the citation from

80) *Ibid.*, pp. 99—101.

81) *Ibid.*, p. 107.

82) *Ibid.*, pp. 107—109.

83) *Ibid.*, p. 109.

84) *Ibid.*, pp. 109, 110.

85) *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 112.

86) *Ibid.*, p. 112.

Fulgentius. He argued that Fulgentius, in the passage to which Zwingli alluded, was discussing the two natures in Christ and not the Lord's Supper.<sup>87)</sup> All accounts have the speech of Luther regarding Fulgentius, except that of Brenz and Osiander. But even they do not omit it entirely. Brenz speaks of a discussion concerning "*veteres patres.*"<sup>88)</sup>

While their accounts vary, all the eyewitnesses are agreed that Zwingli and Luther spent the rest of the morning in a more or less heated debate regarding the local and illocal presence of Christ's body. Zwingli approached the point in question with reason as his standard of judgment. As a result he argued that since Christ had ascended into heaven, He could not be in the bread and wine. Luther, using faith as his standard of judgment, was willing to believe that Jesus could be in both places, heaven and the elements of the Sacrament of the Altar.<sup>89)</sup>

#### Sunday Afternoon, October 3

On Sunday afternoon, October 3, Luther and Oecolampadius continued the debate. Their remarks are noted by Hedio and Collin, who collaborated, and Bullinger, who copiously used Collin as his source.<sup>90)</sup> The paucity of chroniclers reporting this section is probably due to the fact that the other eyewitnesses considered the arguments discussed on Sunday afternoon a repetition of what had been previously stated. Oecolampadius restated Zwingli's doctrine of the local presence and cited Augustine and Fulgentius to substantiate his view.

According to Hedio, Brenz, and Osiander, the debate ended with a protest on the part of the mediating Strassburg theologians against Luther's statement at the beginning of the colloquy regarding their unorthodoxy.<sup>91)</sup> Jacob Sturm began the defense of the Strassburgers. Later it was taken up by Bucer. Luther made light of his previous accusation by stating that the Strassburg theologians were not his disciples; therefore he was not much concerned with what they taught.

The debate was formally closed by Chancellor Feige.<sup>92)</sup>

#### The Results

The immediate result of the Colloquy expressed itself in the form of a series of articles or theses of faith drawn up by Luther at the close of the debate.<sup>93)</sup> While the articles, as d'Aubigné somewhat enthusiastically states, stand as the "first bulwark erected

87) *Ibid.*, pp. 112, 113.

88) *Ibid.*, p. 112.

89) *Ibid.*, pp. 113—120.

93) *Cambridge Modern History*, II, 209.

90) *Ibid.*, pp. 120—127.

91) *Ibid.*, pp. 127—130; 53.

92) *Ibid.*, p. 131.

in common by the reformers against Rome,"<sup>94)</sup> they did not represent or effect a religious unity between the Lutherans and the Zwinglians. Each group went home from Marburg claiming the victory; and despite their mutual agreement to adopt a more irenic policy in their writings, the controversy continued.<sup>95)</sup>

Since the attempt at religious unity—the prerequisite for political unity—failed, Philip of Hesse's plan for a Pan-Protestant union also failed. Shortly after the Marburg Colloquy, when the idea of a political union was again broached, the Lutherans asserted that they would rather make an agreement with the heathen than with those who interpreted the words of Christ's institution of the Last Supper symbolically.<sup>96)</sup> Evidently they felt that in the former case no denial of the truth would be involved, while in the latter their action might be interpreted as betokening an attitude of indifference toward a manifest error.

It is apparent, therefore, that the desired results of the Marburg Colloquy were not attained. The continued lack of unity among the Protestants of Europe stands as a monument to the failure of Philip of Hesse's ambitious plan. The Colloquy marked the lasting division between the Lutheran and the Reformed faiths. From a higher point of view we can say that the Colloquy was a success. The strong temptation confronting the Lutherans to effect a compromise—a course which Zwingli was quite willing to take—was overcome; they remained faithful to their convictions and demonstrated to the world that they considered loyalty to the Word of God more important than worldly prominence and power.

### Appendix

#### The Marburg Articles

Philip of Hesse said, "We must let the Christian world know that, except the manner of the presence of the body and blood in the Eucharist, you are agreed in all the articles of faith."<sup>97)</sup> In compliance with the Landgrave's request fourteen articles dealing with the major tenets of the Christian faith were drawn up and signed by Luther and Zwingli together with their respective colleagues:

"First, we—both parties—unanimously believe and hold that there is one, true, and natural God, Creator of heaven and earth and of all creatures; and that this same God, one in essence and nature, is threefold in person; that is to say, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as was declared in the Nicene Council and as all the Christian Church professes.

94) D'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation*, p. 393.

95) Eells, *Martin Bucer*, p. 97.

96) Smith, *Age of the Reformation*, p. 110.

97) T. Engelder, *Theological Monthly*, IX, 101.

"Secondly, we believe that neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit, but the Son of God the Father, who is by nature God, became man through the working of the Holy Spirit and without the benefit of the seed of man was born of the Virgin Mary; that He had body and soul as other men have, but was without sin.

"Thirdly, we believe that this same Son of God and of Mary, Jesus Christ, undivided in person, was crucified for us, died, was buried, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father, is Lord over all creatures, and will come for the purpose of judging the living and the dead.

"Fourthly, we believe that original sin is received and inherited by us from Adam and is capable of damning all men. And had not Christ helped us with His life and death, we would of a necessity have perished eternally and would not be permitted to enter God's kingdom of bliss.

"Fifthly, we believe that we were saved not only from the power of that (original) sin as well as from the power of all other sins, but also from eternal death by our faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ, who died for us. Beyond that faith good works and position avail nothing in freeing one from the power of sin.

"Sixthly, we believe that such faith is a gift of God which we cannot obtain by previous good works, service, or by our own strength; rather, the Holy Spirit—at will—gives to and creates in our hearts this faith, if we hear the Gospel or Christ's words.

"Seventhly, we believe that this faith is our righteousness before God, on account of which God declares us to be righteous, pious, and holy. It defends us from sin, death, and hell; it receives us into grace and makes us blessed. By this faith we are made partakers of the Son's righteousness, life, and gifts. Therefore ascetic living and holy vows, when they are reckoned as aids to salvation, are accursed.

"Eighthly, we believe that the Holy Spirit never works or creates this faith in the heart of any man unless he first hears preaching, the spoken Word, or the Gospel of Christ. By those means the Holy Spirit creates faith in whom and when He will. Rom. 10:17.

"Ninthly, we believe that Holy Baptism is a Sacrament which has been instituted by God as an aid to such faith. And, because God's command—"Ite, baptisate," Matt. 28:19—and God's promise—"Qui crediderit," etc., Mark 16:16—are contained in Baptism, it is not an empty symbol or watchword among Christians; but it is a sign and work of God which creates faith and by which we are born again.

"Tenthly, we believe that this faith, which is created by the

Holy Spirit and by which we are declared righteous, moves us to do good works, namely, to love our neighbor, to pray to God, and to suffer all persecution.

"Eleventhly, we believe that confession or conference with one's pastor or neighbor should not be mandatory but voluntary. However, it is helpful to those who are brokenhearted, oppressed, cumbered by sin, or fallen into error. Of special importance is the comfort of absolution which they receive from the Gospel, which is the only correct absolution.

"Twelfthly, we believe that government, temporal law, courts, and regulations are to be respected wherever they may be; they are not to be condemned as some Papists and Anabaptists teach and hold. Moreover, we believe that a Christian, occupying a governmental position either by birth or by profession, can be saved by faith in Christ just as one who occupies the position of father or mother, husband or wife, is saved.

"Thirteenthly, we believe that tradition and human ordinances — spiritual or ecclesiastical — when they are not contrary to the plain Word of God, may or may not be observed. In these matters the wishes of our people should be observed in order to prevent unnecessary offense and in order to preserve peace. We also believe that the doctrine forbidding the marriage of priests is a doctrine of the devil. 1 Tim. 4:1, 2.

"Fourteenthly, we all believe with regard to the Lord's Supper that it ought to be celebrated in both kinds, according to its institution; that the Mass is not a work by which a Christian obtains pardon for another man, whether dead or alive; that the Sacrament of the Altar, too, is the Sacrament of the very body and blood of Jesus Christ; and that the spiritual manducation of this body and blood is highly necessary to every Christian. In like manner, as to the use of the Sacrament, we are agreed that, like the Word, it was ordained by Almighty God in order that weak consciences might be moved by the Holy Spirit to faith and to charity. Although at present we are not agreed on the question whether the true body and blood of Christ are bodily present in the bread and wine, yet each party should show Christian charity for the other, so far as conscience permits, and both parties earnestly implore Almighty God to confirm us by His Spirit in the sound doctrine. Amen.

"**MARTINUS LUTHER**  
**PHILIPPUS MELANCHTHON**  
**JUSTUS JONAS**  
**ANDREAS OSLANDER**  
**JOHANNES BRENTIUS**

**STEPHANUS AGRICOLA**  
**JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS**  
**ULRICUS ZWINGLIUS**  
**MARTINUS BUCERUS**  
**CASPAR HEDIO" 98)**

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