

12-1-1949

Notes on the Consensus Tigurinus of 1549

John Theodore Mueller
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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



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

Recommended Citation

Mueller, John Theodore (1949) "Notes on the Consensus Tigurinus of 1549," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 20, Article 73.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol20/iss1/73>

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.

Notes on the Consensus Tigurinus of 1549

By JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

1

In the latter part of May, 1549, there was adopted at Zurich, Switzerland, a Calvinistic covenant of the greatest importance—the so-called Zurich Agreement or Consensus Tigurinus, so named after the Latin designation of Zurich and its environs. Its complete title, as adopted by the signatories, reads: *Consensio mutua in re Sacramentaria Ministrorum Tigurinae Ecclesiae et D. Ioannis Calvini Ministri Genevensis Ecclesiae iam nunc ab ipsis autoribus edita.*¹

The New Schaff-Herzog *Encyclopedia* describes the Consensus Tigurinus briefly as follows: "A creed of the Reformed Church embodying the united views of Calvin and Bullinger [the latter, the successor of Zwingli in Zurich] on the Lord's Supper and forming one of the best sources for a knowledge of the Reformed theory on this subject."² Other descriptions of the Agreement are as follows:

"The Consensus Tigurinus consists of twenty-six articles, which refer only to the Lord's Supper and characterize the true relation of the Calvinistic to the Zwinglian doctrine of the Lord's Supper. . . . The articles discussed [by Calvin and Farel, on the one hand, and by Bullinger, on the other], together with the twenty articles mentioned before [Calvin's twenty articles on the Lord's Supper, representing the view of the Geneva theologian, which, early in 1549, he had submitted to a joint conference of German and Swiss pastors, convened for the discussion of the welfare of the Church by the Council of Bern], formed the basis of the Consensus, which represents the official turning of Reformed Switzerland from Zwingli's to Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper. It is named after *Pagus Tigurinus*, the ancient name of a part of Switzerland."³ This confession "grew out of a desire on

¹ *Collectio Confessionum in Ecclesiis Reformatis Publicatorum*. Ed. Dr. H. A. Niemeyer, Lipsiae, 1840; p. 191 sqq.

² The New Schaff-Herzog *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*; Funk & Wagnalls Co., N. Y., 1912; vol. XII, *sub voce* Zurich Consensus.

³ *Kirchliches Handlexikon* . . . von Dr. ph. Carl Meusel; Verlag von Justus Naumann, Leipzig, 1889; vol. 2. s. v. Consensus Tigurinus.

the part of Calvin to effect a union among the Reformed upon the doctrine of the Eucharist."⁴ According to Philip Schaff "the Consensus of Zurich (1549) and the Consensus of Geneva (1552), especially the latter, are not so much confessions of faith as elaborate theological and polemical essays on the doctrine—the one on the Lord's Supper, the other on Predestination—for the purpose of harmonizing and defending the teaching of the Swiss Churches."⁵ In short, the Consensus Tigurinus was an attempt on the part of Calvin and others to unite the Zwinglian and Calvinistic adherents of the Reformed Church on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

2

Philip Schaff supplies the following historical details on the origin of the Agreement:

"In the sacramental controversy . . . Calvin stood midway between Luther and Zwingli and endeavored to unite the elements of truth on both sides *in his theory of a spiritual real presence and fruition of Christ by faith* (italics our own). This satisfied neither the rigid Lutherans nor the rigid Zwinglians. The former could see no material difference between Calvin and Zwingli, since both denied the *literal interpretation* of 'This is my body' and a *corporeal presence and manducation* (italics our own). The latter suspected Calvin of leaning towards Lutheran consubstantiation and working into the hands of Bucer, who had made himself obnoxious by his facile compromises and ill-concealed concessions to the Lutheran view in the Wittenberg Concord (1536).

"The wound was reopened by Luther's fierce attack on the Zwinglians (1545) and their sharp reply. Calvin was displeased with both parties and counseled moderation."⁶ It was

⁴ *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*. Prepared by the Rev. John M'Clintock, D.D., and James Strong, S.T.D. Harper & Brothers, Publishers, N.Y., 1874; vol. II, s.v. Consensus Tigurinus.

⁵ *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*. By Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D. Harper & Brothers, N.Y., 1877; vol. III, p. 232.

⁶ The reference here is no doubt to Luther's *Brief Confession of the Holy Sacrament Against the Enthusiasts*, which was published at Wittenberg in September, 1544, but which in some editions of the *Erlanger Ausgabe* is wrongly dated 1545; cf. St. Louis Ed., vol. XX, 1765. Luther's *Brief Confession* was provoked by a "Plan of Reformation" (*Reforma-*

very desirable to harmonize the teaching of the Swiss Churches. Bullinger, who first advanced beyond the original Zwinglian ground and appreciated the deeper theology of Calvin, sent him his book on the Sacraments in manuscript (1546) with the request of his opinion. Calvin did this with great frankness, which at first irritated Bullinger. Then followed a correspondence and personal conference at Zurich, which resulted in a complete union of the Calvinistic and Zwinglian sections of the Swiss Churches on this vexed subject. The negotiations reflect great credit on both parties and reveal an admirable spirit of frankness, moderation, forbearance, and patience, which triumphed over all personal sensibilities and irritations. . . .

"In the month of March Calvin sent twenty articles to the Synod of Bern, but in this canton there was strong opposition to Calvin's rigorism, which subsided only after his death.

"In May, 1545, he had, in company with Farel, a personal interview with Bullinger in Zurich at his cordial invitation and drew up the Consensus, as it now stands, in twenty-six articles. It was published in 1551 at Zurich and at Geneva. . . .

"The Consensus was adopted by the Churches of Zurich, Geneva, St. Gall, Schaffhausen, the Grisons [Graubuenden, the easternmost Swiss canton], Neuchatel, and, after some hesitation, by Basel, and was favorably received in France, England, and parts of Germany. Melancthon declared to Lavater [Bullinger's son-in-law] that he then for the first time understood the Swiss and would never write against them; but he erased those passages of the Consensus which made the efficacy of the Sacrament depend on election.

"While the Consensus brought peace and harmony to the Swiss Churches, it was violently assailed by Joachim Westphal of Hamburg (1552) in the interest of the ultra-Lutheran

tionsentwurf), elaborated by Bucer and Melancthon for the Archbishop of Cologne. Concerning this document, which doctrinally was rather indefinite, Luther says: "It talks much about the benefit, fruit, and honor of the Sacrament, but it mumbles (*mummelt*) about its essence, in order that one might not know what it thinks of it. Nowhere does it want to say clearly whether there is in it the true body and blood, received orally." Luther's polemic was directed against the "enthusiasts and enemies of the Sacrament: Carlstadt, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Stenkefeld [Schwenkfeld] and their disciples in Zurich and wherever they happen to be." Cf. St. Louis Ed., vol. XX, 61.

party in Germany and became the innocent occasion of the second sacramental war."⁷

It may be well for us here to supplement Schaff's brief and somewhat incomplete account of the history of the Zurich Consensus by that of Dr. Paul Christ (formerly professor of systematic and practical theology at the University of Zurich) in the New Schaff-Herzog *Encyclopedia*. Dr. Christ writes:

"In 1541 Calvin had published his Genevan Catechism, setting forth a view of the Lord's Supper which inclined toward that of Luther rather than that of Zwingli. For a time there seemed to be a prospect of union between the Lutherans and the Reformed, but in 1541 Luther began a series of impassioned attacks on Zwingli and the Reformed, calling their leader a foe of the Sacrament and putting him in a class with the Anabaptists.⁸ As Zwingli's successor [Zwingli had fallen in the battle at Cappel in 1531] and the recognized head of the German-Swiss Reformed, Bullinger, in 1545, replied to Luther with a defense of Zwingli's character and doctrine as well as of the Reformed in general, in his *Wahrhaftige Bekenntnis der Diener der Kirche zu Zuerich . . . insbesondere ueber das Nachtmahl*.

"As a result, the confession of the Zurich preachers, who had ever felt themselves essentially in sympathy with Zwingli, strongly manifested the original Zwinglian type. This found approval in Bern, where the Lutheranizing tendencies under the influence of Bucer had been overthrown by Zwinglianism after all attempts at union had proved hopeless. But these proceedings at Bern, which included stern measures against Lutheranizing pastors and the disuse of a catechism which Bucer had helped to review in 1537, directly affected Calvin and his views of the Lord's Supper, for the Vaud [a canton

⁷ *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. I, pp. 471—473. Schaff here, of course, represents the Reformed side of the question. The Lutheran view is naturally quite different.

⁸ Dr. Christ does not mention any controversial writings of Luther on the Lord's Supper published at this time. As a matter of fact, the Wittenberg Reformer's literary attentions were then directed elsewhere. His great monographs on the Lord's Supper appeared as follows: *Against the Heavenly Prophets Regarding Pictures and the Sacrament*, in 1524/25; *That These Words of Christ "This Is My Body," etc., Still Stand Against the Enthusiasts*, in 1527; his *Confession Concerning the Sacrament*, in 1528; and his *Brief Confession*, in 1544. But in his sermons, letters, and other writings Luther constantly bore witness to the Scriptural doctrine of the Lord's Supper, especially since Melancthon and other Wittenberg colleagues had begun to vacillate and mediate on the subject.

in western Switzerland, of which Lausanne is the capital] *preachers, controlled by Bern since 1536, were placed in a serious position by the contradictions between the catechism of their spiritual lord in Geneva and the Zwinglian catechism prescribed to them by Bern* (italics our own).

"It thus became necessary for Calvin and Bullinger to enter into negotiations, especially as Calvin was already eager for a union of at least all the Reformed, while Bullinger, however loyal to Zwinglian tradition and however distrustful of Bucer's tactics, was fully inclined to alliance, provided it admitted of no misinterpretation. In 1547 Calvin spent some days in Zurich and the two leaders met. After three more visits to Zurich, Calvin, accompanied by Farel, who had also worked in the interest of harmony, met Bucer at Zurich in the latter part of May, 1549. A few days later the twenty-six articles were agreed upon, which united Zwinglians and Calvinists in one Reformed body. The basis of the deliberations had been the twenty articles sent by Calvin two months earlier to the Bern Synod."⁹

3

With regard to the *structure and content* of the Consensus Tigurinus Dr. Christ writes in the same article on the subject:

"The articles of the Zurich Consensus fall into two divisions: the first nine, declaring that the Lord's Supper is not a mere 'empty symbol,' and the remainder aiming to refute the charge that Calvin's teaching tended toward consubstantiation. The Zwinglian conception of a 'testimony and seal of grace' and the spiritual communion with Christ are emphasized, but neither the distinctly Calvinistic tenet of the miraculous influence, through the Holy Ghost, of the vivifying body of Christ on the believing soul nor the Zwinglian theory of the Lord's Supper as a mere commemorative meal receives conspicuous mention.

"In Arts. 10—26 the *Roman Catholic* and the *Lutheran doctrines* (italics our own) of the Eucharist are denied in favor of the Reformed theories of the Lord's Supper, and the tenet of Predestination is pressed to its full logical conclusion as regards the reception of the elements.

⁹ The New Schaff-Herzog *Encyclopedia*, vol. XII, p. 535 f. While Dr. Christ's account repeats some details given above, it adds so many new and important factors that we have given it in full.

"The Consensus never became a formal confession of the Reformed Church, yet it is noteworthy as the first bond that united the Swiss Reformed among themselves and with their coreligionists abroad, thus giving them the consciousness of being members of the great Reformed body and avoiding the threatening danger of a second Protestant cleavage into Calvinism and Zwinglianism."¹⁰

John T. McNeill (formerly of the University of Chicago), writing in *The Journal of Religion* (July, 1928; Vol. VIII, No. 3) on *Calvin's Efforts Toward the Consolidation of Protestantism* gives this brief description of the content of the Tigurine Agreement:

"These articles of agreement, if somewhat repetitious, are unambiguous and full of nervous thought. The Sacraments are described (7) as 'marks and badges of Christian profession and fellowship or fraternity to be incitements to gratitude and exercises of faith and a godly life.' But beyond the Zwinglian conception (8), 'He undoubtedly truly performs inwardly by the Spirit that which the Sacraments figure to our eyes and senses; in other words, we obtain possession of Christ as the fountain of all blessings.' They are effective, however, only for the elect (16—18). 'For as He enlightens unto faith none but those whom He has foreordained to life, so by the secret agency of the Spirit (italics our own) He makes the elect receive what the sacraments offer.' 'The signs are administered alike to reprobate and elect, but the reality reaches the latter only.' Those who hold the literal view of the words of institution [the Lutherans are meant] are 'repudiated as preposterous interpreters' (22). The phrases about 'eating His flesh' and 'drinking His blood' are explained as not involving any 'transfusion of substance,' but in the sense that 'we draw life from the flesh once offered in the sacrifice and the blood shed in expiation' (23). The sharply Zwinglian phraseology of some of these clauses and especially the reference to 'preposterous interpreters' (22) strikes the reader at once. . . ."

"Why did Calvin, if he desired to conciliate the Lutherans, accept language which was not adapted to win them? Probably the answer is, as Gieseler seems to suggest, that Calvin and Bullinger had in view as their immediate aim *obtaining*

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, *ibid.*

the assent of Bern, where the majority party was extreme Zwinglian" (italics our own).¹¹

In a general way, the Consensus Tigurinus may be divided into two parts: Arts. I—XX, in which Calvin sets forth his own views on the Lord's Supper, as essentially agreeing with those of Zwingli and differing from those of the Catholics and the Lutherans; and Arts. XXI—XXVI, in which he, to please Bullinger and the Zurich-Bern party, expresses with special clarity and sharpness his rejection of the Catholic and the Lutheran doctrine. Hence, for the study of the question whether or not Calvin was more Lutheran in his doctrine of the Lord's Supper than he was Zwinglian, the last six articles, because of their pronounced antithesis to Lutheranism, are the most important.

4

So far we have dealt with the presentation of the subject by Reformed theologians. Dr. F. Bente, in his *Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books* may serve as the spokesman of the Gnesio-Lutherans in their opinion of Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper as this is set forth in the Consensus Tigurinus. Dr. Bente devotes an entire chapter to "Calvin's Zwinglianism" in his special discussion of *The Crypto-Calvinistic Controversy*.¹² He there writes:

"The doctrine of Calvin and his adherents concerning the Lord's Supper is frequently characterized as a materially modified Zwinglianism. Schaff maintains that 'Calvin's theory took a middle course, retaining, on the basis of Zwingli's exegesis, the religious substance of Luther's faith and giving it a more intellectual and spiritual form, triumphed in Switzerland, gained much favor in Germany, and opened a fair prospect for union' (Creeds 1,280). As a matter of fact, however, a fact admitted also by such Calvinists as Hodge and Shedd, Calvin's doctrine was a denial *in toto* of the real presence as taught by Luther (Pieper, *Dogm.* 3,354). Calvin held that after His ascension, Christ, according to His human nature, was locally enclosed in heaven, far away from the earth. Hence he denied also the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Holy Supper. In fact, Calvin's doctrine was

¹¹ *The Journal of Religion*, p. 424 f.

¹² *Triglot Concordia*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo., 1920; p. 174 f.

nothing but a polished form of Zwingli's crude teaching, couched in phrases approaching the Lutheran terminology as closely as possible. Even where he paraded as Luther, Calvin was but Zwingli disguised (and poorly at that) in a seemingly orthodox garb and promenading with several imitation Lutheran feathers in his hat."

Is this judgment too severe? Evidently August Ebrard in his *Das Dogma vom heiligen Abendmahl* thinks so.¹³ He writes, for example, in a note on Art. V of the Consensus Tigurinus: "Here, then, the difference between Calvin and Zwingli is expressed with sunlike clarity. According to Zwingli the Sacraments are *tesseræ professionis tesseræ fraternitatis*, 'admonitions to gratitude.' The Consensus Tigurinus admits that accidentally they are all this, but according to their essence they are seals of God's work of grace" (p. 505). Again: "But this [the adoption of the Zurich Agreement] was an event of ecclesiastico-historical importance: Zwinglianism absorbed Calvinism as a higher development of itself" (p. 524).

According to Ebrard, then, it would be wrong to speak of "Calvin's Zwinglianism," for in the Consensus Tigurinus Zwinglianism rather took on Calvinism. Ultimately, however, the difference between the two views is not too great, for in the Consensus Tigurinus Zwinglianism and Calvinism were blended into a doctrinal unity, allowing both aspects to stand, though in modified terminology. For the sake of union Calvin adapted himself to Zwingli's view.

In the paragraph just referred to, Dr. Bente quotes in justification of his opinion the Formula of Concord as follows:

"Although some Sacramentarians strive to employ words that come as close as possible to the Augsburg Confession and the form and mode of speech in its churches, and confess that in the Holy Supper the body of Christ is truly received by believers, still, when we insist that they state their meaning properly, sincerely and clearly, they all declare themselves unanimously thus: that the true essential body and blood of Christ is absent from the consecrated bread and wine in the Holy Supper as far as the highest heaven is from the earth. . . .

¹³ *Das Dogma vom heiligen Abendmahl und seine Geschichte*. Von August Ebrard. Verlag von Heinrich Zimmer, Frankfurt a. M., 1846; p. 484 ff.

Therefore they understand this presence of the body of Christ not as a presence here upon earth, but only *respectu fidei* (with respect to faith), that is, that our faith, reminded by the visible signs, just as by the Word preached, elevates itself and ascends above all heavens and receives and enjoys the body of Christ, which is there in heaven present . . . in a manner true and essential, but nevertheless *spiritual only* . . . consequently nothing else is received than bread and wine (*Trigl.*, [Intro. 175] 971, 2 f.)."

Dr. Bente interprets this paragraph to mean: "This is, and was intended to be, a presentation of Calvinism as being nothing but Zwinglianism clothed in seemingly orthodox phrases" (*ibid.*).

To prove this point, Dr. Bente quotes (in part) several articles of the Consensus Tigurinus. He writes: "That this picture drawn by the Formula of Concord is not a caricature or in any point a misrepresentation of Calvinism appears from the Consensus Tigurinus. The articles quoted read:

"In as far as Christ is a man, He is to be sought nowhere else than in heaven and in no other manner than with the mind and the understanding of faith. Therefore it is a perverse and impious superstition to include Him under elements of this world."

This is a part of Art. XXI of the Consensus Tigurinus, which both in Niemeyer's *Collection of Confessions* and in E. F. Karl Mueller's *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche* has the following explanatory heading: *Localis imaginatio tollenda* (the local conception must be rejected). The entire article reads:

"But especially there must be rejected any idea of a local [real] presence. For while the signs are here upon earth, are discerned with the eyes and felt with the hands, Christ, in as far as He is a man, must not be sought anywhere else than in heaven and in no other way than with the mind and the understanding of faith. Wherefore it is a perverse and impious superstition to seek Him under the elements of this world"¹⁴ [that is, in, with, and under the bread and wine].

¹⁴ *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche in authentischen Texten mit geschichtlicher Einleitung und Register, herausgegeben von E. F. Karl Mueller. A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf. (Georg Boehme) 1903; p. 159 ff.*

Calvin, therefore, in this article clearly and unmistakably teaches the "real absence" of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament. The sacramental elements are on earth, but Christ's human nature is enclosed in heaven and so can be received only by faith. Hence there can be neither a real presence in the Lutheran sense nor an oral manducation. This is the same doctrine which Zwingli had asserted time and again over against Luther. Let the reader bear in mind that Art. XXI is the first of the six antithetical articles in which the Lutheran (as also the Roman Catholic) doctrine of the Lord's Supper is expressly repudiated. Arts. XXI to XXVI were added to Calvin's original twenty articles to satisfy the Zurich (Bullinger)-Bern Reformed pastors.

From Art. XXII Dr. Bente next quotes the words: "We repudiate those [who urge the literal interpretation of the words of institution] as preposterous interpreters. . . . For beyond controversy they are to be taken figuratively . . . as when by metonymy the name of the symbolized thing is transferred to the sign.

Art. XXII bears the explanatory heading: *Expositio verborum Coenae Domini, Hoc est corpus meum* (Exposition of the words of the Lord's Supper: This is My body). The article reads: "Accordingly, those who in the solemn words of the Supper: 'This is My body; this is My blood,' urge, as they say, the precisely literal sense, we reject as preposterous interpreters. For we regard it as beyond controversy that they [*verba Coenae*] must be taken figuratively, so that bread and wine are said to be that which they signify. Nor should it be regarded as novel or insolent that by metonymy the name of the signified thing is transferred to the sign, since everywhere in the Scriptures there occur statements of this kind and we, by so speaking, offer nothing that is not found in the oldest and most approved writers of the Church."

In Art. XXII of the Consensus Tigurinus Calvin thus rejects the literal interpretation of the words of institution, which was defended by the Lutherans, as preposterous, thus confirming the truth that his "real presence" of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament is only "spiritual." While his interpretation of the words of institution was not the same as that of Zwingli, since he sought the figure in the word *body*, whereas Zwingli sought it in the verb *is* (represents),

both agreed that the figurative interpretation of the words of institution is the only one justifiable.

Dr. Bente does not quote Art. XXIII of the Consensus Tigurinus: *De manducatione corporis Christi* (concerning the manducation of the body of Christ). But it adds an essential point, namely, that Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament nurture the communicant only spiritually, that is, by faith. The article reads:

"But that Christ nurtures our souls through the faith of the Holy Ghost by feeding us with His flesh and giving us to drink of His blood, that is not to be understood in the same manner as if there occurred any commingling or transfusion of the substance, but because we draw life from the flesh which once was offered up for a sacrifice and the blood which was once poured out for an atonement."

While the Lutherans do not teach any commingling or transfusion of the substance, that is, of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, they, nevertheless, teach that in, with, and under the bread and wine the communicant receives Christ's true body and blood. This teaching Calvin rejects, so that he recognizes no oral manducation, but only a spiritual one, just as did Zwingli and after him, Bullinger.

Art. XXIV is directed primarily against the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation. But it is of interest to the Lutheran scholar that Calvin here declares the Lutheran doctrine of the Real Presence just as absurd as the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation, a thing which generally was done before him by Zwingli, whose example he here follows. The article reads: "In this way there is refuted not only the fiction of Transubstantiation, but all crass figments and futile subtleties, which either detract from His celestial glory or which are less in agreement with the truth of His human nature. For neither do we regard it as less absurd to place Christ under, or to unite Him with, the bread than to change the bread into His body."

From Art. XXV Dr. Bente quotes the words: "When we say that Christ is to be sought in heaven, this mode of speech expresses a distance of place . . . because the body of Christ . . . being finite and contained in heaven, as in a place, must of necessity be removed from us by as great a distance as the heaven is removed from the earth."

In this article, Calvin, following Zwingli, asserts the local inclusion of the human nature of Christ in heaven and therefore its necessary absence from the Lord's Supper. Although, therefore, Calvin used the expressions "real presence," "sacramental union," and others, they mean something radically different from what they mean to genuine Lutherans. The article, in its entirety, reads:

"Christ's body is in heaven as in space. In order that there might not remain any ambiguity when we say that Christ is to be sought in heaven, this statement means and expresses to us a distance of space. For although, philosophically speaking, there is no space beyond the heavens, because, however, the body of Christ, inasmuch as it has the nature and mode of a human body, is finite and contained in heaven as in space, it is necessary that it is as far from us by so great a distance of space as heaven is distant from earth."

Here, then, Calvin motivates his "real absence" by Christ's local inclusion in heaven. Calvin thus agrees with Zwingli as to the spiritual interpretation of the words of institution, the "real absence" of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament, and the local inclusion of Christ's human nature in heaven.

Art. XXVI of the Consensus Tigurinus bears the explanatory heading: *Christus non est adorandus in pane* (Christ is not to be adored in the bread). It is directed primarily against the Roman Catholic doctrine of the adoration of the consecrated host. Dr. Bente, therefore, does not quote it. Nevertheless, it has, at least indirectly, some bearing on the Lutheran doctrine of the Real Presence, as the reader will perceive. The article reads:

"But if it is not permissible to affix in our imagination Christ to the bread and the wine, much less is it permitted to adore Him in the bread. For although the bread is given to us as a symbol and pledge of the communion which we have in Christ, because, however, it is a sign, not the thing itself, nor has included in itself the thing or affixed to it, they make an idol of it who turn their mind to it to adore Christ."

In reply the Lutheran dogmaticians denied the charge of *artolatrea* as well as Calvin's claim that it is wrong "to affix Christ to the bread"; for if it was not wrong for Christ

to have been affixed to the Cross, it certainly cannot be wrong to see him united with the bread. Nor do Lutherans agree that the bread is a mere sign of the body. They rather regard the consecrated bread as the bearer of the body, since with the bread the communicant receives Christ's true body. Calvin, though in different words, nevertheless, supported every essential antithesis which, before him, Zwingli had offered to the doctrine of the real presence. Dr. Bente, therefore, is not wrong when he speaks of "Calvin's Zwinglianism."

There is one other article in the Consensus Tigurinus that must not be overlooked when the reader considers Calvin's relation to the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Our reference is to Art. XVI: *Non omnes sacramento participantes re quoque participant* (Not all who partake of the Sacrament, partake also of the thing). Lutherans, too, teach that not all communicants receive the *blessings* of the Holy Supper; for while all communicants, no matter whether they are believers or not, receive Christ's true body and blood, only the believers receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. But that is not what Calvin means in Art. XVI of the Consensus Tigurinus. He writes:

"Besides, we teach diligently that God does not indiscriminately exercise His power in all who receive the Sacraments, but only in the elect. For just as He does not illuminate everyone unto faith, but only those whom He has foreordained unto life, so He effects *by the secret power of His Spirit* (italics our own) that the elect receive what the Sacraments offer."

Perhaps not even in the articles discussed above does Calvin show how far he is removed from the Lutheran doctrine of the means of grace as he does in this one. According to Dr. Christ, Arts. 1—9 are to show that according to Calvin the Lord's Supper is not a mere "empty symbol," for, according to Calvin, the Sacraments are *gratiae suae testimonia et sigilla* (Art. VIII). But Calvin denies universal grace, so that the Sacraments are testimonies and seals of divine grace only to the elect, never to the non-elect. However, even the elect cannot view them as testimonies and seals of divine grace, for they do not know whether or not they are elect. In addition, God does not work through the Sacraments as means

of grace, but "He effects by the secret power of His Spirit that the elect receive what the Sacraments offer."

Where, then, is the approach of Calvin to the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper? Ultimately, just as to Zwingli, the Lord's Supper, despite all expressions to the contrary, must be to Calvin an "empty sign," offering no assurance and giving no comfort to the distressed sinner. Calvin speaks very highly of God's promises which must be believed. Art. X of the Consensus Tigurinus bears the explanatory heading: *Promissio maxime in Sacramentis spectanda* (The promise must be regarded most in the Sacraments). The article begins with the words: "It behooves us to regard not the bare signs, but rather the promise which is annexed there." But how is the aroused sinner to comfort himself with God's promise of grace if he does not know that the promise is meant for him?

No, indeed! Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace is not that of Luther and of Scripture. In Art. XX of the Consensus Tigurinus he mockingly remarks: "Just as if in the very moment that the visible sign is brought into the midst, it would bring with it God's grace." Scripture does teach what to Calvin's reason seems to be utterly foolish; and in his contempt for the means of grace he finds himself one with Zwingli, who in more vehement terms said no more than Calvin expressed in more cautious and moderate terms. In the center of the Consensus Tigurinus stands Calvin's unscriptural doctrine of Predestination. So his doctrine of the means of grace, and, in particular, of the Lord's Supper, needs must be unscriptural, too, since the former doctrine leaves no room for any efficacious, comforting means of grace.

5

Although the Consensus Tigurinus never became a formal confession in the Reformed Church as a whole, it is, nevertheless, the most important agreement which Reformed Christendom has ever witnessed. It is that for the following reasons:

In the first place, the Consensus Tigurinus is a mature work, written by Calvin after he had given the doctrine of the Lord's Supper much study. It is true, Calvin was only forty years old when he composed the Zurich Agreement, but it must not be forgotten that he was only twenty-seven

when he first published his *Christianae Religionis Institutio*. Five years before the Consensus Tigurinus, in 1545, Calvin had published his *Catechismus Ecclesiae Genevensis*, in which he assigns to the Sacraments a high value and which may be regarded as a stepping stone to the Zurich Confession.

Again, the Zurich Agreement is a brief and simple confession which is easy to read and to understand and in which the essentials of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper receive prominent consideration, while details of less significance are omitted.

In the third place, the Consensus Tigurinus is a distinctively Reformed confession, allowing neither the Roman Catholic nor the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper to stand. As the Catholic doctrines of transubstantiation and the *ex opere operato*-infusion of grace as a *vis sanctificans* are rejected, so also the Lutheran doctrines of the literal interpretation of the words of institution, the Real Presence, the oral manducation, and the reception of Christ's body and blood by unworthy communicants are rejected, while in the background of the entire treatment of the doctrine stands Calvin's teaching of predestination which allows no doctrine of the means of grace in the Lutheran sense to stand.

Lastly, the Consensus Tigurinus, while a strictly Reformed confession, is, nevertheless, an indefinite statement of faith, permitting, within its general scope, various Reformed views to find recognition. It has been said that the many confessions within Reformed Christendom prove the flexibility of its doctrine, of course, within a certain and definite compass. Within this general frame, however, the Reformed theologian is free to teach with Zwingli that "is" means "represents," or with Calvin that "My body" means "the sign of My body," or with Zanchi that the words of institution must be taken figuratively as a whole. What he must teach is that the words of institution are to be taken figuratively and not literally, as the Lutherans teach. Nor dare he teach a "sacramental eating" (Real Presence), but he must teach a "spiritual eating and drinking" as the only mode of receiving Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament. Nor dare he teach that all communicants receive Christ's body and blood, but he must teach that only the believers feast on Christ's body, and that by faith; in particular, that only the elect, by the secret power

(*arcana virtute*) of the Holy Spirit receive what the Sacraments offer (Art. XVI).

It may not be quite adequate to speak of "Calvin's Zwinglianism" (though the expression might be defended), just as one could hardly speak of "Zwingli's Calvinism." But in the Consensus Tigurinus Zwingli and Calvin so met that after 1549 there could be no split in Switzerland between the German and the French Cantons. In the Consensus Tigurinus both Zurich and Geneva acknowledged each other as one in faith and doctrine, and from the Reformed point of view it was perhaps the greatest accomplishment of Calvin's later activity that by the Zurich Confession he kept the Swiss Reformed from dividing into two distinctive groups, one following Zwingli and the other the "sage of Geneva."

