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Luther's Endorsement of the *Confessio Bohemica*

By JAROSLAV PELIKAN, JR.

As a result of the research that has been carried on in the past half century on the theology of the Reformation, we are now in an advantageous position for a historical and theological evaluation of the faith of the Reformers. What began as purely historical investigation has become instead a recovery of Reformation insights that had been lost in the intervening centuries. For this reason contemporary theological scholarship has been compelled to buttress its systematic presentations with historical material and to make its historical study relevant by drawing theological conclusions from it.

That situation has given deeper meaning to a study of the confessional documents produced by the Reformation. For in such study the historical and the systematic are uniquely combined. The twofold task which contemporary scholarship has set itself — to discover what the Reformation meant and to discover what it means — is precisely the responsibility of the student of Reformation confessions. "Konfessionskunde" in Germany and "motif-research" in Sweden share this twofold concern with the historical and the relevant.¹

The confessional documents that emerged from the Reformation can conveniently be divided into two groups. Of primary importance are those that still claim the loyalty of sections of Protestantism, like the Augsburg Confession, the Formula of Concord, the Westminster Confession, and others. In the study of these, interest in theological relevance has often been permitted to obscure the historical facts surrounding their origin. What may be termed "secondary confessions" are those that at one time represented the faith of certain churches, but that no longer adequately describe the position of any group within organized Christendom. As theological concern has often made historical candor difficult in the case of the primary confessions, so in the case of the secondary confessions a pedantic and archaeological interest in historical minutiae has often stood in the way of genuinely theological research.

¹ On "Konfessionskunde" see Otto Piper in Vergilius Ferm (ed.), *An Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York, 1945), p. 422, and J. L. Neve, *Churches and Sects of Christendom* (2d ed.; Blair, 1944), pp. 35—38; on the Swedish "motif-research" see Edgar Carlson, *The Reinterpretation of Luther* (Philadelphia, 1948), esp. pp. 36—44.

The confession of faith whose origin we have examined in two previous articles in this journal² belongs to the second group; in spite of feeble efforts to revive it as the confessional standard of modern Czech Protestantism, the *Confessio Bohemica* of 1535 remains as a purely historical document, without immediate contemporary significance. What endows it with significance is not primarily its own content, but the fact that its composition was associated with the theology of the most important Christian thinker since the days of the Apostles, Martin Luther. No investigation of the *Confessio* therefore can content itself with historical examination of the circumstances under which it was produced. It must go on to consider the relationship of the *Confessio* and Luther's theology. It is to this latter problem that the present essay is addressed.

Luther's subscription to the *Confessio Bohemica* was the result of a process which lasted almost twenty years; that process has been described in the foregoing two articles. But a description of the process is not an explanation of the event. For even after a consideration of the facts of the case, the question still remains: Why did Luther approve of the *Confessio Bohemica* of 1535? What were the precipitating factors in his sponsoring of that confession?

I

One of the factors that brought about Luther's endorsement of the *Confessio Bohemica* was the regard for Hus which we traced in our first essay. Closely connected with it was Luther's sense of gratitude to Hus and to Hus' church for the historical continuity which they provided. "Abscondita est ecclesia, latent sancti," wrote Luther to Erasmus:³ the Church, at least at the present, is hidden. But he was equally sure that "die Heilige Christliche kyrche nicht untergeheth bis ans ende der welt."⁴ That applied to the Middle Ages, too; and Hus was a proof to Luther that there was a Church also under the Papacy.⁵ In short, though Hus was not, as has sometimes been maintained, the source for Luther's

² "Luther's Attitude Toward John Hus," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XIX (1948), 747-763; "Luther Negotiations with the Hussites," *ibid.* XX, 496-517.

³ "De servo arbitrio" (1525), *Werke* (Weimar, 1881 ff.; hereafter abbreviated as WA) 18, 652; cf. "arca abscondita," "Ad librum . . . Catharini . . . responsio" (1521), WA, 7, 722.

⁴ "Deutsch Catechismus" (1529), WA 30-I, 218. It is interesting that he mentions Hus in this connection as one of the "Vetern."

⁵ See the pertinent passages in Karl Holl, "Luther und das landesherrliche Kirchenregiment," *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, I, *Luther* (7th ed.; Tuebingen, 1948), pp. 369-70.

view of the Church as invisible, or, rather, as hidden,⁶ he was an indication of the continuity of the Church despite the apostasy of medieval Catholicism. That moment was of great historical significance, as Elert has shown.⁷ In addition, it had considerable significance for Luther's sense of mission and vocation. Like Johann Hilten,⁸ Hus had prophesied of Luther's coming;⁹ and later Lutheranism was quite in keeping with Luther when it saw in Hus' predictions "oracula et prophetias de opere reformationis . . . et Antichristi revelatione Lutheri ministerio."¹⁰

Also worthy of consideration in this question is Luther's appreciation of the semantic difficulties involved in the composition of a religious confession. Much in Luther does indeed give the impression as though, to use Brunner's striking phrase, "the Word of God is again made compassable";¹¹ as a result even his liberal

⁶ Ernst Rietschel, *Das Problem der unsichtbar-sichtbaren Kirche bei Luther*, No. 154 of "Schriften des Vereins fuer Reformationsgeschichte" (Leipzig, 1932), pp. 25-26. Nevertheless, the phrase "universitas praedestinatorum," which Luther employed at the Leipzig Debate, was Hussitic as well as Augustinian; cf. "Luther's Attitude," p. 754, note 53, and Werner Elert, "Die Botschaft des VII. Artikels der Augsburger Konfession," *Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, 60 (1927), 1035. For a summary, cf. Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (Tuebingen, 1923), pp. 401-403, who sees in the phrase the makings of sectarianism; for Luther, however, it seems to have meant quite the opposite. See also Reinhold Seeberg's comment, "dass die Formel congregatio praedestinatorum fuer Luthers Kirchengedanken durchaus nicht bestimmend ist," *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, IV-1 (3d ed.; Leipzig, 1917), 279, note 1. The thought did, however, occur frequently in Luther; cf. the passages in Holl, "Die Entstehung von Luthers Kirchenbegriff," *op. cit.*, p. 293, note 9.

⁷ Werner Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums* (2 vols.; Muenchen, 1931-1932), I, 428. And so to Luther can in a sense be traced the conception of Christian history which Lutheranism later adopted. The absolute ultimate of that conception is well illustrated by a man like Johann Georg Walch. Walch felt that under the Papacy "der groeszte Teil was zwar vom Glauben abgefallen. Doch fande sich noch ein kleines Haeflein der Glaebigen. Solches bestunde aus den Kindern, die nach empfangener Taufe starben: aus solchen einfaeltigen Leuten, welche die Grund-Wahrheiten der Seeligkeit in Einfalt des Herzens annahmen und aus den oeffentlichen Zeugen der Wahrheit," among which latter "gehoeert die vornehmste Stelle dem Johann Hussen": "Vorrede" to Adam Lebrecht Mueller, *Des standhaftigen Maertyrers M. Johann Huszens, Predigers und Professors zu Prag Entdecktes Luthertum vor Luther* (Jena, 1728). The book is preserved in the library of Valparaiso University.

⁸ Cf. the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, *Concordia Triglotta* (Saint Louis, 1921), pp. 419-421.

⁹ Adolf Hauffen, "Husz ein Gans — Luther ein Schwan," *Prager deutsche Studien*, 9 (1908), 1-28, has collected all the references and offers an excellent exposition.

¹⁰ Johann Gerhard, "De Vocatione Beati Lutheri," *Loci Theologici*, edited by E. Preuss, VI (Berlin, 1867), 87.

¹¹ Emil Brunner, *The Divine-Human Encounter* (Philadelphia, 1943), p. 31.

interpreters have granted that he endowed faith with a content that they are unwilling to give it.¹² Nevertheless, he criticized the Roman Catholic system for its objectivism and absolutism — at the same time that he was himself objectifying! That same ambivalence is apparent also in his attitude toward the possibility of expressing the Christian faith in terms of human language. He criticized the ecumenical creeds and conciliar decisions,¹³ and yet he could at times be almost traditional in his treatment of them.¹⁴

That sensitivity for the conditioned character of even the ecumenical descriptions of the Christian faith was due at least partly to Luther's own version of an ancient theory of semantics and knowledge. Propounded by Plato¹⁵ and occupying a prominent place in Hebrew thought as well, the theory of the superiority of the spoken to the written word has had an interesting history.¹⁶ Luther adapted it to his view on the dynamic character of the Christian Gospel — "non de Euangelio scripto sed vocali loquor."¹⁷ His favorite word for the Gospel was "Predigt";¹⁸ and in a fascinating, if philologically questionable exposition of the word "Beth-

¹² Even W. Herrmann, despite the brief to which he was writing, had to admit that "wohl ist auch Luther bisweilen dem Gewichte einer Ueberlieferung erlegen, die dem Autoritaetsglauben, der Unterwerfung unter unverstandene Lehre die Kraft zutraute, dem Menschen das Himmelreich zueroeffnen," *Der Verkehr des Christen mit Gott* (7th ed.; Leipzig, 1921), p. 176, where appropriate quotations are given. Cf. Ludwig Ihmels, *Die christliche Wahrheitsgewisheit: ihr letzter Grund und ihre Entstehung* (3d ed.: Leipzig, 1914), pp. 127—35, for a critique of Herrmann's use of Luther; Ihmels' own interpretation, pp. 10—37, comes to the admission "dass Luthers Position, eben weil er nirgends sie theoretisch entwickelt hat, Fragen offen laeszt, zu deren Beantwortung bei ihm sich wohl Andeutungen finden, ohne dass sie jedoch von ihm zu diesem Zweck verarbeitet waeren," p. 31, which is certainly true of Luther's position on this particular problem. See also Albrecht Ritschl's incomplete work, *Fides implicita* (Bonn, 1890), p. 70.

¹³ Cf. "Von den Conciliis und Kirchen" (1539), WA 50, 509—653, and the comments of F. Cohrs and O. Brenner, pp. 493—500.

¹⁴ See the terse presentation of the entire attitude in Otto Ritschl, *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus*, I (Leipzig, 1908), 268—75: "Luther und die dogmatische Tradition der alten Kirche."

¹⁵ Socrates speaks of "the word which is written with intelligence in the minds of the hearers," and his companion of "the living and breathing word of him who knows, of which the written word may justly be called the image," *Phaedrus*, 276 A.

¹⁶ No adequate treatment of that history is known to me. It would have to deal, to speak only of theology, with such diversified themes as the rabbinical Memra, the Logos in Philo and in Byzantine thought, Horace Bushnell's "Dissertation on Language," and the principles of the "Dorpat school."

¹⁷ "Ad librum Catharini responsio," WA 7, 721.

¹⁸ Elert, *Morphologie*, I, 60, 165—66.

phage" he expounded his view that the Church is a "Mundhaus," not a "Federhaus."¹⁹

Nowhere was Luther more conscious of the relation between the written and the spoken word than in his dealings with other Protestants, especially in the 1530's. Probably because of the logomachy which had resulted from the Sacramentarian controversies,²⁰ Luther was moved to write to the clergy in Augsburg in July of 1535:

Quanto gaudio vestras, charissimi fratres, acceperim literas, malo ex viva epistola, qui est vester D. Gereon et Caspar Hueber, vos cognoscere, quam ex elementis istis grammaticis et mortuis.²¹

That mood asserted itself even more effectively while Luther was dealing with the *Unitas Fratrum*. As we have seen,²² he frequently alluded to the fact that their writings often made him suspicious of their views, but that a personal interview set things straight. This he attributed to the fact that their faith was tied to their language; hence, anyone who did not read and understand Czech could not understand them.²³ And though he did not particularly like that fact,²⁴ he nevertheless took account of it. It seems clear that in his endorsement of the *Confessio Bohemica* of 1535, Luther was striving to go beyond the written word of the confession to the meaning behind it.²⁵

Yet another factor accounting for Luther's stand on the *Confessio Bohemica* is the change which had come about in the

¹⁹ Sermon on Matt. 21:1-9 for first Advent Sunday, *Saemmtliche Schriften* (Saint Louis Edition, henceforth abbreviated as *StL*) 11, 28-29.

²⁰ This is not to assert, as has sometimes been said, that the theological difference between Luther and his opponents in the Sacramentarian controversies was a battle over words; it sometimes became that, but it always was more. Indeed, the problem of that difference was basic to Luther's religiousness and cannot be brushed aside today. See in brief Ernst Sommerlath, "Luthers Lehre von der Realpraesenz in Abendmahl im Zusammenhang mit seiner Gottesanschauung" in Robert Jelke (ed.), *Das Erbe Martin Luthers und die gegenwaertige theologische Forschung: Festschrift fuer Ludwig Ihmels* (Leipzig, 1928), pp. 320-38.

²¹ Luther to the clergy in Augsburg, July 20, 1535, *Briefwechsel*, edited by Enders and Kawerau (hereafter abbreviated as *E-K*) 10, 177. See their answer to him, September 8, 1535, *E-K* 10, 214-15: "Unsers Schreibens halben sollen E. E. nicht zweifeln, dasz wir nicht eine tode Schrift, sondern unser lebendig Herz E. E. zugeschickt haben, wie wir aus dermaszen gewiszlich dafuer halten, dasz wir nicht tode Buchstaben, sondern das lebendige Herz christlicher Liebe von euch empfangen haben."

²² See "Luther's Negotiations," p. 511, note 97; p. 514, note 114; p. 515, note 121.

²³ "Deutsche Messe und Ordnung des Gottesdienstes" (1526), *WA* 19, 7.

²⁴ See "Luther's Negotiations," p. 511, note 98; p. 513, note 108.

²⁵ Cf. Loofs' explanation, referred to in note 63 of this essay, and Luther's views on logomachy while discussing the Wittenberg Concord, notes 54-55.

theological tenor of the Unity because of their association with him. One by one all the objectionable tendencies among them were removed; by 1538 they were all gone, and so he could and did endorse their confession. He had, for example, taken sharp issue with Lukáš' view of the function of reason in religious matters.²⁶ He had similar compunctions about the spiritualism which evidently made the Brethren despise education in general and the study of foreign languages in particular.²⁷ The fact that they rebaptized converts from Roman Catholicism displeased him, too.²⁸ But at Luther's suggestion they added a combination of spiritualism to their *Apologia*.²⁹ They strove to make it clear to him that they had abandoned the practice of rebaptizing³⁰ and that they were willing to make almost any concession—as indeed they did³¹—to win his approval. All this marked them as open-minded men—"weak brothers," according to Luther's definition.³² That attitude of irenic humility must certainly be taken into account as a factor in Luther's endorsement of the *Confessio Bohemica* of 1535.

II

Each of these considerations was instrumental in moving Luther to treat the *Confessio Bohemica* with sympathy. But the fundamental problem in his dealings with the Brethren had been that of the Lord's Supper, and this is the crux in a discussion of Luther's endorsement of the *Confessio*. Why Luther was willing to tolerate the view of the Brethren and yet was unwilling to accept Ulrich Zwingli's formulation, was difficult for his con-

²⁶ See "Luther's Negotiations," p. 511, note 96. Interestingly, President T. G. Masaryk, following Palacky, based his philosophy of Czech history partly on this divergence between Luther and Lukáš: *Světová Revoluce* (Praha, 1925), pp. 589—90.

²⁷ "An die Ratsherrn aller Staedte Deutschlands" (1524), WA 15, 42—43. Too often, however, Luther's exclamation "geyst hyn, geyst her," WA 15, 42, has been taken as the complete picture. Any such attempt to resolve the tension of "wort und geyst" is, however, invalidated by a counterexclamation like "gottes wort hyn, gottes wort her," WA 24, 12, written in 1527 against what may be termed "biblicistic spiritualism." On the problematics of this tension in Luther and later Lutheranism, see the exposition of R. H. Gruetzmacher, *Wort und Geist. Eine Untersuchung zum Gnadenmittel des Wortes* (Leipzig, 1901).

²⁸ Sermon on Matt. 8:1-13 for third Sunday after Epiphany, *StL* 11, 489—90.

²⁹ It condemned those "qui se in quodam spiritu et in quibusdam conflictis ab se rebus substantialibus sive essentialibus, hoc est, in phantasiae suae visis fundant": Balthasar Lydius, *Waldensia* (Rotterdam, 1616), Ib, 246.

³⁰ Elders of the Bohemian Brethren to Luther, October 8, 1536, E-K 11, 94—95.

³¹ We have referred to their concessions on celibacy and on the time of grace in the essay, "Luther's Negotiations," p. 516, note 128.

³² Cf. "Luther's Negotiations," p. 501, note 30.

temporaries to understand. Modern interpreters have not had less difficulty with the problem.

Was the doctrine of the Brethren similar to that of Zwingli? If so, why did Luther accept the one and reject the other? Assuming such a similarity, some of Luther's contemporaries urged that he reconsider the stand he had taken at Marburg in 1529. Such objections made themselves heard shortly after that colloquy,³³ and when the "Rechenschaft" appeared with Luther's preface, some of Zwingli's followers hoped that now Luther would revise his previous position.³⁴ With a similar interest in mind, Th. Diestelmann has used Luther's dealings with the Brethren as substantiation for the possible historicity of a disputed conversation between Luther and Melanchthon about Zwingli.³⁵

Faced with the same problem, other interpreters have suggested that the *Confessio Bohemica* of 1535 represents a completely Lutheran position. So, for instance, the "alter Martinus" of Lutheranism, Martin Chemnitz, tried to explain Luther's conduct by stating that when the Zwinglians sought to substantiate their position on Christ's presence only at the right hand of the Father by reference to the Czech Confession of 1506, the Brethren "repetitione et declaratione suae confessionis publice testati sunt, se Lutheri sententiam de coena Domini, ut consentaneam verbo Dei, probare, et a Cinglio dissentire."³⁶ Similarly, Julius Koestlin suggests that despite their somewhat dubious modes of expression, the Brethren were in essential agreement with Luther.³⁷

³³ Cf. Chancellor Gregory Brueck's "Ursachen warumb man sich mit den schwermern nit in verstantnus noch ander handlung zu beschutung des irrals geben soll," written in November or December of 1529. Brueck feels constrained to reply to the charge that ". . . haben wir doch derhalben pundtnus mit den, die fur ketzer gehalten sein worden als mit der Chron zu Beheimen," reprinted in Hans von Schubert, *Bekennnisbildung und Religionspolitik 1529—30 (1524—1534). Untersuchungen und Texte* (Gotha, 1910), p. 145.

³⁴ See Ambrosius Blaurer to the Buergermeister and City Council of Constance, December 18, 1536: "Dr. Luther hat im Jahr 1533 die Rechenschaft des Glaubens der Brueder in Boehmen und Maehren mit seiner Vorrede drucken lassen. Da hoffe ich, er werde auch mit anderen gleiche Geduld haben und, da er die Uebereinstimmung ihres Glaubens von den Sakramenten mit den seinigen zugeben, obwohl ihre Sprachweise mehr der unsern gleicht, auch gegen uns christliche Liebe zeigen," Traugott Schiess (ed.), *Briefwechsel der Brueder Ambrosius und Thomas Blaurer* (3 vols.; Freiburg, 1908—12), I, 838. Cf. also Ambrosius Blaurer to Heinrich Bullinger, May 23, 1533, *ibid.*, 395—96.

³⁵ *Die letzte Unterredung Luthers mit Melanchthon ueber den Abendmahlstreit* (Goettingen, 1874), pp. 141—47.

³⁶ *Fundamenta Sanae Doctrinae de Vera et Substantiali Praesentia, Exhibitione, et Sumtione Corporis et Sanguinis Domini in Coena* (1569; republished: Frankfort, 1690), p. 102.

³⁷ *The Theology of Luther*, translated by Charles E. Hay (Philadelphia, 1897), II, 192—94.

If there is little difference between Zwingli's view of the Lord's Supper and that of the Brethren, how explain the fact that from the late twenties on Luther consistently condemned the first and tried to sympathize with the second? In 1533, the same year that he published the "Rechenschaft" of the Brethren,³⁸ he wrote to the Protestants in Frankfurt:

Wer seinen seelsorger oeffentlich weis, das er Zwinglisch leret, den sol er meiden und ehe sein lebelang des Sacraments emperen, ehe ers von jm empfahen solt, ja auch ehe drueber sterben und alles leiden.³⁹

And in 1544, only two years after his cordial letter to Augusta,⁴⁰ he wrote his bitter and violent "Kurzes Bekenntnis vom Abendmahl."⁴¹ Luther had objected to some Bohemian formulations as violently as he had to Zwingli's, for he saw their similarity;⁴² but to the formulation in the *Confessio* he did not object.

But that is not because the *Confessio* is completely Lutheran. The Brethren still insisted upon Christ's presence only at the right hand of the Father and quoted the Apostles' Creed to prove their point,⁴³ and they were careful to state very explicitly their rejection of any substantial presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper. As will be pointed out presently, their willingness to join with Calvin a few years later also shows that Article XIII of the *Confessio Bohemica* of 1538 is not entirely Lutheran in its doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

The first interpretation referred to above—the agreement of the Brethren and Zwingli—is usually preferred by Reformed interpreters; the second—agreement with Luther—usually by Lutheran interpreters. But both interpretations, as we have seen, involve themselves in historical inexactitudes and inconsistencies.

³⁸ See "Luther's Negotiations," p. 513 f., notes 113—15.

³⁹ "Sendschreiben an die zu Frankfurt a. M." (1533), WA 30-III, 561.

⁴⁰ Luther to Augusta, October 5, 1542, E-K 14, 340.

⁴¹ WA 54, 141—67. Among other things he refers to the Reformed as "Eutychern und Sacramentsschendern," "verfluchte Rotte der Schwärmer," says that Zwingli "wird auch gantz und gar zum Heiden" (143), exclaims: "viel lieber, sage ich, wolt ich mich hundert mal lassen zureissen oder verbrennen, ehe ich wolte mit Stenckefeld [*sic!*], Zwingel, Carlstad, Ecolampad, und wer sie mer sind, die leidigen Schwärmer, eins sinnes oder willens sein, oder in jre Lere bewilligen" (144), feeling forced "keines Schwärmers . . . gemeinschaft anzunemen, sondern mus weder jre Briefe, Bucher, grus, segen, schriftt, namen noch gedechtnis, in meinem herten wissen, auch weder sehen noch hoeren" (154).

⁴² See especially "Luther's Negotiations," p. 505, note 54.

⁴³ Article VI of the *Confessio Bohemica* in H. A. Niemeyer (ed.), *Collectio Confessionum in Ecclesiis Reformatis Publicatarum* (Leipzig, 1840), p. 792; the second half of my dissertation on "Luther and the *Confessio Bohemica*" (The Divinity School of the University of Chicago, 1946) is an edition and translation of the *Confessio*, with commentary, including a discussion under Article VI of this problem.

Rather, the solution of the problem of Luther's endorsement of the *Confessio Bohemica* seems to lie in the relationship of three theological trends: the position of the *Confessio*; the position of Martin Bucer, particularly as this was being formulated in the Wittenberg Concord; and the position of John Calvin. It is of more than passing significance that the *Confessio*, the Wittenberg Concord, and the first edition of Calvin's *Institutes* should have appeared within one year of each other. An analysis of Luther's attitude toward the *Confessio* must take account of all three of those trends. For while there is documentary evidence for a study of Luther's attitude toward Bucer, there is little such evidence for his attitude toward Calvin; there is, on the other hand, more material on the Brethren and Calvin than on the Brethren and Bucer.

III

There is a striking similarity between the theological development of the Brethren and that of Martin Bucer, especially in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper and in the effect which that doctrine had on Luther in each case. Like the Brethren, Bucer attempted to occupy a mediating position between Luther and Zwingli.⁴⁴ They, too, had sent legates at the same time to Luther and to the Zwinglians.⁴⁵ The confusion which that action indicates appears also in Bucer; although his view of the Lord's Supper seems to have been very greatly akin to Zwingli's, particularly from 1524 on, he was much more consistent even then in regarding that Sacrament as a means of divine grace.⁴⁶ For our purposes

⁴⁴ "Es hat in Butzer die Neigung gelebt," summarizes a modern interpreter of Bucer's *De regno Christi*, "sich Verhaeltnissen und Menschen anzupassen, mit dem Versuch, ohne von den eigenen Grundsätzen das Wesentliche aufzugeben, das von jenen geforderte anzuerkennen, wenn es seinen Prinzipien nicht voellig entgegengesetzt war": Wilhelm Pauck, *Das Reich Gottes auf Erden*, No. 10 of "Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte" (Berlin and Leipzig, 1928), p. 100. He tried such a mediating position at Marburg in 1529 and at Augsburg in 1530: Hastings Eells, "Sacramental Negotiations at the Diet of Augsburg, 1530," *Princeton Theological Review*, 23 (1925), 213-33.

⁴⁵ "... ano i mezi Cvingliany," N. Slanský in Anton Gindely (ed.), *Quellen zur Geschichte der boehmischen Brueder*, No. 19 of "Fontes Rerum Austricarum" (Vienna, 1859), p. 46.

⁴⁶ August Lang, *Der Evangelienkommentar Martin Butzers und die Grundzuege seiner Theologie* (Leipzig, 1900), pp. 237-50, esp. p. 245 on "ein Hinaustreben ueber Zwinglis Meinung"; nevertheless, his close relation with Zwingli "haengt . . . aufs innigste mit seinen Grundprinzipien zusammen," p. 250. The selections which Lang offers from Bucer's commentaries on the words of institution bear out his contention that there was vastly more to the man than some of his utterances might indicate; see Appendix 4, pp. 433-35. While emphasizing that in general Bucer "steht . . . Zwingli naeher als Luther" (p. 139), Otto Ritschl gives a similar construction of Bucer's view of the Lord's Supper, *op. cit.*, III, 153-56.

the most important stage in the development of Bucer's doctrine of the Lord's Supper was that which culminated in the Wittenberg Concord of 1536.

In the Wittenberg Concord there was articulated the pro-Lutheran, but still mediating position to which Bucer had come by 1536, and the desire for union which had come upon Luther in the same period.⁴⁷ He gave frequent expression to that desire in prayers like this:

Valete in Christo, et persuadete vobis, quantum in me fuerit, omnia me facturum et passurum fideliter et hilariter, quae ad istam concordiam perficiendam possibilia sunt. Cupio enim (ut antea quoque scripsi) nihil ardentius, quam vitam istam brevi finiendam in pace, charitate, et unitate Spiritus Sancti vobiscum concludere. Christus Jesus, auctor vitae et pacis, conjungat nos Spiritus Sancti sui vinculo in perpetuam unitatem, Amen.⁴⁸

Moved by his conviction that he was soon to die,⁴⁹ Luther was eager for reunion with the alienated Protestants; he was nevertheless suspicious of anything that looked like compromise.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ A thorough analysis of the Wittenberg Concord in terms of the changed political situation by 1536 and of Luther's, Melanchthon's, and Bucer's development is still a *summum desideratum*. Much of the material for such a study is conveniently collected in *StL* 17, 1984—2163. G. Mentz' *Die Wittenberger Artikel von 1536* (Leipzig, 1905) deals specifically with the articles presented to the English delegation and only incidentally with the Concord. The only volume I know of devoted to the Concord is G. Goeszwein's *Eine Union in der Wahrheit* (Saint Louis, 1886), but his historical interpretations are strongly influenced by his theological views, as, e.g., on pp.162—64; the same holds true of the analysis of Heinrich Schmid, *Der Kampf der lutherischen Kirche um Luthers Lehre vom Abendmahl im Reformationszeitalter* (Leipzig, 1873), Ch. I, pp. 8—55; somewhat subject to the same criticism, but historically more accurate is Koestlin, *Theology of Luther*, II, 155—82. Probably the best treatment, though written chiefly from Bucer's point of view, is in Chapters XX—XXI of Hastings Eells, *Martin Bucer* (New Haven, 1931), pp.190—224, and notes on pp.471—77; cf. also Lang, *op. cit.*, pp. 269—82, and Otto Ritschl, *op. cit.*, III, 154—56.

⁴⁸ Luther to the clergy in Augsburg, October 5, 1535, E-K 10, 239—40; see also Luther to Bucer, January 22, 1531: "Dominus Jesus illuminet nos, et concordet perfecte faciat, hoc oro, hoc ploro," E-K 8, 351; Luther to the clergy in Augsburg, July 20, 1535, E-K 10, 177—78; Luther to the clergy in Strassburg, October 5, 1535, E-K 10, 237; Luther to Gereon Seiler, October 5, 1535, E-K 10, 241.

⁴⁹ ". . . mortem meam, quam non longe abesse et arbitror et spero," Luther to the clergy in Ulm, October 5, 1535, E-K 10, 243; "cupio ante finem hujus vitae meae redditam pacem ecclesiae," Luther to Martin Schelling, November 27, 1535, E-K 10, 272; Luther to the clergy in Strassburg, November 27, 1535, E-K 10, 273.

⁵⁰ Luther to Bucer, January 22, 1531, E-K 8, 349—50; Luther to Melanchthon, December 17, 1534, E-K 10, 92—94 (if it is genuine, this is a significant document for Luther's relations with Bucer). Significantly, Luther felt compelled to defend himself against the charge of having compromised in the Wittenberg Concord; see his letter to the Buergermeister and City Council of Isny, December 26, 1536, *StL* 17, 2138.

In addition to this general tone, there are certain specific factors in the formulation of the Wittenberg Concord which form an interesting parallel to those involved in Luther's dealings with the Bohemian Brethren. One of them was his high personal regard for Bucer,⁵¹ despite the latter's having tampered with Lutheran books in translation⁵² and despite the appearance of a preface by Bucer to a collection of Zwingli's letters published while negotiations were going on.⁵³ As with the *Confessio*, so with the Concord, the problem of logomachy entered in. Several times Bucer had suggested that perhaps the controversy was at least partly about mere words—a suggestion that Luther violently denied;⁵⁴ after the discussions, however, Luther, too, granted that it is not necessary that parties be united in their mode of expression.⁵⁵ Again, he was more kindly disposed toward Bucer and his supporters because they had declared themselves in agreement with the Augsburg Confession and the Apology thereof⁵⁶ and because they admitted the error of their previous ways.⁵⁷

⁵¹ He wrote to Bucer as to "Venerabili in Christo viro, D. Martino Bucero, ministro Christi fideli, suo fratri charissimo," March 25, 1536, E-K 10, 312; this opinion was shared by Justus Jonas, as evidenced by his letter to the clergy in Augsburg, July 19, 1535, StL 17, 2067.

⁵² Eells, *Bucer*, pp. 76—81.

⁵³ Cf. Friedrich Myconius' report of Luther's disappointment at this, StL 17, 2092—93, and Bernardi's report (1536) of Bucer's explanation that this was done contrary to his will, *ibid.*, 2104—05. Bucer had previously sought to excuse Zwingli: letter to G. Brueck, July, 1530, StL 17, 1986; and Luther had been surprised that Bucer's mediating position had conciliated Zwingli and Oecolampadius: letter to Bucer, January 22, 1531, E-K 8, 349—50. Cf. Eells, *Bucer*, pp. 193—94.

⁵⁴ Luther to Duke Ernest of Braunschweig-Lueneburg, February 1, 1531, *Werke* (Erlangen edition, hereafter abbreviated as EA) 54, 212 f.; Bernardi's report (1536) of Luther's answer to the charge of logomachy, StL 17, 2103, and Bucer's discussion of the "tropus," *ibid.*, 2106—07. See Eells, "Sacramental Negotiations at the Diet of Augsburg," p. 218.

⁵⁵ Luther to the Swiss cities, December 1, 1537, EA 55, 190; cf. Melancthon's conviction that the parties were united "in re," letter to Urbanus Rhegius, *Corpus Reformatorum* 2, 843.

⁵⁶ Elector John Frederick had demanded that such be the terms in a letter to Luther, May 14, 1536, E-K 10, 334, and in an undated letter to Brueck, StL 17, 2087. Bucer's declaration of his agreement with the Confession and the Apology was enough to satisfy Melancthon, their author: letter to Agricola, February, 1535, *Corpus* 2, 827; and the very conservative Myconius was also satisfied by that subscription, "Bericht," StL 17, 2086—87, 2097. Both the clergy of Ulm in their letter to Luther of October 31, 1536, E-K 11, 112, and the members of the Strassburg ministerium in their letter of January 18, 1537, E-K 11, 179, made their agreement with the Confession and Apology quite explicit.

⁵⁷ Bucer admitted that he had previously been unclear on many aspects of the question: Myconius, StL 17, 2096; and Bernardi, StL 17, 2105. On Bucer's *Retractationes*, cf. Bucer to Luther, July 21, 1536, E-K 11, 7.

But the principal aspect of Bucer's thought was his insistence—despite their difference on the nature of Christ's presence in the Sacrament—that the Lord's Supper is, in the terminology of present-day theology, a "Gabe" of God, not an "Aufgabe" of man. In a treatise addressed to the Czechs, Luther had branded as "der aller schedlichst und aller ketzrischt" misinterpretation of the Lord's Supper not a refusal to agree on the nature of Christ's presence, but regarding the Supper as "eyn offer und gutt werck."⁵⁸ Already in 1531 Luther was glad that Bucer saw the Sacrament as a food for the soul;⁵⁹ and in 1535–36 Bucer's party continually emphasized that a valid sacrament is dependent not upon man, but upon God, who through Christ is given in the Sacrament.⁶⁰ When, finally, even Johann Brenz was convinced and satisfied,⁶¹ it was clear that, at least for the moment, the union was acceptable; and so, in Eells' words, "the Lord's Supper was administered, and . . . there was certainly a miracle of Christian love when Zwinglians and Lutherans ate and drank together of the body and blood of the Lord."⁶²

Now, the Wittenberg Concord is important for the purposes of this study for at least two reasons. For one thing, it illustrates Luther's attitude toward those who differed with him at the time when he was considering the *Confessio Bohemica*. Hence, Luther's treatment of the Concord, perhaps more than any of his other contacts, helps explain his endorsement of the *Confessio*.⁶³ But the Concord is important for another reason as well: it helps explain the relationship of Luther and Calvin. And since the Brethren dealt extensively with Calvin, but not with Bucer,

⁵⁸ "Von Anbeten" (1523), WA 11, 441. For an interpretation of this moment in Lutheranism, as contrasted with Calvinism, see Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf, "Die Abendmahlslehre der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche," *Abendmahlsgemeinschaft?* (Muenchen, 1937), pp. 159–60.

⁵⁹ Luther to Bucer, January 22, 1541, E-K 8, 349.

⁶⁰ Strassburg theologians to Luther, August 19, 1535, E-K 10, 195; "channel of grace" in Myconius' "Bericht," *StL* 17, 2105; Bucer, *Corpus Reformatorium* 3, 78; Gereon to Luther, September 8, 1535, E-K 10, 219.

⁶¹ Cf. Strassburg theologians to Luther, August 19, 1535, E-K 10, 194, and Julius Hartmann, *Johannes Brenz* (Elberfeld, 1862), pp. 159–60.

⁶² Martin Bucer, p. 202.

⁶³ This parallel has been pointed out from two vastly different quarters. After citing the Concord as proof of Luther's position, Friedrich Loofs continues: "Auch gegenueber den dem Evangelium entgegenkommenden boehmischen Bruedern zeigte Luther 1533 und 1538, dass er die seiner Meinung nach noetige Uebereinstimmung in der doctrina fidei unabhaengig wusste von der 'Weise zu reden,'" *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte* (4th ed.; Halle, 1906), p. 841. Similarly, Theodore Graebner, "The Historic Lutheran Position in Non-Fundamentals" (Saint Louis, 1939), pp. 8–9.

Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper, as laid down in the 1536 edition of his *Institutes*, needs to be examined for the light it sheds on Luther's attitude toward the *Confessio Bohemica*.⁶⁴

Luther's doctrine of the real presence, it must be remembered, is to be interpreted in the light not so much of his Christology as of his doctrine of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵ So it is, too, with Calvin, as is evidenced by the fact that the chapter "De Sacramentis" in his *Institutes* follows immediately upon the stirring words:

Non enim levibus experimentis suos probat Dominus, nec molliter exercet, sed in extrema quaeque saepe adigit, et adactos diu in eo luto haerere sint, antequam gustum suae dulcedinis aliquem illis praebat, atque (ut ait Hanna) mortificat et vivificat, deducit ad infernos et reducit. Quid his possent, nisi liqui animis et in desperationem ruere, nisi afflictos, desolatos et iam semimortuos haec cogitatio erigeret: se a Deo respici et finem praesentibus malis affore? ⁶⁶

As a means towards granting that "gustum suae dulcedinis," God has provided the Sacraments. Their purpose is "ut fidei nostrae

⁶⁴ Calvin-research in general, as also on the Lord's Supper, has been divided on the relation between the two Reformers; cf. Erwin Muehlhaupt, *Die Predigt Calvins*, No. 18 of "Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte" (Berlin and Leipzig, 1931), pp. viii-ix and 167-68, as well as the detailed review of "Thirty Years of Calvin Study" by John T. McNeill in *Church History*, XVII (1948), 207-40, esp. the discussion of Calvin's doctrine of the Sacraments, pp. 230-31. So, for example, Otto Ritschl feels that in his doctrine of the Sacraments Calvin "ist . . . im allgemeinen jedoch mehr Zwingli als Luther gefolgt," *op. cit.*, III, 229-30; but the whole presentation, pp. 229-42, and especially the discussion of Calvin's relation to Luther, pp. 235-42, does not seem to bear out that contention. In a presentation of *Calvins Lehre vom Abendmahl* (2d ed.; Muenchen, 1935), Wilhelm Niesel seeks to demonstrate a similarity between Luther and Calvin in their doctrine of the Lord's Supper; unfortunately he obscures the valid point he is making with regard to the young Calvin by his uncritical identification of Calvin's earlier and later views. Following Niesel, for reasons other than historical, is Walther von Loewenich, *Vom Abendmahl Christi* (Berlin, 1938), pp. 90-98, especially the summary points, pp. 93-95; the late M. Reu's objections to Loewenich, *Can We Still Hold to the Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord's Supper?* (Columbus, 1941), pp. 81-82, are not on historical grounds, either. The entire problem of Calvin's relation to Luther, on which the last word has not yet been spoken, has been beclouded by later controversies between the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches not necessarily germane to that relation, and especially by the fact that the singularly unspiculative presentation in the *Institutes* of 1536 has too often been interpreted by foe and friend alike on the basis of Calvin's later, less evangelical viewpoints.

⁶⁵ It is the merit of Helmut Gollwitzer's treatments of Luther's doctrine of the Lord's Supper that they have called attention to this basic fact, often forgotten or neglected; see "Luthers Abendmahlslehre" in *Abendmahlsgemeinschaft?* pp. 94-121, esp. p. 101, and the many references in his stimulating and learned *Coena Domini* (Muenchen, 1937).

⁶⁶ "Institutiones religionis christianae" (1536), *Corpus Reformatorum* 29, 101; the entire passage could have been penned by the young Luther. On this activity of God and the Holy Spirit, see his sermon, *ibid.*, 77, 789.

serviant, nempe ut alant ipsam, exerceant, augeant."⁶⁷ Calvin insisted that to accomplish this, Christ's body and blood "vere et efficaciter exhiberi, non autem naturaliter."⁶⁸ Important here is the "efficaciter," for a fear of blaspheming the body of Christ has often kept men from communing. But when that happened, men were placing the responsibility for the effectiveness of Christ's presence into their own hands, instead of leaving it in God's hands, where alone the entire matter has meaning.⁶⁹

Because of this basic orientation concerning the Sacraments, Calvin was unable to accept Zwingli's formulations, which he regarded as profane. But it is interesting as well as highly significant that Calvin found an affinity in Bucer and in the Wittenberg Concord.⁷⁰ It was to Bucer, in turn, that Luther addressed his highly controverted words: "salutabis Dr. Johannem Sturmium et Joh. Calvinum reverenter, quorum libellos singulari voluptate legi."⁷¹ Luther may well have been referring to Calvin's *Institutes*, though this is not sure.⁷² If so, then Luther must have seen, and correctly, that Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper was close to that of the Wittenberg Concord and to that of the Bohemian Brethren, both of which he had approved. Calvin, Bucer, and the Brethren were considerably closer to Luther than to Zwingli, despite their formulations; therefore, Luther could, and did, deal with them approvingly.⁷³

⁶⁷ *Corpus* 29, 103. The Lord's Supper "non perfectis institutum est, sed infirmis ac debilibus, ad vellicandum, excitandum, stimulandum, exercendum fidei et caritatis defectum," *ibid.*, p. 129; cf. Calvin's sermon comparing the Sacraments to God's gift of sunshine, *Corpus* 74, 98.

⁶⁸ *Corpus* 29, 123: "non substantiam ipsam corporis, seu verum et naturale Christi corpus illic dari: sed omnia, quae in suo corpore nobis beneficia Christus praestitit."

⁶⁹ "Nam si hoc agitur, ut nostram a nobis dignitatem petamus, actum de nobis est. Ruina tantum et confusio nos manent" is his terse analysis, *Corpus* 29, 128.

⁷⁰ Cf. the brief account in August Lang, *Johannes Calvin, No. 99 of "Schriften des Vereins fuer Reformationsgeschichte"* (Leipzig, 1909), p. 211.

⁷¹ Luther to Bucer, October 14, 1539, E-K 12, 260.

⁷² Diestelmann, *op. cit.*, p. 320, note 1, feels confident that it was indeed the *Institutes* to which he was referring; because of the reference to Sadoletus in the following sentence, Gustav Kawerau takes the words as a reference to Calvin's reply to Sadoletus (1539: *Corpus* 33, 385 ff.), E-K 12, 261. One cannot resist the feeling that if any books by Calvin were to come to Luther, the *Institutes* would be among them; certainly "libellos" could include both the reply to Sadoletus and the *Institutes* of 1536.

⁷³ Reinhold Seeberg has formulated the issue thus: "Fragt man aber, ob Calvins Lehre Luther oder Zwingli naeher steht, so wird im konfessionellen Interesse in der Regel zugunsten letzterer Moeglichkeit entschieden. Beachtet man jedoch, dasz gegenueber der rein subjektiv

Luther's opposition to Zwingli's view concerning Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper had been chiefly on two scores: Zwingli's moralism and his rationalism.⁷⁴ That moralism and rationalism had manifested themselves in the denial of the presence of Christ as it was taught by the New Testament. Zwingli was, therefore, among those "die also sicher daher faren und speyen eraus alles, was yhn yns mau' fellet, und sehen nicht zuvor einen gedancken zehen mal an, ob er auch recht sey fur Gott."⁷⁵ He was no longer a weak brother to be tolerated and exhorted.⁷⁶ But so long as anyone was willing to bend his reason to the Word and to acknowledge the Lord's Supper as the gift of the presence of the living Christ, Luther accepted him in Christian fellowship.

This the Brethren were willing to do. Convinced that they put the Word above their own reason and that they believed in the givenness of the living Christ in the Sacrament, Luther acknowledged the spiritual descendants of John Hus, the Bohemian Brethren, as his brethren. He did so publicly in 1538, when he endorsed the *Confessio Bohemica* of 1535.

rememorativen Auffassung Zwinglis Calvin sowohl eine besondere praesentia vivi Christi als die durch dieselbe verursachten religioesen Wirkungen in der Weise Luthers annimmt, so wird man — unter Wahrung der festgestellten Differenz — doch urteilen duerfen, dasz in dem religioesen Verstaendnis des Sakraments Calvin Luther viel naeher als Zwingli steht," *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, IV-2, 607—08. For a strong presentation of the other view, see Schmid, *op. cit.*, pp. 136—38.

⁷⁴ Cf. Loewenich, *op. cit.*, p. 87. But because of his theological purpose, Loewenich seems to me to ignore the fact that what Zwingli denied because of his moralism and rationalism was the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and that, as a result, Luther's conception of Christ as present "vere et efficaciter," as Calvin put it, cannot be dismissed as simply as Loewenich tries to do.

⁷⁵ "Das diese wort Christi (Das ist mein leib etce) noch fest stehen widder die Schwermegister" (1527), WA 23, 71.

⁷⁶ Cf. the passage cited in "Luther's Negotiations," p. 501, note 30.

