

11-1-1947

## The Consensus of Sandomierz. A Chapter from the Polish Reformation

Jaroslav Pelikan Jr  
*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [History of Christianity Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Pelikan, Jaroslav Jr (1947) "The Consensus of Sandomierz. A Chapter from the Polish Reformation," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 18, Article 69.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol18/iss1/69>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

# The Consensus of Sandomierz

## A Chapter from the Polish Reformation

(A Conference Essay)

By JAROSLAV PELIKAN, JR.

From April 9 to 14, 1570, representatives of Polish Calvinism, of Polish Lutheranism, and of the Bohemian Brethren met in the city of Sandomierz in southwestern Poland and signed a document acknowledging each other's confessions and doctrines as orthodox and looking forward to the time when all three could be united in one confession and one national Polish Church; that document was the so-called Consensus Sendomiriensis, the Consensus of Sandomierz. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the conditions which produced it, and to explain the circumstances under which it was adopted.

### I

The synod of Sandomierz opened on Sunday, April 9, 1570, with common worship and the election of the officers.<sup>1</sup> On Monday, the leaders of the Lutheran delegation began the actual negotiations with an admonition to "strengthen the sacred bonds that we might be, as we also are, one kingdom of Christ and one vineyard of the Lord of hosts." In a similar vein, Andrew Pražmovský, plenipotentiary representative of the Unitas Fratrum, expressed the hope of his communion for the establishment of peace and suggested that perhaps the *Confessio Bohemica* of 1535 might be the ideal confession for the united churches. But Paul Gilowski, one of the leaders of the Reformed Church in Minor Poland, had another suggestion, namely, that the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566,

<sup>1</sup> The chief source for the narrative of the synod is the detailed account by Šimon Bohumil Turnowski, a leader of the Bohemian Brethren in Poland; cf. Theodor Wotschke, "Joh. Turnowski. Ein Senior der böhmischen Brüder," *Aus Posens kirchlicher Vergangenheit*, I (1911), 73—111. The account is entitled "Iter Sendomiriense," and Jaroslav Bidlo claims that the original manuscript is, or was, in Posen; to my knowledge it has never been critically edited. Cf. Bidlo, *Jednota bratrská v prvním vyhnanství*, II (Prague, 1903), 150, n. 5. I have been forced to depend upon the translation presented by Georg Fischer, *Versuch einer Geschichte der Reformation in Polen*, I (Grätz, 1855), 257—86, and upon the additional material supplied by Daniel Ernest Jablonski, *Historia consensus Sendomiriensis* (Berlin, 1731), esp. pp. 39—60. For a brief evaluation cf. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (3d ed., New York, 1881—82), I, 581—88.



already translated into Polish and provided with an appropriate preface, would be more suitable.<sup>2</sup> The rest of the day was devoted to the Lutheran objections to both the Bohemian and the Helvetic confessions, and to the defense of the former by Simon Turnowski.

After this inauspicious beginning, the sessions of the Synod were opened on Tuesday with the report that the Lutherans and Reformed of Lithuania had come to an agreement in Wilno on March 2. Spurred on by this report, the Synod returned to the reading of the Polish translation of the Helvetic Confession and to a debate on the accuracy and adequacy of its formulations, particularly on the Lord's Supper, with both the Bohemian Brethren and the Lutherans objecting to certain words and phrases.

Finally, on Wednesday, the reading and discussion of the Confession were completed, and the matter of adopting it came to a vote. Though still desirous of having their own confession adopted for the entire group, the representatives of the Bohemian Brethren stated their satisfaction with the Helvetic Confession and their willingness to accept it as the basis of union. "The eyes of all," writes Jablonski, "were now turned on the Saxons." Under the pressure of this switch in the tactics of the Bohemians and of the earnest exhortations of all present, the Lutherans agreed to the composition of a new confession, with the proviso that they be allowed to retain the Augsburg Confession as a separate credal statement; to this everyone consented.

As an incentive and model for their efforts, the agreement of the Reformed and Lutherans in Wilno was read the following day; and on April 14, as a climax to the synod, all three communions adopted and signed the following statement, the Consensus of Sandomierz:<sup>3</sup>

"Since, after many long conflicts with sectarians, Tritheites, Ebionites, and Anabaptists, we have nevertheless emerged, by the grace of God, from so many great struggles and de-

<sup>2</sup> The *Confessio Helvetica posterior* is reprinted in Schaff, *op. cit.*, III, 233-306, and his introductory remarks, I, 390-420; on the Polish translation, cf. Jerzy Lehmann, *Konfesja Sandomierska na tle innych konfesji w Polsce XVI wieku* (Warsaw, 1937), pp. 105-29.

<sup>3</sup> For my translation of the Consensus I have followed the edition in H. A. Niemeyer, *Collectio Confessionum in Ecclesiis Reformatis Publicatarum* (Leipzig, 1840), pp. 553-61.



plorable contentions, it was decided by those Reformed and orthodox churches of Poland which seemed to the enemies of the truth and of the Gospel to be in least agreement in certain articles and formulas of doctrine to call a Synod in the interest of peace and concord and to attest their mutual consensus. Therefore, after a friendly and Christian conference, we agree to these articles with minds thus joined and agreed.

"First. As both we who in the present Synod have published our confession and the Bohemian Brethren have never believed that those who adhere to the Augsburg Confession feel otherwise than piously and orthodoxly about God and the Holy Trinity, also the incarnation of the Son of God and our justification and other principal articles of our faith; so also those who follow the Augsburg Confession have openly and sincerely confessed that they, on the other hand, know of nothing in the confession of our churches or that of the Bohemian Brethren concerning God and the Holy Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, justification, and other primary articles of the Christian faith which would be contrary to the orthodox truth and the pure Word of God. And there we have mutually and unanimously promised according to the rule of God's Word that we shall defend this mutual consensus in the true and pure religion of Christ against Papists, against sectarians, against all the enemies of the Gospel and the truth.

"Moreover, as far as the unfortunate difference of opinion on the Lord's Supper is concerned, we agree on the meaning of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, as they have been orthodoxly understood by the fathers, and especially by Irenaeus, who said that this mystery consists of two elements, namely, an earthly and a heavenly one.<sup>4</sup> Nor do we assert that those elements or signs are bare and empty; we state, rather, that at the same time by faith they actually [*re ipsa*] exhibit and present that which they signify. Finally, to put it more clearly and expressly, we have agreed to believe and confess that the substantial presence of Christ is not merely signified, but that the body and blood of the Lord are represented, distributed, and exhibited to those who eat by the

---

<sup>4</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book IV, chap. 18, sec. 5, in A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (ed.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I (New York, 1908), 486.



symbols applied to the thing itself, and that the symbols are not at all bare, according to the nature of the Sacraments. But lest the diversity of manners of speaking bring forth another controversy, we have decided by mutual consent, in addition to the article which is inserted into our Confession, to add the article of the Confession of the Saxon churches on the Lord's Supper, sent to the Council of Trent in 1551, which we acknowledge as correct and have accepted. These are the words of that Confession:<sup>5</sup>

"Also men are taught that sacraments are actions instituted of God, and that without the use whereunto they are ordained the things themselves are not to be accounted for a sacrament; but in the use appointed, Christ is present in this communion, truly and substantially, and the body and blood of Christ is indeed given to the receivers; that Christ does witness that He is in them and does make them His members and that He does wash them in His blood, as Hilary also says, "These things being eaten and drunk do cause both that we may be in Christ and that Christ may be in us." Moreover, in the ceremony itself we observe the usual order of the whole ancient Church, both Latin and Greek. We use no private masses, that is, such wherein the body and blood of Christ is not distributed; as also the ancient Church, for many years after the Apostles' times had no such masses, as the old descriptions which are to be found in Dionysius, Epiphanius, Ambrose, Augustine, and others do show.'

"We have decided to be bound by this holy and mutual consensus, and have agreed that just as they regard us, our churches, our confession published in this Synod, and that of the Brethren as orthodox, so also we shall treat their churches with the same Christian love and acknowledge them as orthodox. We shall avoid the extreme and impose utter silence upon all bickering, disagreement, and controversy by which the course of the Gospel is impeded to the great offense of many pious people, and from which there comes a severe calumny by our adversaries and contradiction to our true Christian religion. Rather let the occasion be provided to strive for public peace and tranquillity, to exercise mutual

<sup>5</sup> There is a sixteenth-century English translation of the *Confessio Saxonica* in M. Reu, *The Augsburg Confession* (Chicago, 1930), II, 411-18. I reprint here only the second paragraph.



charity; we should also offer our labors for the building up of the church in our fraternal union.

"For this reason we have agreed by mutual consent to persuade all our brethren with utmost zeal and to invite them to increase, build up, and conserve this Christian and unanimous Consensus, to nourish it and testify to it, especially by the hearing of the Word (by attending the services first of one, then of another of the confessions) and the use of the Sacraments, observing the proper order and manner of the discipline and custom of each church.

"We leave the rites and ceremonies of each church free by this concord. For it does not matter much what rites are observed, as long as the doctrine itself and the foundation of our faith and salvation are kept intact and incorrupt. So the Augsburg Confession itself and the Saxon Confession teach on this matter;<sup>6</sup> and in this our Confession published in this Synod of Sandomierz we have expressed the same thing. .

"We have therefore promised and decided to compare counsels and works of charity among ourselves, and in the future to consult about the conservation and growth of all the pious, orthodox, and Reformed churches of the entire realm of Lithuania and Samogitia, as well as [the formation of] one body. And if they ever hold general synods, let them inform us; and when called to our general synods, let them feel free to come. And to put a colophon to this consensus and mutual concord, we do not think it would be inappropriate for the saving and assuring of this fraternal society to gather in a certain place, where, forced to this by improbity of the enemies of truth, we would draw up a compend of the body of doctrine (one out of the several Confessions) and publish it, that the mouths of evil men may be stopped to the great comfort of all the faithful in the name of all the Polish, Lithuanian, and Samogitian Reformed churches which agree with our confession.

"Having given and joined our right hands, therefore, we have sacredly promised and mutually agreed that we want to build up and nurture faith and peace and to strive more and

---

<sup>6</sup> The reference is, of course, to Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis, 1921), p. 47; the reference to the Saxon Confession is more obscure, though it may be to the defense of the Lutheran rite in Reu, *op. cit.*, p. 414. See the interpretation by Werner Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums*, I (Munich, 1931), 234-40.



more for the building of the kingdom of God, avoiding all occasions for the alienation of the churches. Finally, we agree that unmindful and forgetful of ourselves, as is proper for true ministers of God, we shall promote the glory solely of Jesus Christ our Savior and contend for the truth of His Gospel in word and deed.

"That this might be fixed sure and firm forever we pray with ardent petitions to God the Father, the Author and abundant Fountain of all consolation and peace, who rescued us and our churches from the morass of the Papacy and endowed us with the pure and holy light of His Word. May He deign to bless this our holy peace, consensus, conjunction, and union to the glory of His name and the building up of the Church. Amen."

## II

Like every statement of faith, the Consensus of Sandomierz was an answer to a need, in this case the need of a solid Protestant front against Roman Catholicism on the one hand and Socinianism on the other. An understanding of the Consensus involves a consideration of this need as well as a discussion of the attitudes of the three communions involved.

In the quarter century between 1548 and 1573, designated by Paul Fox as the period of the "triumph and dominance" of Protestantism in Poland,<sup>7</sup> the attempts of the Roman Catholic Church to win back lost ground in Poland grew in size and intensity. In 1556 the Pope had sent Aloysius Lippomani to Poland as his nuncio, and in 1563 Francesco Commendone. Their hand was strengthened in 1569 by the introduction of the Society of Jesus, one of whose members, Antonio Possevino, remembered for his work in Russia, provided much of the literature of the Polish Counter Reformation.<sup>8</sup> Also prominent in the effort to save Poland from Protestantism was Luther's opponent Johann Cochlaeus (1479—1552). Fearing an alliance of Saxony, Poland, and Bohemia against Rome, he became alarmed when a number of young Polish noblemen

<sup>7</sup> Paul Fox, *The Reformation in Poland. Some Social and Economic Aspects* (Baltimore, 1924), p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Carl Sommervogel (ed.), *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus, Part I, Bibliographie, VI* (Brussels and Paris, 1895), 1061—93, for a list of his writings, most of them directed against Protestantism and Eastern Orthodoxy.



were enrolled at Wittenberg<sup>9</sup> and were being encouraged by Melanchthon.<sup>10</sup> And though he was quite sure by 1540 that Poland was saved,<sup>11</sup> he nevertheless traveled there and continued to supply literature for Poland as late as 1550.<sup>12</sup>

In Poland, itself, meanwhile, the outstanding proponent of what came later to be known as "ultramontanism" was the Bishop of Ermland, Stanislaus Hosius (1504—79).<sup>13</sup> Fanatical in his hatred of everything Protestant, Hosius ought perhaps to receive most of the credit for the ultimate return of Poland to Roman Catholicism. Testimony to this hatred as well as to his zeal in expressing it are his collected works, published in two large volumes, and especially such a work as his *Confutatio Prolegomenon Brentii*, directed, as the title indicates, against a work by the great Swabian reformer, Johann Brenz.<sup>14</sup>

Polish Protestantism was, then, under great pressure from the Roman Catholic right, "the enemies of the truth and of the Gospel," as the Consensus calls them. Equally great, however, and much more embarrassing to the three communions which participated in the synod was the Socinian left, the "sectarians, Tritheites, Ebionites, and Anabaptists" to whom reference is made in the opening sentence of the document. While dealing with the Roman Catholics, the Polish Protestants were always aware of the Unitarians, too; and in making clear their antithesis to the Catholic view, they had to keep clear of the Unitarian or Socinian view.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The earliest report Cochlaeus had of this was around December 24, 1533: *Nuntiatuiberichte aus Deutschland nebst ergänzten Aktenstücken*, I (Gotha, 1892), No. 51, p. 156, and Walter Friedensburg's note, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XVIII (1898), 243 (henceforth abbreviated ZKG); he was sure of it in the spring of the following year, Cochlaeus to Aleander, April 12, 1534, ZKG, XVIII, 246.

<sup>10</sup> Cochlaeus' anger was directed particularly at Melanchthon in the Polish question. Cf. Cochlaeus to Aleander, September 8, 1534, ZKG, XVIII, 255. His books against Melanchthon were for the sake of the Poles. Cochlaeus to Johann Fabri, October 28, 1534, ZKG, XVIII, 260.

<sup>11</sup> Cochlaeus to Bishop Giberti of Verona, January 31, 1540, ZKG, XVIII, 423.

<sup>12</sup> Cochlaeus to Cardinal Cervino, November 24, 1540, ZKG, XVIII, 438; and April 27, 1550, *ibid.*, 633.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Michael Ott, "Hosius," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, VII (New York, 1913), 473—75.

<sup>14</sup> *D. Stanislai Hosii Opera omnia*, edited by Stanislaus Rescius (Cologne, 1584), I, 417—609; cf. Brenz to Duke Albrecht of Prussia, September 24, 1558, Th. Pressel (ed.), *Anecdota Brentiana* (Tübingen, 1868), p. 451.

<sup>15</sup> An interesting parallel suggests itself in the predicament of certain liberal Calvinists in New England at the beginning of the last cen-



Coming out of a combination of humanistic and nominalistic thought,<sup>16</sup> the Unitarianism of the Renaissance and Reformation began in Italy, but soon thereafter moved to Poland. In interpreting this fact, we may well adopt the explanation suggested by Harnack: "That the Italians were attracted to Poland cannot be explained merely from the great freedom that prevailed there in consequence of the permanent anarchy (sovereignty of the great landed proprietors); we must rather remember that there was perhaps no other country in Europe in the sixteenth century whose towns were so Italian as those of Poland."<sup>17</sup>

In Poland the Unitarians had gained new converts not only from Catholicism, but also from the Reformed and Lutheran camps.<sup>18</sup> Objecting to the many Catholic elements still retained in Protestant dogma and worship, they revised the classic Protestant estimates of sin, of free will, of the person of Christ, and, therefore, of the Trinity. Others in Poland, meanwhile, had become so aroused over the "Sabellianism" of Francesco Stancaro (1501—74) that they had stressed the distinction between the persons of the Trinity at the expense of the unity of the Godhead, thus laying themselves open to the charge of Tritheism.<sup>19</sup>

The Consensus of Sandomierz was called forth, then, not only by the vigorous counterreformatory activity of Roman Catholicism, but also by the embarrassing presence of Socinianism and Unitarianism. Both these extremes made it politically necessary for the Protestants of Poland to declare their faith; for despite his Protestant sympathies<sup>20</sup> Sigismund

---

tury; they were also caught between a conservative position to which they could no longer hold and the radical Unitarian position, with which they refused to be identified.

<sup>16</sup> See Tadeus Grabowski, *Literatura aryanska w Polsce* (Posnan, 1908).

<sup>17</sup> Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma* (English ed., New York, 1903), VII, 135.

<sup>18</sup> See Theodor Wotschke's refutation of the claim that the Unitarians came only from among the Reformed: "Wittenberg und die Unitarier Polens," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, XIV (1917), 123—42.

<sup>19</sup> On Stancaro cf. the article by H. Schmidt in *Realenzyklopädie für die protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, XVIII (Leipzig, 1906), 752—54, and the bibliography cited there; see also the resolution against his teachings adopted at Sandomierz in Jablonski, *Historia*, pp. 56—57.

<sup>20</sup> More than any other scholar, Karl Völker has helped to elucidate the complex interrelations between the political and the religious situation in sixteenth-century Poland. Most relevant to the material at hand



Augustus, the Polish king, had been urging that they adopt a unified confession. Indeed, as Jaroslav Bidlo summarizes the situation, "the king was willing to grant the Protestants freedom for that faith or confession on which they would agree so that they would make up only one religious party."<sup>21</sup> And just as the Lublin Union of 1569 between Poland and Lithuania had called forth the Wilno agreement referred to above, so the political situation in Poland called for united Protestant action. In view of these circumstances, we may agree with the great Polish historian Józef Szujski that the Consensus of Sandomierz "became the reason why in the next election the dissident party did not play any role. It was primarily a political union."<sup>22</sup>

### III

Such were the political and religious circumstances which produced the Consensus of Sandomierz; it remains now to analyze the reasons why each of the participating churches agreed to the Consensus, considering first the Calvinists.

"We may certainly say," writes Hermann Dalton, "that the famous union formula of Sandomierz is the late and mature fruit of Laski's work; in its content we see again the beautiful spiritual features of our friend."<sup>23</sup> Best known for his work in England during the Edwardian Reformation in 1551,<sup>24</sup> John a Lasco or Laski (1499—1560) had worked for the ideal of a united Polish Protestantism all his life. This ideal he was willing to achieve even at the expense of theological accuracy; thus, it took Johann Brenz considerable time to persuade Laski that his completely Calvinistic view of the Lord's Supper was not the same as that of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>25</sup> He was

---

are three studies: "Der Protestantismus in Oesterreich und Polen im Ringen um seine Rechtsstellung," ZKG, LIII (1934), 542—70; "Die Glaubensfreiheit in den Städten Polens," Zeitschrift für osteuropäische Geschichte, IX (1934), 67—88; "Der Kampf des Adels gegen die geistliche Gerichtsbarkeit in seiner Tragweite für die Reformation in Polen," Harnack-Ehrung zum 70. Geburtstag (Leipzig, 1921), pp. 317—27.

<sup>21</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>22</sup> Józef Szujski, *Dzieje Polski*, II (Krakow, 1894), 399.

<sup>23</sup> Hermann Dalton, *Johannes a Lasco. Beitrag zur Reformationsgeschichte Polens, Deutschlands und Englands* (Gotha, 1881), p. 570.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism* (Chicago, 1939), pp. 90—92, for his activity in England; on his early career, see p. 75, n. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Brenz to Hartmann Beyer in Franckfort, September 2, 1556, *Anecdota*, pp. 432—33; for a commentary on Brenz' attitude toward Laski cf. Dalton, *op. cit.*, p. 520.



nevertheless a thoroughgoing Calvinist; witness his treatise on the Lord's Supper of April 15, 1558, in which the age-old objections to the Lutheran view are rehearsed: it conflicts with the doctrine of the ascension, with the doctrine of Christ's true humanity, and with the general doctrine of the Sacraments.<sup>26</sup>

From this fact it is apparent that what Laski wanted was not only compromise: he sought a national Polish Church, with a new confession. That was the ideal of the Consensus, too. The Consensus attempted to set up that Church on the basis of equal participation by all three communions; but, like Laski, the Reformed sought what Karl Kratzke has called "subordination of the Lutherans to the Calvinists."<sup>27</sup> Having once persuaded the Polish Lutherans to go along with them in the Consensus, the Polish Calvinists tried to palm off the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566 as the official confession of the new Polish national Church.<sup>28</sup> Because the Consensus made such a strategy possible, the Polish Calvinists agreed to the Consensus of Sandomierz.

But in many ways the most significant aspect of the Consensus is the fact that it brought about some degree of understanding between the Lutherans and the Unity of Bohemian Brethren. From its very inception, the Unity had looked for co-operation with other groups which wanted to be Christian without being Roman Catholic—with the Waldensians, the Eastern Orthodox, and, ultimately, the Protestants of Germany and Switzerland. With Martin Luther, it will be remembered, they carried on extensive negotiations, which culminated in his endorsement of the *Confessio Bohemica* of 1535.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the Brethren corresponded with John Calvin and Henry Bullinger<sup>30</sup> and continued to figure prominently

<sup>26</sup> Joh. a Lasco, *Opera*, edited by A. Kuyper, II (Amsterdam, 1866), 755ff. For a detailed discussion of Laski's theories about the Eucharist see Karl Hein, *Die Sakramentslehre des Johannes a Lasco* (Berlin, 1904).

<sup>27</sup> Karl Kratzke, *Johannes a Lasco und der Sakramentsstreit* (Leipzig, 1901, p. 172).

<sup>28</sup> Bidlo, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>29</sup> On the negotiations leading up to Luther's endorsement of the *Confessio* and the endorsement itself, see Jaroslav Pelikan, "Luther and the *Confessio Bohemica*" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, the University of Chicago, 1946).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Georg Loesche, *Luther, Melancthon und Calvin in Österreich-Ungarn* (Tübingen, 1909), pp. 261—307.



in the struggle for the unity of the Church well into the seventeenth century.<sup>31</sup>

Always strong in the Unity, the irenic and ecumenical spirit grew ever stronger during their stay in Poland.<sup>32</sup> Faced with an active Lutheran party and an energetic Reformed group, they sought various possible means of effecting a rapprochement among the various churches. It is interesting to note, however, that the role of the Unity in such a rapprochement had radically changed in one generation. Formerly, as in the aforementioned *Confessio* of 1535, the Unity had acted as the mediating party between the Lutheran and the Reformed extremes. But in Poland the Brethren often seemed to represent a position farther removed from the Lutherans than was the Reformed view.<sup>33</sup> Thus, two months before the Synod of Sandomierz, on February 14—17, 1570, the Polish Lutherans and the Brethren had met in Poznan for discussion; but the comparison of the Augsburg Confession and the *Confessio Bohemica* led to a debate on ubiquity, on pedobaptism, and on the presence of Christ in the Sacrament, which split the conference wide open.<sup>34</sup>

As a result, the Brethren were pleased to find in the Consensus of Sandomir a formula on which the three communions could agree as a basis for discussion; and even though they were frustrated in their attempt to have the *Confessio Bohemica* adopted by the other groups, they were willing to co-operate in the Consensus because it brought about the possibility of an understanding with the Lutherans.

These circumstances might explain the attitude of the Polish Calvinists and of the Bohemian Brethren. But what of the Lutherans? How account for the fact that they went

<sup>31</sup> The Brethren were represented by John Amos Comenius (1591 to 1670) at the *collegium charitativum* in Thorn in 1645; Matthew Spinka, *John Amos Comenius, That Incomparable Moravian* (Chicago, 1943), pp. 101—15.

<sup>32</sup> The most complete treatment of the activity of the Brethren in Poland is that of Jaroslav Bidlo, referred to in note 1 above. For a short summary, see Theodor Wotschke, *Geschichte der Reformation in Polen* (Leipzig, 1911), pp. 133—43.

<sup>33</sup> On the controversies between the Brethren and the Lutherans which led to this shift cf., in addition to Bidlo, Jablonski's *Historia*, pp. 12—35. For a discussion of the entire relationship between the Brethren on the one hand and the Lutherans and Reformed on the other cf. the essay by Ján Kvačala, "Styky Jednoty Bratros Českých s Flaciom a Laským," reprinted in his collected essays, *Viera a Veda* (Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš, 1911, pp. 241—81.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Bidlo, *op. cit.*, pp. 147—49.



along on a plan to form a federation, or union, of the various Protestant communions in Poland? I would submit at least two considerations which help to explain the Lutheran position.

For one thing, the Consensus — indeed, the entire union movement of which the Consensus is the climax — had the blessing of the theological faculty of the University of Wittenberg. Philip Melanchthon had been very influential in Poland and had carried on extensive correspondence with Polish Protestant leaders.<sup>35</sup> Testimony to his abiding influence is the inclusion in the Consensus of his *Confessio Saxonica* of 1551. The men who were prominent at Wittenberg during this time — Paul Eber (1511—68), Caspar Peucer, Melanchthon's son-in-law (1525—1602), George Major (1502—74) — were all Melanchthonian in their orientation and therefore inclined to look with favor upon any movement for church union.

As has been pointed out, the chief obstacle in the way of union in Poland was the relations between the Lutherans and the Bohemian Brethren. In 1568 the Wittenberg faculty had said of the Brethren: "We have read your Confession before and recognized that in most parts of doctrine and in all the chief articles it agrees with the Confession of our Church, although certain things are expressed in less detail and there is some variety in church practices. Since we do, however, agree in the foundation and in the doctrine necessary for salvation, we have never held that your Church and our Church are alien."<sup>36</sup>

What effect such a statement from the Wittenberg faculty could have on the Polish Lutherans can be gauged from an examination of the Polish students who had been at Wittenberg and who were now old enough to participate in Polish affairs. From 1554 till 1565, inclusive, there had been at least forty-seven Polish noblemen and sixty-eight Polish commoners — a total of 115 men — in residence at Wittenberg.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> On Melanchthon's relations with Poland cf. Loesche, *op. cit.*, pp. 167—72; on his correspondence, Theodor Wotschke, "Zum Briefwechsel Melanchthons mit Polen," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, VI (1909), 350—57.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Wotschke, *Geschichte*, p. 241. Cf. a similar statement of February 8, 1573, quoted at length in Jablonski, *Historia*, pp. 68—69; and of November 3, 1575, *ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>37</sup> The following figures are compiled from the Wittenberg roster reprinted in Karl E. Förstemann (ed.), *Album Academiae Vitebergensis*, I (Leipzig, 1841) and II (Halle, 1894).



## THE CONSENSUS OF SANDOMIERZ

887

Year	Noblemen	Commoners	Year	Noblemen	Commoners
1554	12	21	1560	8	4
1555	2	1	1561	3	3
1556	1	9	1562	1	0
1557	0	1	1563	4	2
1558	5	9	1564	0	9
1559	12	6	1565	8	3

This meant that a considerable segment of Polish Lutheranism was under the influence of Wittenberg at the time of the Consensus.

Nor dare the fact be ignored that there is really nothing in the Consensus to which a Lutheran could not subscribe, though that document ignores certain things which a Lutheran would have been obliged to include.<sup>38</sup> But after all, was not its statement on the chief point of controversy, the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, Lutheran in origin and scope? The Consensus is not a confession; it is an agreement to co-operate until a confession can be drawn up, with the proviso, be it remembered, that the Lutherans may retain the Augsburg Confession as their own statement of faith.

In view of these facts, is it any wonder, then, that the Polish Lutherans should have yielded to the pressure exerted upon them, and agreed to the provisions of the Consensus? Under the circumstances, they could really have done little else.

United by their common opposition to Roman Catholicism and Unitarianism and drawn to the idea of union by various needs, the Lutherans, Calvinists, and Bohemian Brethren of Poland came to an agreement in the Consensus of Sandomierz of April 14, 1570. How and why that union failed is part of the tragic story of the Polish Counter Reformation and therefore lies outside the scope of this essay.<sup>39</sup>

Valparaiso, Ind.

<sup>38</sup> Fischer calls the stand of the Consensus "echtlutherisch," *op. cit.*, p. 176; and Johann Georg Walch admits that the Consensus was "mehr Lutherisch als Zwinglisch gedacht," *Historische und theologische Einleitung in die Religionsstreitigkeiten . . . ausser der Lutherischen Kirche*, III (Jena, 1734), 1047.

<sup>39</sup> See Werner Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums*, II (Munich, 1932), 207, n. 1, for a suggestive comment on the relationship between Protestant disunity and the rapid decline of Polish Protestantism. It seems, however, that a complete discussion of the problem would have to go even beyond Elert in demonstrating that the disunity was not the efficient cause of the disappearance of Protestantism, and that the political events of 1572 were of great importance in that development.