

Discord, Dialogue, and Concord

Studies in the Lutheran Reformation's
Formula of Concord

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The Influence of the Formula of Concord on the Later Lutheran Orthodoxy

Robert D. Preus

The Influence of the Formula of Concord on the Later Lutheran Orthodoxy is an interesting and instructive topic. The title might better be stated: The Influence of the Theology of the Formula of Concord on the Most Fruitful of the Following Generations of Orthodox Theologians. For then we could easily demonstrate the way in which Quenstedt and others of his era, often without any originality, followed at points Chemnitz or Chytraeus, or Selnecker in many of their theological discussions.¹ I believe the matter of the influence of the Formula of Concord and its theology on later Lutheran theologians of the seventeenth century will be convincingly settled to the reader's satisfaction by a simple sampling of how later seventeenth century orthodoxy was affected by the Formula of Concord and its authors. A massive assembling of evidence (or nonevidence) which very assuredly exists in abundance is hardly necessary.

We can see where the later orthodox theologians follow Chemnitz, Selnecker, Chytraeus, and, to a lesser degree, the other authors of the Formula of Concord, again where they went back to the earlier confessions and more commonly to Luther and in some cases to Melancthon, and then in some instances where they launched out on their own

1. One need only compare the Christology of John Andrew Quenstedt in his *Theologie Didactico-Polemica sive Systema Theologiae* with that of John Gerhard's *Loci Theologici* and particularly Martin Chemnitz's *De Duabus Naturis* to note an almost utter dependence upon not only the thought but even the terminology. In many cases Quenstedt simply quotes verbatim at great length without even mentioning the fact or giving references, a practice not uncommon in those days.

and showed almost no dependence upon the Formula of Concord or sometimes any of the confessions.²

In this essay I propose to comment on the subject of the relationship between the theology of the Formula of Concord and the later orthodox theology with, I trust, sufficient evidence, to show just how deeply the Formula of Concord itself affected the orthodox theologians of the following century. The conclusions drawn are significant if for no other reason because the seventeenth century theologians, with their giant tomes in dogmatical and exegetical theology, have exerted a strong influence on nineteenth and twentieth century theologians, who in turn have left their mark on the theology and on entire church bodies of our day.

Strong Influence—Articles I, II, and III

In their discussions of original sin the theologians of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries follow very closely the treatment of the Formula of Concord which in turn defines original sin in terms

2. Not only authors of the Formula of Concord such as Chytraeus and Selnecker wrote books on the confessions, but later orthodox Lutherans of all succeeding generations did the same. Most were written on the Augsburg Confession; but several were devoted to the theology of the Formula of Concord, most notable of which were *Nikolaus Selnecker, Erklärung etlicher streitiger Artikel aus der Concordienformel* (Leipzig, 1582); Leonard Hutter, *Concordia Concors, de Origine et Progressu Formulae Concordiae Ecclesiarum Confessionis Augustanae* (Wittenberg, 1614); and Sebastian Schmidt, *Articulorum Formulae Concordiae Repetitio* (Strasbourg, 1696). It is interesting that the seventeenth century dogmaticians in their dogmatical or exegetical works seldom cite the confessions; even less do nineteenth and twentieth century confessional Lutherans, e.g., Gisle Johnson, *Den Systematiske Teologi* (Oslo: Dybwad, 1897) and K. Krogh-Tønning, *Den Christelige Dogmatik* (Christiania: P. T. Mallings Boghandel, 1885) among the Norwegians; Friedrich A. Philippi, *Kirchliche Glaubenslehre* (Stuttgart: Samuel Gottlieb Liesching, 1854) among the Germans; and Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans. Theodore Engelder, John T. Mueller, and Walter W. F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951—) and Adolph Hoenecke, *Evangelical-Lutherische Dogmatik* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1909) among the American. Why? Perhaps it is because they were writing to some extent for non-Lutheran readers, but more likely because of their convictions, conscious or unconscious, that exegesis just does not require a confessional basis of any kind. This is not to say that later Lutherans were not guilty of dogmatic exegesis (see John Gerhard, *Annotationes Posthumae in Evangelium D. Matthaei* [Jena, 1663] and many of the shorter exegetical treatises of the day). Friedrich Balduin's *Commentarius in Omnes Epistolas Beati Apostoli Pauli* (Frankfurt on the Main, 1710) is a good example of the better quality of the dogmatic exegesis of that day. But all this does not mean that the "dogmatic exegesis of that day" (which I suppose is common also to our day) was based on the confessions *per se*. It was not.

identical with the Augsburg Confession. The same is true of their discussions of the freedom of the human will; and here, too, the Formula of Concord consciously follows Luther.

The Formula of Concord, in treating the doctrine of original sin, is combating two opposite errors: that of Flacius, which made sin the very substance of man and thus opened up a Pandora's box of misunderstandings and aberrations; and that of Viktor Strigel who was a synergist. I regard Article I of the Formula of Concord as a commentary on the history, not so much the text, of Genesis 3, with rather little regard to Romans 5 and other evidence for the fact of original sin. Thus, the article takes for granted an historical Fall (SD I, 6, 9, 11, 23, 27, 28; cf. SA III, II, 1; AC II, 1) whereby Adam, the progenitor of the entire human race, brought sin, guilt, and eternal punishment upon the entire human race. The definition of original sin as inherited, propagated sin (*Erbsünde*), which consists of a lack of fear and trust in God and of concupiscence, is simply taken from the Augsburg Confession. The polemic is almost exclusively against the Flacian error and its impossible consequences. The context of the entire discussion is a certain Pauline understanding of the image of God. Man in his state of integrity possessed this image which consisted in righteousness and knowledge of God. The loss of the image was not the loss of man's humanity, nature, or essence (Epit. I, 17ff.), much less a mere "external impediment" of some kind but a corruption of man's nature and a "complete deprivation or loss" of all his spiritual powers (Epit. I, 15).

This doctrine, with all its details, is completely taken over by the later Lutheran dogmatians.³ But a great mass of biblical evidence is assembled to press certain points, particularly that original sin is a total corruption, that it is propagated, and that it is an active and dynamic concupiscence. Quenstedt says that original sin encompasses and controls all our powers, our members, indeed, the total man. Like a garment original sin encircles and clings to us and hinders us in our course toward true piety. It produces its own germs or fruits. It is the "root," as Luther puts it in SA III, II, 1-2, of all vices and is the common source of all sin. And what is of paramount importance, original sin is an active following after hostile attitudes and

3. See, for instance Abraham Calov, *Socinismus Profligatus, hoc est, Errorum Socinianorum Luculenta Confutatio* (Wittenberg, 1668), pp. 259ff., and John Andrew Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica sive Systema Theologiae* (Leipzig, 1702), part II, chap. II, sec. II (1:914-1076).

wicked traits (*positio pravae concupiscentiae & successio contrarii habitus & vitiosae qualitatis*), and active rebellion, a desire for all that is base, a hatred of God.⁴ This active nature of original sin, so commonly emphasized by the early reformers and the Formula of Concord, is stressed with the same vigor by the dogmaticians. Speaking of man's habitual inclination toward evil (Matt. 15:19; Mk. 7:21), Quenstedt remarks that even such initial and involuntary movements of our concupiscence are truly sin (Romans 7). And when Jesus says that evil thoughts proceed from the heart and Paul says we will what is evil, they are not speaking metonymically, but of an actual warring against the law of the mind, a sinful willing of evil even in the regenerated man (Rom. 7:13).⁵

The soteriological backdrop out of which Article I of the Formula of Concord is written is also shared by the later Lutherans, sometimes as they follow closely the Formula's discussions of the consequences of the Flacian error,⁶ but also at times out of an evangelical concern of their own. Erik Adhelius⁷ insists that the correct understanding of the human situation is so important because it alone shows a sinner his need for a savior. The fact to be stressed is that all sin (and this includes at the outset man's sinful condition) is against God's law and therefore against God. And man's tragic situation can only be remedied by Christ. Thus, original sin must be taught out of such a soteriological concern.⁸ Only if a proper understanding of sin is

4. Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica*, sec. I, thesis 34 (1:918). Cf. Melancthon's statement in his *Loci Communes* of 1521 in *Melancthons Werke in Auswahl*, 2:1, ed. Hans Engelland (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1952), p. 21: "Original sin is a sort of living power (*vivax quaedam energia*) in no way and at no time bringing forth any other fruit than vice. For when does the soul of man not burn with evil desires, desires in which the most base and offensive things are not checked? Avarice, ambition, hatred, jealousy, rivalry, the flame of lust, wrath; and who does not feel these things? Pride, scorn, Pharisaic big-headedness, contempt of God, distrust of God, blasphemy. . . ." Such language is typical of the Formula of Concord and the later Lutheran theologians.

5. Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica*, thesis 35 (1:119).

6. *Ibid.*, sec. II, ques. 10 (1:1021). Cf. Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici* (Frankfurt and Wittenberg, 1653), 1:244-45.

7. Erik Adhelius, *Disputationum Homologeticarum in Augustanam Confessionem prima—sexta* (Uppsala, 1653), p. 83: "*Sed nihilominus sincera hujus peccati agnitio valde necessaria nobis peccatoribus, ut eo avidius medicinam per Christum amplectamur. Necque enim potest intelligi magnitudo gratiae Christi, nisi morbis nostris cognitio. Tota hominis justitia mera est hypocrisis coram Deo, nisi agnoverimus cor naturaliter vacare amore, timore, fiducia Dei.*"

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-95.

preached in the church will a proper understanding of Christ and his work result in the church. One repents of "propagated" sin and turns to Christ.⁹

Very little is made in the Formula of Concord about the imputation of Adam's sin or guilt to the entire human race, probably because the concern was primarily centered in the anthropological aspect of the doctrine, the nature of man's sin as propagated. The imputation of course is implied when the Formula describes original sin as involving guilt (*reatus, Schuld*) and brings God's wrath and damnation (SD I, 13-19; cf. AC II, 2). The dogmaticians are more explicit about the imputation of Adam's sin, or guilt, to all posterity. When Rom. 5:12ff says that all men sinned in Adam, it does not mean that all did precisely as Adam did, but that all "participated in his guilt," and thus in God's reckoning.¹⁰ Because all participated in Adam's sin, the two notions, inherited sin and imputed guilt, go together.¹¹ The reason that this matter, barely touched upon by our confessions, was stressed by the later dogmaticians was due to the Socinian threat. Quenstedt devotes one entire question to the forensic imputation of Adam's sin and guilt to the entire human race, using almost exclusively Rom. 5:12-19 as his exegetical basis.¹² The exegetical works of the later orthodox Lutherans take up the matter in greater detail, again at least in part for polemical reasons, also against papists and Arminians.¹³

One would suppose that with such close dependence upon the the-

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 4, 5.

10. Calov, *Socinismus Profligatus*, p. 243.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Quenstedt, *Theologica Didactico-Polemica*, sec. II, ques. 7 (1:993-98).

13. E.g., see Calov, *Biblia Novi Testamenti Illustrata* (Dresden and Leipzig, 1719), vol. I, book II, p. 99: "*Uti enim hic peccatores constituti sunt imputatione in obedientiae Adami, sic justi nos constituimur imputatione vel justitiae Christi.*" Again Calov says, "*Quomodo autem poena esset in posteris peccati primi, nisi posteris primum illud peccatum imputaretur?*" Calov, in such typical statements, is polemicalizing against Bellarmine, Becan, and other papists, but his soteriological concern is clearly apparent. Cf. also Balduin, *Commentarius*, p. 183, *passim*. Aegidius Hunnius, in his *Thesaurus Apostolicus Complectens Commentarios in omnes Novi Testamenti Epistolas* (Wittenberg, 1705), pp. 51-52 is more careful to relate the inherited nature of original sin with God's imputation of guilt. "*Non solum reatus alieni peccati imputatur posteris, sed ipsum quoque vitium in illos propagatur. . . .*" Also: "*Peccatum originis non definitur imputatione nuda lapsus alieni primorum parentum, sine vitio & corruptione propria; sicut Scholastici Theologi censuerunt: sed ea ratione & peccatum, & cum peccato mors in nos propagata scribitur, quatenus ipsi quoque peccavimus. Hoc palam affirmat Apostolus.*"

ology of the Formula of Concord in its doctrine of original sin, the later Lutherans would also lean heavily upon the same source as they treat the subject of Article II of the Formula of Concord, that is, freedom of the will. This is true, particularly among the earlier post-Reformation theologians (e.g., Leonard Hutter, John Gerhard) and all the Scandinavians (e.g., Jesper Brochmand, Kort Aslaksøn, and Olav Laurelius). Aslaksøn simply and unabashedly takes over the doctrine of the Formula of Concord,¹⁴ as does Laurelius, although the latter subsumes the subject under the doctrine of original sin.¹⁵ At times, however, later theologians tend to depart from the theology of the Formula of Concord on the matter of the freedom of the will. They accepted Luther's strong emphasis upon man's utter passivity in conversion and his "block," "stone," "log," "pillar of salt" imagery (SD II, 19, 20, 24), although God works in man as in a rational creature (SD II, 49, 50). But in the discussion of other subjects synergism definitely crops up. Hollaz,¹⁶ for instance, poses the question why God does not grant all men saving faith, and finds the answer in the theory that all unregenerated men do not resist the work of the Holy Spirit with the same intensity.

Article III of the Formula of Concord is a masterful discussion on the nature of justification, just as Melancthon's treatment of justification by faith in the Apology is one of the finest ever written on the subject. The two notable discussions complement each other and afford a total picture of the doctrine of justification. Earlier Lutheran orthodoxy, taking its cue from these two great sections of our Book of Concord, combine the work of Christ, his obedience of doing and suffering, his life and death (SD III, 15-16, 55-88), later called active and passive obedience, under one heading, namely justification (Chemnitz and Gerhard). This is in keeping with both the intent of Melancthon and the Formula of Concord. For Melancthon offers his most explicit treatment of the work of Christ in his discussions of justification. In a sense this procedure of Gerhard and Chemnitz retains

14. Kort Aslaksøn, *De Libero Homini Arbitrio* (Copenhagen, 1612), p. Blv.

15. Olav Laurelius, *Syntagma Theologicum* (Uppsala, 1641), pp. 149ff. Cf. also Abraham Calov, *Historica Syncretistica* (Wittenberg, 1682), p. 663.

16. David Hollaz, *Examen Theologicum Acromaticum* (Rostock and Leipzig, 1718, part III, sec. I, chap. I, quest. 9 (p. 602): "*Dist. inter resistentiam naturalem, & malitiosam. Illam Spiritus S. per gratiam praevenientem frangit & refrenat: haec in aliis hominibus minor, in aliis maior & ferocior est, quae saepe impedit, quo minus vera fides in corde hominis irrogeniri accendatur.*"

justification as the center and chief theme (*praecipuus locus*) of Melancthon in the Apology (IV, 2) and at the same time retains Luther's strong emphasis in the Smalcald Articles that "the first and chief article" of Christian doctrine is the article of Christ and his saving work. This procedure by the earlier dogmaticians retains the atoning work of Christ not simply as the basis of a sinner's justification, but also as an element and form of the very declaration of justification itself. Like the Formula of Concord and Luther and Melancthon, the dogmaticians make much of the imputation of Christ's righteousness (his obedience) to the believer (Apol. IV, 305, 307; in fact, this is Melancthon's definition of justification!).¹⁷

A statement by Balthasar Mentzer may serve to show the dependence of later Lutherans on the theology of the confessions and particularly the Formula of Concord as they work out their Christocentric doctrine of justification.

The basis which merits our justification is Jesus Christ the God-man who in both of his natures is the one mediator and redeemer of the entire human race. Although he was Lord over the law for our sake he was made under the law to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of children (Gal. 4:4, 5). He not only observed the whole divine law, but fulfilled it completely and exactly (Matt. 5:17, 18). Thus he is called the end (*telos*) and the perfection of the law (Rom. 10:4). But he also sustained the punishment which we deserved by our sins, he suffered and died in our place, as the whole gospel history abundantly testifies. This entire obedience of his, both in what he did and what he suffered (which is commonly termed active and passive obedience) is called the righteousness of Christ, i.e., the righteousness which is revealed in the gospel, and the righteousness of faith, i.e., the righteousness which is apprehended by faith and counted for righteousness to us who believe.¹⁸

Lutheran orthodoxy almost slavishly, but albeit with great vigor and real warmth, adheres to the Reformation doctrine of justification, to its centrality in the theological enterprise, to the reality of the imputation

17. Cf. SD III, 4, 9. Perhaps more than any of the other of the dogmaticians Gerhard emphasizes this fact in his lengthy discussion of the meritorious cause of our justification (*Loci Theologici*, 7:30-72) and again in his treatment of the nature of justification (*causa formalis justificationis*) as the nonimputation of our sin for Christ's sake and the gracious imputation of Christ's righteousness to us through faith (*ibid.*, 257-315). This definition of the nature of justification is clearly taken from the Formula of Concord and Chemnitz, although, as shown above, it can be traced back to Luther and the earlier confessions.

18. Balthasar Mentzer, *Opera Latina* (Frankfurt, 1669), 1:60.

of Christ's righteousness to the believer, to the *sola fide* and the *sola gratia*, to Luther's understanding of faith directed always toward Christ.¹⁹ But exactly here at the point of justification *propter Christum* it takes much from the masterful treatment of the Formula of Concord.

No Appreciable Influence—Articles IV–X

After Luther's emphases upon the necessity of good works in so many treatises and after Melanchthon's excellent discussion of the subject of "Love and the Keeping of the Law" in the Apology (IV, 122–400), by far the longest discussion in all the Lutheran confessions, one can only marvel that the theologians who wrote the Formula of Concord would be compelled to treat the matter again and marvel still more that Roman theology persistently misunderstood the Lutheran position, thus compelling the later Lutheran dogmatists to address themselves to this issue at great length, not merely for the sake of the subject itself, but for the sake of clarifying their position. Because Majorism did not persist with its various subtleties long after the Formula of Concord, the subjects of good works, love, and the fruits of faith (of the Spirit) were handled by the later Lutherans primarily on the basis of Scripture and earlier Lutheran theologians. Jesper Brochmand wrote a commentary on the book of James simply to prove that the Lutherans took the theology of James and good works seriously.²⁰ A perusal of the great dogmatical works of the era, with their sections on the law, repentance, confession, good works, prayer, and the cross (sections not found in many modern dogmatics) should indicate the seriousness of Lutheran orthodoxy to maintain a proper emphasis upon the Christian life. But the theology of the Formula of Concord had little influence upon their work. Luther in his several discussions of the Ten Commandments did influence the later Lutheran orthodox theologians, and so did Melanchthon in his treatment of the subject in Apology IV.

Articles V and VI of the Formula of Concord, which belong together, had little influence upon later Lutheran orthodoxy, although the dogmatists treated the subjects of the proper distinction between law and gospel and the Third Use of the law. Once again the imme-

19. I believe I have clearly demonstrated this fact in my article "The Doctrine of Justification in the Theology of Classical Lutheran Orthodoxy," in *The Springfielder* 29:1 (Spring 1965): 24–39.

20. Jesper Rasmus Brochmand, *In Canonicam et Catholicam Jacobi Epistolam Commentarius* (Copenhagen, 1706).

diate occasion for the articles was no longer an issue. The theologians of the seventeenth century simply went back to Luther, Melancthon, and to the Bible itself as they addressed themselves to the issue of distinguishing the law from the gospel and the threefold function of the law. Hollaz,²¹ for instance, never cites Luther or the confessions as he delineates the word of the law and the word of the gospel. Chemnitz first discusses the law at great length and then the gospel under his section on justification, but does not treat the distinction *per se*.²² He treats the threefold use of the law on only two pages of his immense *Loci Theologici*.²³ This is significant because Chemnitz is one of the authors of the Formula of Concord. Apparently the theologians after the Formula of Concord, indeed even its authors, did not think that the subject matter of Articles V and VI merited extended discussions in their theological works, perhaps because they believed the matter had been settled once and for all by the Formula itself.

Once again the later theologians simply pass over Articles VII and VIII of the Formula to Luther and the Scriptures in the case of the Lord's Supper, and to the Church Fathers and the Scriptures in the case of the Person of Christ. This was only natural. The Formula of Concord, while settling the two issues for Lutherans, simply did not do so in respect to the Lutheran and Reformed controversy. To us today the two articles in the Formula might appear quite thorough and conclusive, but they were hardly adequate to use as a basis to carry on the controversy with the Reformed who immediately attacked both articles on biblical and patristic grounds.²⁴ Searching the Scriptures and Luther's interpretation of them on the points of difference and a thorough study of the patristic doctrine of the Person of Christ was the only way the Lutherans, beginning with Chemnitz, could go.

A couple of observations might be made, however, before leaving

21. Hollaz, *Examen*, part III, sec. II, chap. I, quest. 6—chap. II, quest. 10 (pp. 996–1039). Cf. also Gerhard's section on the subject (*Loci Theologici* 6:132–42) which makes no use of the confessions and little of Luther. He cites a few Bible passages, and is not particularly heartwarming.

22. Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 2:202–15.

23. *Ibid.*, 2:99–100. Cf. also Laurelius, *Syntagma Theologicum*, who presents a rather edifying discourse on the threefold use of the law.

24. It is not necessary and would be fruitless to trace all the Reformed and Lutheran polemics which followed the signing of the Formula of Concord. Rudolph Hospinian's *Concordia Discors* (Zurich, 1611) was only the beginning of the vast discussion that ensued, centering on the articles of the Sacrament of the Altar and the Person of Christ and never settled anything.

these two articles. First, the intensity of the debate between the Lutherans and the Reformed in many cases tended to freeze further biblical research on the subject of the Lord's Supper to the point where little more than the doctrine of the real presence and what appeared immediately adjunct to it was ever discussed. This unbalanced treatment of the subject is already discernible in the Formula of Concord itself which limits its discussion to the doctrine of the real presence (which under the peculiar circumstances obtaining at the time was justified) except for a short discussion on worthy participation and the comfort offered in the Supper to poor and weak sinners who need God's grace and encouragement (SD VII, 68-71). The memorial aspect of the Supper is indeed mentioned by the later theologians. And the emphasis upon the "whole action" (words of institution, distribution, and consumption) found in the Formula itself is marked. But the soteriological purpose of the sacrament (SD VII, 62, 68-71) does not receive the emphasis in the later theologians that one would wish for, except often in a rather perfunctory manner.²⁵ And the relationship between the real presence and the blessing it brings (as expressed in the *huper humon* of 1 Cor. 11:24) is scarcely mentioned. This is not the case with the earlier Lutherans.

Johann Brenz closely relates the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament with the blessings which Christ has secured for us by his body and blood. I would like to quote some of his presentation to illustrate its uniqueness when compared with that of the later theologians.²⁶ He asks,

What has Christ therefore bequeathed to us here? That which he had as his very own and his most precious possession, namely his own body and his own blood. Do not think that this is just an ordinary bequest! He could not have left his church anything greater or more beneficial. For in his body and blood which he expended to God the Father to pay for our sins he has bequeathed to us the remission of sins. And what greater, more marvelous thing can happen to us than that? Where there is remission of sins, we have also a gracious God, righteousness, life, eternal salvation. What then can harm us? Poverty, shame, sickness, death, hell? But where there is no remission of sins, nothing does

25. Hollaz, *Examen*, part III, sec. II, chap. V, quest. 22 (pp. 1137-39). Quenstedt is hardly better, *Theologica Didactico-Polemica* part IV, chap. VI, sec. II, quest. 10 (2:1282-89).

26. Johann Brenz, *De Majestate Domini Nostri Jesu Christ ad Dextram Dei Patris et Vera Praesentia Corporis & Sanguinis ejus in Coena* (Frankfurt, 1562), pp. 177f.

any good, not wealth nor power nor health nor anything else which this world esteems and admires. Wherefore, since Christ in his testament has left to the church his body and blood, and thereby also the remission of sins which was procured through the sacrifice of his body and blood, we must see that he has left it the highest, finest, most useful and by far the most necessary things for our salvation.

The theologians after the Formula seldom talked this way. To Brenz the presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament conveys to us what he accomplished for us by his body and blood. The sacrament is the way in which the objective work of Christ is made ours. Sacramentology is the arm or vehicle of Christology.

Brenz proceeds:

Now all these things are said that we might make use of this testament, just as we are wont to make use of mundane wills and testaments. For if a person has been made an heir in a testament of this world, but is prevented from receiving his bequest because of the injustice of coheirs or other parties he will straightway appeal to the terms of the testament, bring them to the fore, inspect and weigh them, throw them in the face of his adversaries, and consider all the objects according to these terms, in order that he might finally be permitted to receive his portion. Now we make use of the New Testament of Christ in much the same way. Remission of sins and an inheritance of eternal life have been promised for the sake of Christ our Lord. Now the terms of this testament were executed at the institution of the Lord's Supper. Satan, our adversary, tries to keep us from receiving this inheritance. He throws up at us the multitude and enormity of our sins. Our sins which are to be remitted by God are so great and so many, he says. Then he seeks to deny that we will inherit the kingdom of heaven. Oh, he concedes that God is forbearing and merciful, but only if we love him (as the law prescribes) and observe his commandments. But then he says, you have not loved God with your whole heart, you have not observed even the least of his commandments perfectly. Why should you expect or hope for eternal life. These are the fiery darts of the adversary. What can we do about it? We can produce the terms of our testament, we can partake of the Lord's Supper, and then we are made certain of our inheritance, of the remission of sins and of eternal life. Of course, we do not deny that our sins are great and many; on the contrary, we frankly confess them before God. Nor do we deny that we have never perfectly followed God's law. But we have the terms of the Lord's testament, we have the Lord's Supper. And since he has there committed unto us his body and blood, he has *eo ipso* bequeathed to us also the remission of sins and life eternal. What about this? Will Christ revoke the truth of his testament because our sins are many and great? Will he become a liar because I have been disobedient? Never! Heaven and earth will pass away, he says, but my Word will not pass

away. Therefore let us see from the word "testament" what a broad application the Lord's Supper has. As Christ has called this Supper his testament, our great divines have called it, not inappropriately or without purpose, a viaticum. . . . What then is that viaticum through which we can extricate ourselves from destruction? We know of course that Christ is our *hilasmos*, that is, the price of our redemption. But because he has given himself to us to be eaten and drunk along with his body and blood in the Supper, we can correctly say that the Lord's Supper is the viaticum which pays our way on our pilgrimage and protects us from the attacks of thieves and the tyranny of Satan. You see, if Satan, in the hostel of poverty or of sicknesses or of death, exacts the claim he has over us because of our sins and threatens us with eternal destruction, then we have the Lord's Supper in which Christ's body and blood, the price of our redemption, are given us to feed upon with the bread and wine. . . . When we partake of the body and blood of Christ, who has conquered death and risen from the dead and enjoys eternal blessedness, then it can only follow that we too conquer death in him; and when death is defeated, we have reached eternal happiness.

I have found nothing on the real presence and purpose of the Lord's Supper like this quotation from Brenz in those theologians who wrote after the Formula of Concord.

The post-Reformation Lutheran theologians almost totally bypass the Formula of Concord as they present their doctrine of Christology. This is to be expected. Chemnitz, himself one of the authors of the Formula of Concord, had written a great and definitive work on the subject of the two natures of Christ.²⁷ And Chemnitz supplied the "Catalog of Testimonies" which supported the Formula of Concord on this subject. The later theologians of the seventeenth century, notably Gerhard, Calov, and Quenstedt, follow the theology of Chemnitz who leaned heavily upon the early Church Fathers (especially John of Damascus), except that they reverse the second and third genus (classification) of the communication of attributes. Their theology is that of the Formula of Concord at every point, but it is to Chemnitz, the Church Fathers, and ultimately to the Scriptures that they repair as they work out their Christology.

The occasions for Article X of the Formula of Concord were long gone even at the time of its writing. For this reason little attention is given this article by later Lutheran orthodoxy, except that their doctrine of church fellowship (*concordia*) is based upon agreement in

27. Martin Chemnitz, *De Duabus Naturis in Christo* (Frankfurt and Wittenberg, 1653). English translation by J. A. O. Preus, *Martin Chemnitz on the Two Natures of Christ* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971).

the gospel and all its articles (SD X, 31), like the Formula itself. In the seventeenth century, controversies, not unlike those that followed Luther's death, arose, and the same *modus operandi* was employed by Lutherans to overcome them and reach unanimity. That such efforts failed, even among Lutherans as in the case of Calov's *Consensus Repetitus*,²⁸ indicates not a departure from the position of the confessions concerning adiaphora, but an adherence to a position which demanded only agreement in the doctrine of the gospel for unity and concord in the church.

Departure from the Formula of Concord—Article XI

In only one article is there clearly a departure from the theology of the Formula of Concord on the part of seventeenth century Lutheranism: the doctrine of predestination and election. The Formula of Concord presents the doctrine of the election of grace as a great mystery. God in his grace has elected a certain number to faith and eternal life (SD XI, 24, 45, 82). This choosing must not be viewed *nude* to search out God's hidden will apart from God's giving Christ to be the savior of all men. And it must be distinguished from God's foreknowledge in the ecclesiastical sense of knowing all things in advance of their occurrence. But this choosing is a decree (SD XI, 5), which pertains to all who believe in Christ; it offers gospel comfort (SD XI, 26); it particularizes the universal grace of God, just as absolution particularizes the universal grace of God (SD XI, 27–28, 33). Especially is it to be taught and urged to support and affirm the *sola gratia* (SD XI, 43, 44). It is *propter Christum*. And with such an evangelical treatment our confessions stop: there can be no probing of the secret will of God, no asking why he does not convert all. Such questions must remain a mystery (SD XI, 53–59). With perfect justice God could damn all men (SD XI, 60).

I think the dogmaticians honestly try to follow the Formula of

28. Abraham Calov, *Consensus Repetitus Fide vere Lutheranae* (Wittenberg, 1666). Calov, Dannhauer, and other theologians of the day wrote dozens of books and pamphlets on the subject of syncretism, in every case following the principles of the Formula of Concord on what constituted adiaphora and what was necessary for harmony and fellowship in the church. Calov himself wrote some twenty books. But the Roman menace and the Augsburg and Leipzig Interims were in no sense the context of their discussions. Rather, it was the negotiations with more liberal Lutherans, such as Georg Calixtus, and the Reformed that prompted their discussions. See Robert Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970–72), 1:117–54.

Concord as they develop a new approach and doctrine. In their discussions of election they cite the Formula more than in almost any other article they treat. But beginning with Aegidius Hunnius²⁹ the *intuitu Christi meriti fide apprehendendi* and the simple *intuitu fidei* formulae are brought into the picture; and in the end the election *eis uiotbesian* (Eph. 1:5) is denied; speculation replaces simple biblical theology, and the purpose of the doctrine to comfort and lead one to the *sola gratia* is vitiated. We have already seen the synergistic error into which Hollaz fell as he sought to answer the question of why all are not chosen. Hunnius and his successors sincerely tried to combat with their formulae the supralapsarian or sublapsarian doctrines of the Calvinists and the bizarre doctrine of Samuel Huber that all human beings were elect. But they succeeded only in muddying the waters. Hunnius's position is almost impossible to understand. Does he or does he not include the eight points in the Formula of Concord (SD XI, 15–22) as a part of election or as an evangelical context in which the doctrine must always be treated? Gerhard, the systematician, and his followers make the matter quite clear. The eight points are a part of election itself; and thus in effect election becomes no more than God's decree (the dogmaticians do not hesitate to call election a decree, as did the Calvinists) to save those who he already knows will believe, a clear misunderstanding of Paul's use of *proorizo* and of the theology of the Formula on this point.³⁰ It is significant that Gerhard and those after him treated the decrees of election and reprobation as parallel, both contingent upon God's foreknowledge. Like Calvin, he treats the doctrine prior to the work of Christ or justification and in the context of divine providence, fate, and the cause of sin, thus depriving his treatment of the evangelical context he thought he was offering, and falling into a position radically different, but parallel to Calvinism. All the dogmaticians of the seventeenth century follow Gerhard's doctrine of election.

Striking Out on Their Own—Article XII

Article XII of the Formula of Concord is no doubt the least noticed and studied of all the articles offered there. This article touches topics not under debate among the Lutherans, and therefore one wonders

29. Aegidius Hunnius, *Articulus de Providentia Dei et Aeterna Praedestinatione Filiorum Dei ad Salutem* (Frankfurt, 1596).

30. Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 3:145ff.

whether it is needed at all. Ironically the only other article not debated by Lutherans at the time was Article XI, and at just this point alone the later dogmaticians departed from the theology of the Formula of Concord. Article XII deals with "Other Factions and Sects Which Never Embraced the Augsburg Confession." Looking back, one observes that it was most propitious that the three items discussed in this final article were included. For the theologies of the Anabaptists, the Schwenkfelder (*Schwärmer*), and the "new anti-Trinitarians" are very contemporary indeed, and it is well that Lutheranism spoke on these issues in the final pages of the Book of Concord.

The theology of later Lutheranism followed closely the polemics and the entire approach of Luther and the early reformers when they addressed themselves to the threats of the Anabaptists and *Schwärmer*, and thus they offered little new on the subjects of baptism and the means of grace. But in reference to the doctrine of the Trinity they did something which had never been done before. Never had the doctrine of the Trinity been given the amount of attention in terms of its biblical basis as during the time of the post-Reformation era.³¹ The early Church Fathers and creeds articulated the doctrine and defended it against all kinds of heresies. But somehow they were hampered from presenting a total and convincing biblical and exegetical basis for the doctrine. Luther and the early reformers were apparently too busy with other concerns. They wrote commentaries on the creeds; they included mention of the Trinity in their confessions (AC I; Apol. I; SA I); and Luther's presentation in the catechisms of God as Triune as seen by his external works (*opera ad extra*) is an original and masterful exposition. But they never found time to expend the arduous exegetical labors necessary to nail down the biblical basis for the doctrine, as for instance Luther did in his presentations of justification, or the Lord's Supper. It remained for Lutheran orthodoxy to do this; and this stands as one of the great accomplishments of the age. Perhaps they could not add much to what our confessions and the Formula of Concord have stated on the other articles of faith. But here was an area where the confessions had merely assumed what had been taught so many years by the church catholic and had reiterated the theology of the creeds and to some extent that of the medieval scholastic theologians (AC I). It remained for Lutheran orthodoxy to furnish the

31. See Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 219-20. Cf. also Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2:113-63.

fullest exegetical basis for the doctrine yet provided. It was more the Socinian menace than the concern for catholicity or thoroughness that inspired such arduous labors. But the fact remains that John Gerhard, Abraham Calov, John Dörsch, John Quenstedt, Jacob Martini, Leonard Hutter, Martin Chemnitz, and a host of other Lutheran divines, including some exegetes, did a job that had never been achieved before. They followed faithfully the leads, the arguments, and the nomenclature of the great Church Fathers; but the biblical basis, especially for the deity and person of the Holy Spirit, they dug out of Scripture itself. If modern theology does not like their exegesis, contemporary theologians will need to do the job all over again; for no one has so thoroughly presented the doctrine of the Trinity from an exegetical basis since that time.

Conclusion

Our study has been brief and perhaps not apparently very productive. Possibly the reader has experienced something of the frustration of the writer as he pursued the subject. For we seem to have proved a negative thesis. The Formula of Concord as such did not exert a formative influence upon the theological works of classical Lutheran orthodoxy which immediately followed. The rest of the Book of Concord exerted more influence.

But we have not emerged from the study empty-handed. The *theology* of the Formula of Concord clearly corresponds to that of later orthodoxy on every point of doctrine except the doctrine of election. Perhaps we might have expected this agreement, for the Lutherans had the highest respect for their confessional heritage and their forebears.³² But the facts assembled are, I believe, still significant evidence for the close continuity and agreement in doctrine which prevailed among Lutherans from 1577 until almost the turn of the eighteenth century. And this is a remarkable fact indeed.

32. The allegation of Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), pp. xxi-xxii, is utterly without foundation. Perhaps Schlink follows Friedrich A. Nitzsch, *Lehrbuch der evangelischen Dogmatik*, 3d ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1912), p. 26 or Ernst Ludwig Th. Henke, *Georg Calixtus und eine Zeit* (Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1853), vol. II, part 2, p. 182, or some other secondary sources. Modern historians such as Jörg Baur in *Die Vernunft zwischen Ontologie und Evangelium* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1962) and Johannes Wallmann in *Der Theologiebegriff bis Johann Gerhard und Georg Calixt* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1961) have come to the exact opposite conclusions.