

# What Does the *Formula of Concord* Say to Us about Unionism, Ecumenism, and Fanaticism (Pentecostalism)?

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The *Formula of Concord* is ecumenical. Only the providence of the Lord of the universe put it together. Although there were strong political backgrounds, especially since Augsburg 1555, one is hesitant to mention these as touching the essence of the *Formula* or its formulation, since Christians note, above and beyond politics, the providence of the Lord. That providence saw in 1580 Luther for all intents and purposes alive and well through his writings. The fire of Flacius against synergism was still burning in the background, and with that fire a flaring of a controversy concerning original sin in a battle context far different from that which found Luther fighting concerning the same doctrine of original sin against Eck, accusing him of Zwinglianism. (See pages 59 - 61 of Allbeck, *Studies in the Lutheran Confessions*.) Melancthon was now safely physically dead, and with him a good deal of waving the flag of smudgy gray to the Calvinists in the matters of the Lord's Supper and Free Will now behind the Lutherans. And a number of men whom the Lord wanted to be chief authors had been put through the hard knocks of tribulation, correction, and very pointed, often long in coming education, the likes of Andreae, the Bible union man (at least, say, from 1569 on, when he grappled with the *Heidelberg Catechism*); Chemnitz, the Christology scholar (with his study of the *Two Natures of Christ* and the *Communication of Idioms* very important for the confession of the Lord's Supper over against the limited session of Christ at the right hand of God by the Reformed and with his grappling, like Andreae, with the *New Wittenberg Catechism* of 1571; Selnecker, the hymnist; Chytraeus, the Christ-centered evangelical historian; and Musculus and Koerner, two men whom the Lord in his providence used to advertise to the world what is already evident to those who have looked within the Formula - the Formula is a truly ecumenical creed in the best sense of the term. Cf. Romans 11: 33-36, Romans 10: 8-13.

Beyond an act of providence centering in Christ - and the kernel of the flower was already there in the Catechisms of Luther, Marburg, the *Augsburg Confession*, the *Smalcald Articles* of Luther, the *Two Natures of Christ* of Chemnitz, and the *Six Sermons* and *Thirty Three Sermons* of Andreae - the flower was, of course, the fuller statement of doctrine not *quatenus*, but *quia*, flowing from Scripture directly, though in rearranged wordings. But there was a difference between the *Formula* and the scholarly fullness of the *Apology* of Melancthon and the *Refutation of the Council of Trent* by Chemnitz. The fullness of the flower of 1580 was one that represented particularly the rallying about Scripture once again by the Lutherans in specific, hammered out, renewed birth-panged terms, after, particularly Zwinglianism and the after-effects of the Interim of 1548 and the low point of Worms 1557. At least one man, Andreae, thought it never was as bad as it looked, and promised that many rather than few Lutherans would again rally fully united, given the propitious time and circumstances. Ah, the *Formula* was a beautiful doctrinal statement, remaining, despite unflowery language, a proper ecumenical flower through the centuries, not again yielding to the Catholics and pointedly speaking to the Calvinists.

It came about in a world, to follow a grouping probably as wise as any - that of Roland Bainton in *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* - of Lutherans; the Reformed (Zwinglians and Calvinists); the Anabaptists, who could be called the Church withdrawn and whose characteristic was restitution rather than reform; and finally what Bainton calls "the free spirits" whose characteristics he suggests are mostly mysticism and rationalism.

As time went by pietism came and went as a historical movement, standing much, perhaps, in contrast to rationalism, but its mettle did not at all begin to approach the rich preciseness and pointedness of doctrine of the *Formula*. Feelings, and with feelings, eventual tolerance of differing viewpoints made inroads into modern thinking, and with those inroads, a forgetting of the rough and tumble times of 1530 - 1580. One suspects that pietism is in part responsible for a softening or conditioning effect for the modern historian looking back. We tend to think of the Anabaptists in relation to the Sacraments; the *Formula* in Art XII knew what it was doing in categorizing their errors intolerable in church, state, home. We, looking back, tend to see Antinomianism a weak-kneed, luke warm sickness. It was an outgrowth of overstatement in condemning the synergism of Major (V). We tend to consider original sin by itself. In fact, the *Formula* hit Flacius, who was hitting against a corruption of Luther's Third Art. of the Catechism (Cf. Election XI and Free Will II) hard, for one false statement, lest four others creep in on creation, redemption, sanctification, and the resurrection of the flesh. It is certainly not Lutheran teaching of the Third Article, but the 1903 Declaratory statement of the Presbyterians surely shows a softening of old hard-line Calvinism predestination when it speaks about the full responsibility of men for their treatment of God's gracious offer: "Concerning those who perish, the doctrine of God's Eternal Decree is held in harmony with the doctrine that God desires not the death of any sinner, but has provided in Christ a salvation to all, and freely offered in the Gospel to all; that men (and women) are fully responsible for their treatment of God's gracious offer: that His decree hinders no man (or woman) from accepting that offer, and that no man (or woman) is condemned except on the ground of his (or her) sin." In Geneva today, by followers of Calvin, mindful he was the prosecuting attorney for the burning of Servetus at the stake, stands an expiatory monument, with this inscription: "Condemning an error which was that of his age, and firmly attached to liberty of conscience according to the true principles of the Reformation and the Gospel, we respectful sons of Calvin our great Reformer have erected this expiatory monument."

Today we live in America and that means living after the Revolutionary War, not untouched by the Knox-Presbyterian connection of rebellion against the powers that be on somewhat less than ultra clear God-given grounds. It also means living after revivals of the 1840's and later - revivals of various hues. It also means living in the aftermath of both staunch and weak beginnings of Lutheranism in America. A marked change took place with after the First World War. Not only did the recognition come in measure that God could save in English as well as German, but there also came the yellow paint of neglecting and despising, in many instances,

German and the common use of German. And that is a shame, for much heritage may thereby be lost. Who thinks today, for example, save some isolated individuals, in a day of translations by the dozen, to learn from Luther's Psalms, master gem of translation by the master translator himself? Yet not to plunge into such mature work of Luther is to run the risk of missing much of the very vital background and spirit of the mature *Formula* for us 1978 WELS Christians. Consider, just to mention two examples, Luther's considered use of Godless "*Wesen*" in translation of several words, one of which is "evil," pointing to the old evil nature, as well as his great preference of "*Guete*." With these concepts one is into, very much, the ramifications of the issues and terms concerning Original Sin and the Proper Use and Distinction of Law and Gospel, with the Gospel being the king doctrine, the law its handmaid - and those are very much *Formula* considerations. A "must" starting point here is Heinz Blume's fine book: *Martin Lutheran* (sic), *Creative Translator*. (CPH. 1965.) It even seems to have become so bad that it seems other denominations know Luther's expertise at Bible translating better than we. Listen to David Poling in *Inspiration Three* (Volume III). (Keats Publishing, Inc., New Canaan, Conn.) In his introduction he says: "Luther poured enormous time and energy into a steady succession of books, pamphlets, and letters. His greatest work was a German translation of the entire Bible." Children of the reformation, arise. It is time to sing again of true ecumenism of the *Formula*. It is time to sing to the earth of the righteousness of faith as Luther did in his *Psalms*. It is time to humbly hear again Selnecker, the hymn-writer and signer of the *Formula*. Without worshiping Luther, he caught the giant ecumenicity of Luther's *Psalms* and the *Formula*:

“Luther leads us all in song,  
Tenors out God’s Word so strong.  
Him we follow twitter-fashion,  
Knowing God will have compassion.”

Furthermore, to pick up only a few strands of Americana today, about us everywhere is an affluence despite inflation, and a humanism which, among other things, finds violence and sexual license acceptable. In such a scene are we, not immune to the onrushes of humanism, but still a Wisconsin Synod clergy still living to some extents at least, in an ecclesiastical framework amid the larger scene of what Marty Marty calls a nebulous but definite “Righteous Empire” of protestantism in America. Somewhere thereabout are many waves of Unionism, Ecumenism, and Fanaticism (Pentecostalism). We have touched upon ecumenism in the good sense. How anyone who has examined the ecumenical Formula can not see the Formula as the kernel-flower base of true, good modern ecumenism is hard to understand. For the purpose of this paper I shall include unscriptural ecumenism, the desire to unite religiously without true and adequate doctrinal agreements with unionism, the practice of such a false union. As for proper ecumenism, the full Scripture teachings with full agreement can only be the proper base, but in and under that principle the Formula suggest a practice which keeps that true ecumenism (of the *Augsburg Confession* particularly) proper. At the risk of sounding like a football coach, it may be put thus: Drive, drive, drive, into the depths and details of catechetical doctrine! Let there be no forked tongues of duplicity there! The Formula itself reminds us that the catechism of Luther is the “Bible of the Laity.”

To this point there seems something missing concerning the subject of the Formula being ecumenical. In today’s world of mounting Pentecostalism and humanism and perhaps fading catechetical interest, and Luther’s Psalms out of sights practically speaking, are we so secure as to think that it is impossible to lose the whole “bag” of great and pure doctrinal ecumenism? There are several false assumptions which appeal to human nature just waiting to slip into the picture. The first is that we know Scripture so well as not to benefit from Scripture applied in former situations. The second is that we know situations so well as to be ready with the wisdom we have. The third is that because the situations of the Formula are now over 400 years past, they are somehow dated. Still another is that since ecumenism in our circles is often used negatively as a term, doctrinal and proper ecumenism is not relevant for the whole world, and thus somehow not powerful or proper. Furthermore, historians are now taking seriously the spread of Pentecostalism as a world-wide ecumenical force, perhaps the ecumenical hope. That forces upon us the question: What shall we do with the truly ecumenical *Formula* in a shallow ecumenical world? Larry Christianson’s sympathetic presentation of the “Catholic Apostolic Church,” (Irvingites) says: “It was a Movement from without the Historic Church towards it.” If that was so thought in those circles, is it out of place in today’s dangerous world to suggest that the *Formula* is and ought to be used as a great and proper ecumenical magnet for us, a magnet of Scripture applied to what Christianson calls the leitmotif with various elements which are common ground to many various church bodies. Christianson of course is advocating a Pentecostalist concern for non-historians to become historical. We have a Scriptural-Lutheran historical confession that is a single choir of powerful ecumenical trumpets which ought not to be muffled - neither by lack of historical study, humanism, American pluralism, or Pentecostalism. There is plenty of room for trumpeting the ecumenical *Formula* in the light of such passages as Ephesians 2: 17-22 and Ephesians 4: 1-16. It also seems there is plenty of room for the concept of the Formula as a magnet in the same verses as well as in, e.g., John 6: 44 – 45. “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”

400 years after the *Formula*, one wonders if things have changed so much. With an apology to Selnecker, his “homey” verse of his hymn “*Ach, Bleib Bei Uns, Herr Jesu Christ*” seems very much in place. It is herewith paraphrased in a manner a little too home-spun:

“O dearest Lord, the going’s tough,  
And unrest stirs the whole world’s crust,  
And many seats with *Schwaermer* leap  
To smother us in one big heap.”<sup>1</sup>

The original points to a true ecumenical stance, so that the sects and *Scwaermer* are as water drops off the broad shoulders. The *Formula* is a giant, able to withstand the jumping on its back by petty spirits, even if the *Formula* confessors be few. (It also floats far above personality clashes, such as that which burned out of control between Selnecker and Andreae.)

As we meet the terms of unionism and fanaticism, certainly the span of four centuries is evident, but just because the shell is different, doesn’t mean the kernel hasn’t been touched upon and even treated in depth by the *Formula*. Any true union is based upon the Word throughout without compromise - also without compromise to Christ-centeredness. Here consider Justification III, of Good Works IV, Of the Law and Gospel V, and evangelical permeation - Of Church Rites X. These articles are timeless and as appropriate today as over. They are a solid core. It should not be forgotten that in and under the truth, the Bible believing and confessing Christian will take note of and point out all errors standing in contradiction to Scripture. Thus, all the articles of the Formula in reality are living testimonies to true union rather than compromising unionism, and that particularly with, to start with, the Roman Catholic Church.

We remember Bainton’s grouping of the Reformed (Zwinglians and Calvinists), the Anabaptists, and the free spirits. Theologically speaking, some would see the Reformed children in America represented by the softer line of Wesley and the harder line of Whitefield, and again some would gee these revivalists closer in theological heart than would at first glance appear. (Cf. Meusel, F. Pieper, and the earlier Presbyterian quote.) It is but a short step from there to the Billy Grahamism of today, with many latching unto his apron strings of revivalism. At any rate, for the purpose of the *Formula* and this paper I am grouping the Reformed and Anabaptists together (Calvin happily married an Anabaptist), since the Formula is perhaps especially instructive for us moderns concerning the Sacraments, and perhaps especially concerning the Lord’s Supper, and then also with what could be called keeping the Third Article of Luther’s Catechism intact. Thus the Formula again gives its own type of living testimony against unionism. Yet we perhaps may go farther in this attempt at historical focusing. There are some, perhaps many, as we shall note concerning a book on Pentecostalism, who would trace modern Pentecostalism through Wesleyan holiness roots. And perhaps we should go even further yet. It is more than of passing interest that Catholic charismatics are considered in the book mentioned. That brings us full circle in this brief attempt at historical focusing. There is a tremendous sweep of application of the *Formula*, radiating 360 degrees out, starting from the catechisms, the Augsburg Confession., etc., applying the shoe where it fits, whether to Catholics, Reformed, Anabaptists, Arminians, free spirits, Pentecostals, humanistic occasional church-goers, or Roman charismatics. The applications of the *Formula* are timeless as the *Formula* itself. It is ecumenical in every good sense of the term, and thus it is a living testimony against every form of unionism that a bible confessing Church may meet as it confesses the entire Word.

Essential for a deeper understanding of the difference between Luther and Calvin here is a study of the Lord’s Supper VII, taking one into the Person of Christ VII. In connection with that, one might begin with the Anabaptist rejection of infant Baptism XII (First Part). One might here mention the Descent into Hell IX, Election XI, and Free Will II.

Much will have been covered with the above articles. But as to what remains in thinking of free spirits we might think of Article XII (Second Part) - Of Other Heresies and Sects - and also of the Third Use of the

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<sup>1</sup> In German the verse reads: “*Ach Gott, es geht gar uebel zu,  
Auf dieser Erd ist keine Ruh,  
Viel Sekten und viel Schwaermerei  
Auf einen Haufen kommt herbei.*”

Law VI, and that in regard to be thrown into the matter of a false “evangelical” fervor. In Luther’s day the free spirits tended to group. Today humanism is the larger umbrella. Within it are individuals scattered broadly, and if they group, it’s socialistic humanism. If there is a smaller umbrella with a theological aura here, it could be called Pentecostalism.

To keep a central mooring here, perhaps it is wise to quote from Article XII early concerning the erring Schwenkfeldians. “That the ministry of the church -preaching and hearing of the Word - is not a means, by which God the Holy Spirit teaches mankind and effects the saving knowledge of Christ, conversion, repentance, faith, and new obedience in them.” Thus the error was rejected, and the decisive and powerful Word of God presented as all determinative and all decisive. It is a great benefit to be directed to the specific Word of God alone as the source and norm of all theology and Christian practice.

And thus we shall let the *Formula* simply speak for itself, pointing out what seem particularly salient points for us today. We shall follow a base: III, IV, V, X; a Reformed-related group XII (First Part), VII, VIII, IX, XI, II; and a group relating to free spirits and Pentecostalism III (Second Part), VI. Article I is of special interest.

Article I deals with Original Sin. There is little doubt that terminology and semantic problems enter into the modern picture also. But the article is as solid as gold and Flacius, perhaps save for this overzealous lapse into the trap set by Strigel, stands high in the streams of truly Lutheran witness. How C.F.W. Walther deeply lamented his lapse is perhaps well known, but that still doesn’t change history. Perhaps it is simply best here to let the article speak for itself, by itself. It is obvious that many of other persuasions hold different views and the article thus, again, is a witness against unionism. Equally obvious it is that it was also at that time an inner Lutheran battle on what may mistakenly seem to some moderns looking back as a technicality. Yet there was a misstatement or overstatement and furthermore, a number of conclusions can be drawn from the misstatement, such as the conclusion is that God is the author of evil, and a full witness will prevent, where possible, others from drawing false conclusions also. The ramifications of such false conclusions are also very much involved in the Reformed teaching of predestination, though this article did not deal with that specifically. Thus Article I also stands against entertaining unionistic practices. Of course, pity the Arminians here, and recognize that the Reformed in speaking of “total depravity” of man don’t mean original sin “as bad as it could be.” “But we don’t mean to say by this that man is quite as bad as he could be.” -Roger R. Nicole in *Our Sovereign God*, James M. Boice, editor.

But before we let the *Formula* speak for itself, we must at least speak a few words about the difficulties of such or any arrangement for study purposes. They are a 400 year gap of terminology, culture, and an accurate and inclusive definition of Pentecostalism. I shall speak of these difficulties only briefly and in a sketchy manner.

The terminology problem of “now” and “then” can be overemphasized. Allbeck’s book, *Studies in the Lutheran Confessions* is very good in pointing out the groups behind the frontal words in broad strokes. His book illustrates the fact that good history studying clears up many a terminology problem. It is the smaller groups, largely, which might give some problems. Witness the WLQ, Oct. 1965 in a review of *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren* by Leonard Verduin, by P. Peters. Verduin refers to some of these stepchildren (the book is sympathetic to them) as: Donatists or neo-Donatists, *Staebler* (staff-carriers), *Catharer* (*CatherKetzer*), *Sakramentschwaermer* (NB - *Schwaermer!* - my note.) (Sacramentarians), *Winkler* (hedge-priests), *Wieder-taeufer* (Ana-baptists), *Kommunisten* (Communists), and *Rottengeister* (clique-organizers.) Undoubtedly the *Sakramentschwaermer* and *Wieder-taeufer* receive primary attention in the *Formula*. The matter of terminology “within” the *Formula* in matters of doctrine is another matters however. Two different understandings or uses of a term often are at the center of an issue. This is an evident and outstanding fact and the *Formula* illustrates it clearly. It could be called the classic illustration for pointing out the danger: Beware speaking out of both sides of the mouth! Think about the thing termed, Luther says, not the term itself.

Along cultural lines, it is to be lamented that many simply have little use for direct historical study. Yet there is hardly a more interesting chapter of history than 1530 – 1580, touching as it does upon vital issues

nearly at every turn. Our own Prof. Westerhaus has written well of these issues in “Melancthon’s Doctrinal Compromises,” a series of articles worthy of our attention beginning with the *WLQ* of October 1965. His presentation is a far cry from such a modern and five-steps-or-more-removed-from-a-direct-historical study as that of *Psychohistory and Religion: The Case of Young Man Luther*, edited by Roger A. Johnson (Fortress 1977, 198pp., \$12.95), reviewed in *CT* Oct. 79, 1977. It is more than ironic that the young Luther should be psycho-historicized when the mature Luther was master psychologist as shown by his “Psalms.” As a matter of facts, it is obnoxious.

Those problems, though real, are still yet today not insurmountable for 1978 WELS pastors. More difficult perhaps is to grab the vibes of Pentecostalism, although nearly all of us would agree on a common denominator of emphasis on the Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit Baptism, and emotions, and this at the expense of the Word, the tool of the Spirit, when necessary, especially in regard to the sacraments. Here I will only make a few inroads into the forests, referring to a book called: *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, edited by Vinson Synan (Logos 1975, 252pp. \$3.50 pb.). It is a difficult subject, but I believe the “origin” approach is helpful in bridging the gap of 400 years. I have been faced with a choice here, the result of which is: Read it yourself. It would make this paper too lengthy to review in detail, and it would not be right to omit what the ecumenical and non-unionistic *Formula* itself says as a living testimony. The book is reviewed in *CT*, Feb. 18, 1977, but this author feels it is essential reading for a relationship study of the *Formula* and Pentecostalism as well as to begin to understand the movement of Pentecostalism today. I leave untouched the more radical (and sometimes violent) of the modern fanatics. The *Formula* condemns such violence in Article XII, and deals with the principle in VI. If one wishes to begin reading in the more cultic area, Peterson’s book *Those Curious New Cults* might be a good starter. For a good modern starter somewhat in the vein of the *Formula*’s approach in that it reproves, see Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism*, Eerdmans’ 1972. (Actually the book is a Scriptural examination and refutation of “Holy spirit Baptism”.) Whether Hoekema himself has a Lutheran grasp of the Sacraments is another question.

For our purpose here, then, let me from the book mentioned merely record what one author in a position to know thinks the characteristics of Pentecostalism are:

1. Speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the Baptism of the Spirit.
2. Emphasis on holiness.
3. Emphasis on substitutionary atonement. (Limited or full? - my question.)
4. Free and exuberant worship.
5. Consuming evangelistic goal.
6. Prophetic and eschatological implications. (Pentecostal revival a fulfillment of prophecy.)

Again, another author gives these marks:

1. The priority of event.
2. The mood of expectancy.
3. Fullness of Life in the Holy Spirit.
4. The Paradox of Ecumenism and Exclusivism.

One of the more interesting points of the book is the rather obvious but easy to be omitted fact that Pentecostalism has in recent years climbed the ladder of respectability. It thus represents a unionistic force which can no longer be discounted, but must be reckoned with.

Another interesting fact is that “Oneness” Pentecostalism virtually takes up where the Anti-Trinitarianism condemned in Article XII (Of Other Sects) left off. The dress of unionism may have changed, the substance not.

### Article III. Righteousness of Faith Before God.

It is in Koenigsburg in Prussia where we pick up the story of Article III on Justification by faith. Osiander came there in 1548 and died shortly thereafter in 1552. The Lord used this controversy to keep justification by faith on centers as Andreae's first of Six Sermons shows. (Quotations from this point on, unless otherwise noted, are from Klug-Stahlke, *Getting into The Formula of Concord*. CPH. 1977.) "Osiander had particularly drawn a bead on the Reformation's accent on the forensic sense of justification, the teaching that God for Christ's sake declares sinners righteous. To him justification was not an act by which God declares sinners righteous but an act by which God makes a man just by dwelling in him. He argued that Christ the man was righteous because of the indwelling divine nature, therefore we are justified by faith because faith unites us with the divine nature, and God's righteousness becomes ours in this way. We are saved by the inward righteousness, the righteousness which is worked in us, as when a medicine gradually works its healing or cleansing." If not identical with *gratia infusa*, Osiander's teaching is very similar to it. Today, thanks to the *Formula*, we are probably more quick to recognize a form of *gratia infusa* and any claim to man's merit thereby.

Volumes are filled with what is termed "incarnational theology." In a vague, general sort of parallelism, the substitutionary death of Jesus is put aside in favor of what is, in the last analysis, a presentation of Christ and man according to analogy. The seed of this type of thinking was also in the veins of Osiander. "But Osiander said that the human nature of Christ is only a kind of link or connection through which the divine nature with its essential righteousness, wisdom, and power is channeled to the believer. His was a kind of "incarnational theology."

One of Osiander's colleagues, Stancarus, rubbed the other side of the same coin of false doctrine. "Stancarus (an ex-priest from Mantua, Italy, whose name had been Francesco) differed with Osiander on the question of whether it was the divine nature or the human nature of Christ that effected our redemption. He taught that it was the human nature alone. Both Osiander and Stancarus were wrong. Christ works our atonement and is our Mediator according to both natures, inseparably united since the incarnation." "...the *Formula* affirmed the historic and Reformation teaching that Christ is our Righteousness according to His entire person, both divine and human natures, by which he fulfills the law of God perfectly for us even unto death, fulfilling His heavenly Father's will in every way throughout His life, and suffering and dying in our stead, for our sin."

It thus comes as no surprise that in Article VIII a fine full statement of the personal union is given. (See 11, p. 96, Klug.) The article shows that often a study of Christ's person and Christ's work must go hand in hand not to go astray. Nor is this picky. But for those who might not care to drive so hard into the necessary details, the expression, the "whole Christ" is used. "...But that the whole Christ according to both natures is our righteousness." Today we say beware of reductionism.

Paragraph 7 of Klug, p. 839 is notable. "We believe, teach, and confess that for the maintenance of pure doctrine concerning the righteousness of faith before God special diligence should be given to the *particulis exclusivis* (exclusive particles, or words of exclusion), that is, to the following words of the holy Apostle Paul by which the merit of Christ is kept wholly apart from our works, and the glory is given to Christ alone. The holy Apostle Paul writes: "By grace," "without merit," "without the law," "without works," "not of works," etc. (Eph. 2, 8; Rom. 1:17, 3:24, 4:3ff.; Gal. 3, 11; Heb. 11.) These words altogether declare that we are justified and saved "Alone through faith in Christ." That, of course, takes us to Luther's fine translation of Galatians and Romans, especially Romans 3: 28. It also makes Coverdale's translation of Galatians and a comparison of the Prayer Book Version of the Psalms (he was instrumental) with the KJV important. See Heinz Blume, *Martin Luther, Creative Translator*. CPH. 1965. Today's question here is when righteousness is used in translation, will the reader be directed to, in his thinking, a mere quality of man or righteousness in general or the righteousness of God in the sense of holiness or the particular imputed righteousness of Christ when word and context call for it. Furthermore, when righteousness is coupled with "justice" rather than verdict or judgment

(*Mishpat*) and that Judgment often in the Gospel sense, it may very well reflect Osiander's thinking in modern dress.

It yet remains to be pointed out that the use of "faith," must be done carefully, so that the obedience of Christ is kept as the power earning forgiveness. In the Negative, the Formula rejects, 4, p. 84: "That faith does not look only upon the obedience of Christ, but upon His divine nature as it dwells and works in us, and how through such indwelling our sins are covered."

Permit another modern note that we can and should take note of Luther the translator genius. His frequent use of "*muessen*" in various forms in the second half of many psalms is not by chance. It permits and reflects a proper objective, Christ-centered framework which allows the *Gericht und Gerechtigkeit* of the Lord of the Gospel to be the central fulcrum point, just the way Article III relates the righteousness of Christ to the whole person of Christ and His work. Thus Luther often avoids the pitfall of Osiander as well as Calvinistic predestination ideas.

#### **Article IV. Of Good Works**

Although it is easy to misunderstand Major, yet in any case he was wrong, and that came about from his following the footprints of Melancthon. "... It was chiefly from the time of the Interims that he openly espoused Melancthon's wording that good works are necessary to salvation - not because they merit or effect forgiveness of sins, he admitted, but in order that salvation, achieved by grace, might be preserved and not lost by disobedience. So, such works were necessary if salvation was to be retained." p. 39.

Both sides appealed to Luther. But in his treatise *On Good Works* (1520) Luther noted that good works follow after faith and do not bear in any way on justification. As early as 1518 in the *Heidelberg Disputation* "he had pointed out that a man's good works, however shiny they might be, become injurious to a man's salvation, if he trusts in them."

Today, "put your trust in" rather than "believe in" or simply "trust" or "trust in" is a popular translation. We should be warned by the *Formula* of a possible weakness, however well meant. "Put your trust in" obviously can direct to the object of trust in certain situations. It can also direct to the subject as the source of that power, which could be man, if the context does not make it clear that God is the source. That is its weakness. It is one short step from there to trusting in man-created faith as a work of man.

It is well known how Amsdorf swung the pendulum to the other extreme against Major and Menius, asserting that good works were injurious to salvation. We all laugh - now! But the lesson to keep reason captive to the obedience of Christ is there.

2, 85: "We believe, teach, and confess also that good works are to be wholly excluded, both in the question of salvation and in the article of justification before God..."

In 4 and 5 the "thing termed" is cleared up: "In this sense the words "necessary," "should," and "must" are used in a proper and Christian manner regarding the regenerate and are by no means contrary to the pattern of sound words and statements."

"Yet the words mentioned, "necessity," and "necessary" are not to be understood as coercion, when the regenerate are under consideration, but only as the obedience due, which true believers, since they are regenerate, render not by coercion of the compulsion of the law, but of a free and willing spirit, because they are "no longer" under the law, but under grace." (Rom. 6:14; 7:6; 6:14.)

In further paragraphs the *Formula* goes on to point out, citing Romans 8:15 very finely and keeping works divorced from the matter of justification, that the regenerate "from a free spirit" do good works, the spirit has been liberated. It is what we today term evangelical motivation at its best.

#### **V. Of the law and the Gospel**

The question here is whether the Gospel is not only a preaching of grace, but also a preaching of repentance and punishment. Of course, the distinction between the Gospel in the wider and narrower sense



needed to be made. That point was made in the middle (almost incidentally since that was not the real point at issue) of the *Affirmative*, 5, p. 87. For the most part, the article uses Gospel in the narrow “proper” sense,

The necessity of distinguishing between Law and Gospel is made, “We believe, teach, and confess, that the difference between Law and Gospel is to be observed with great diligence in the churches...” Nor are they to be confused. 3, p. 87: “Therefore everything that rebukes sin is and belongs to the preaching of the Law.”

Man who has not kept the law is damned by it. (4) “But the Gospel raises up consciences with the delightful proclamation of the grace and favor of God attained through the merit of Christ.” (6) Thus the law is the handmaid, the Gospel is the king teaching of Scripture, just as the ministry of imputed righteousness is more glorious than the ministry of condemnation.

We let the *Negative* speak for itself: “Therefore we reject and count it as harmful when it is taught that the Gospel is in part a preaching of repentance and punishment, and not of grace alone. By this the Gospel is again transformed into a legal doctrine; the merit of Christ and the Holy Scripture are obscured, Christians are robbed of true comfort, and the doors are again opened for the papacy.”

The historical background is an antinomianism. It is helpful to realize the thinking behind the term: the antinomian Agricola could think “Gospel” only, (and thus contrition and repentance, even knowledge of sin, are worked by the Gospel only). “By experiencing the kindness and mercy of God the regenerate man is caused to grieve over his sins and repents.” “Agricola thus took an extremely antinomistic position, virtually rejecting out of hand the whole Old Testament, as well as all injunctions of the lives of the regenerate.” Melanchthon perhaps had been ambiguous in his use of Gospel in broad and narrow sense, but Flacius, Amsdorf, and Wigand objected to Melanchthon’s followers insisting that the Gospel in its narrow, proper sense worked contrition and rebuked sin. Luther in his time was not silent. Between 1537 and 1540 he composed 6 sets of theses against Agricola and antinomianism. Apparently there were notes of insincerity at times in Agricola’s discussions and other times. He was a writer of the Augsburg Interim 1548. Just how deep a substituting process of Gospel with law had taken him is shown by his involvement with other aberrations - the distinction between justification and sanctification, the nature of original sin, free will, and conversion.

The words of Zwingli, “In itself the Law is nothing else than a Gospel,” find their echo all too often today, such as in the Reformed Karl Barth: “The Law is the necessary form of the Gospel whose content is grace.” I have already expressed my opinion that the real reason that Luther regularly translates “covenant mercy” with “*Guete*” is a proper distinction of Gospel from Law, as reflected in the Christmas message: “Peace on earth, good will toward man.” *Barmherzigkeit* could be a “floater” by comparison, while *Guete* is more specific Gospel, not the evil of man, and thus surely, not salvation by the works of man.

### **Article X. Of Church Rites.**

If Article V on Law and Gospel is notably basic but coming from a background at first glance seemingly lighter, Article X at first glance might seem light, but its background was heavy indeed. When we remember that the “Adiaphoristic” controversy started early with the Interim of 1548 its principals were Melanchthon and Flacius, it was one of the most bitter of the controversies, and in fact had to do with much more than mere rites by themselves, but with the very core of faith, then its worthiness in the *Formula* is granted. One would dare say Luther would have behaved differently than Melanchthon after the Smalcald War of 1547. But historians seem to spotlight fear in Melanchthon - for himself and the church - rather than confession of either the core of faith or a fuller confession as the dominant force. Here the *Formula* comes closest to condemning the practice of unionism directly, rather than by its living testimony of affirmation and negations. “The spirit of indifference and religious fellowship without doctrinal agreement (the latter sometimes called unionism) had their beginnings with Melanchthon, as far as the Lutheran church is concerned.” In simpler language, the church simply must say: “No!” when called for, to things being shoved down its throat in practice and to practice, if it is to guard and confess the truth. Flacius was quick to point it out.

“It is, of course, to be realized that the rites imposed by the Catholics in the Interim were not all adiaphora nor were they divorced from the Roman Church or the articles of faith. So he (Melanchthon) worked

on the basis of a compromise, one that seemed to leave the chief Reformation articles intact while demanding compliance on papal and episcopal recognition of the bishops and hierarchy, as well as the Romish rites and sacraments.” “The stipulations of the Leipzig Interim were not drastically different from the Augsburg Interim. It included recognition of papal authority and Romish ceremonies, for example, in connection with Baptism (sprinkling with salt and exorcism), confirmation by bishops, extreme unction, Corpus Christi processions, and fasting rules. But worst of all was the ambivalent language on central articles like justification by faith alone.”

“I have sinned in this matter and ask forgiveness of God.” was the later statement of Melancthon, in 1556. He said it after the “Peace” of Augsburg 1555 giving Lutherans free status before the law. The fear for the outward existence of the church was no longer so acute, but the spirit of compromise and indifference bore fruits in measure until the Formula itself. “In view of the fact that ours is a day when religious unionism and syncretism are rife in the churches, it is this 10<sup>th</sup> article of the Formula of Concord which has become the veritable citadel for our times for which we often despised and slandered for our unswerving loyalty to the unaltered Augsburg Confession cannot thank praise and exalt God enough.” (*Der Concordienformel Kern und Stern*. P. 25.)

Although the article itself may indeed be called skeletal, still it is a model of writing, distinguishing between adiaphora and the confession of the Gospel, as well as being careful to preserve Christian liberty. If there would be one thing more that we could wish, it would be specific examples in the article itself on the impositions of the Catholics. But that would be running the very risk of locking in the Flacius-Melancthon flavor of the controversy, rather than setting forth the issues for all times.

The first paragraph of affirmation reminds us ceremonies are not per se divine worship. Indeed, of themselves they may be adiaphora, but Scripture is never guilty of merely talking externally.

The second paragraph reminds us the congregation has the authority according to the occasion to change ceremonies.

Levity and offense must be guarded against, says paragraph three.

At the time of persecution when a full (“clear and constant”) confession is demanded of us, it should be given by not yielding to enemies in indifferent matters. It is then no longer a neutral matter but concerns the truth of the Gospel, Christian liberty, the sanctioning of public idolatry, as a-so the prevention of offense. The succession of bible passages is interesting: freedom in Christ, no concord of light with darkness, prohibition to be not again entangled in the yoke of bondage. Gal. 5: 1 2 Cor 6: 14. Gal. 2: 5.

Condemnation for having merely more or less ceremonies than others should not be made

The negative follows, in general, the pattern of the positive. We quote the heart of the scene in paragraph three: (Condemned) “Again, that in time of persecutions, when a clear confession is required (L.), one may accede to the enemies of the truth, and enter into agreement with them in matters neutral and ceremonial.”

Today, many a question of modern casuistry could be discussed here. Entering such discussions might be the question whether at “times of persecution” is of primary emphasis here, or whether the following phrase “clear and constant” is the underlying principle calling for a Gospel confession. At any rate, this author commends the WELS for not accepting the ILCW Lectionary as such. The book *A Commentary on the New Lectionary* by Sloyan, revealing the Catholic origins, and modern, liberal Historical-critical method Catholic thinking of the original, is absolutely terrifying. Sloyan’s credentials for “being in the know” are impressive. To put it briefly, according to him one can not say anyone will be damned. One can not say Christ is the one way to salvation. One can not say that everyone will not finally be saved. That is a gigantic hippopotamus to clean up.

Of the articles we have reviewed thus far, there is a true, permeating Christ-centeredness. I think that simple thought can and should be used in today’s ecumenical and unionistic world. Of Christ, through Christ, and to Christ are all things.

## **XII. (First Part) (Baptism)**

It is typically modern that the Anabaptists thought of Christ as (merely) possessing “more gifts of the Holy Spirit” than others, and these gifts used to becloud the great gift of faith in Christ our righteousness and the miracle of Baptism.

Infant Baptism is rejected because the sinfulness of children of regenerate parents is not seen, and thus the entire doctrine of original sin put aside.

With those misdirectings and aberrations, the key point is often lost and thus the negation of the Formula: “That our righteousness before God rests not only on the unique merit of Christ, but on our renewal and thus on our own piety and the life which we live.”

The Scriptures teach a covenant theology of their own. But there is always the danger of man twisting it into too narrow a channel. Thus (condemned): “They hold that the promise extends only to those who keep God’s covenant and do not despise it.” Cf. the last paragraph.

Today, certainly one can detect from the Formula what a neglect of the teaching of Baptism often involves - a modern affinity, despite different backgrounds, between Pentecostalism (gifts of the Spirit), Catholicism (a “new monasticism” as righteousness), and the Reformed (their covenant theology of the elect versus the non-elect).

### **VII VIII Of the Lord’s Supper. Of the Person of Christ.**

Articles VII and VIII are closely related. “Misrepresentation, speaking with forked tongue, was the name of the game in the Crypto-Calvinistic Controversy.” “It was not only the Sacrament that came under fire. The person of Christ also became a target for rationalistic reductionism by Zwingli and Calvin and their followers.”

“Calvin consistently upheld the God-man status of Jesus Christ. But, on basis of the principle that the finite is not capable of the infinite, Calvinism had also just as consistently denied the full communication of divine attributes to Christ according to His human nature ... Reformed theologians have regularly considered such bestowal to be of limited scope, that is, that Christ possesses the divine prerogatives only bodily to His divine nature... ‘In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily’ (Col. 2:9). Accordingly, Lutheran theology repudiates as false and unscriptural the Calvinistic teaching that the ascended Christ is to be limited to a localized inclusion or seclusion at the right hand of God.”

“Luther remonstrated against such delimiting of Christ’s power, stating that the right hand of God is everywhere; it is the right hand of power, and Scriptures surely teach that Christ, the undivided God-man fulfills His promise to be everywhere literally. Dimensions of space, time, and motion, are not impediments - even as regards His human nature - for Him who is the almighty God. Therefore, in the Sacrament there is no insuperable hurdle which Christ must overcome to give us His true body and blood in His own supernatural, almighty way.”

“It goes without saying that the doctrine of the person of Christ impinged closely on the Lord’s Supper, and vice versa.”

“Calvin had revealed in his acceptance of the ‘Consensus of Zurich’, also called the ‘Consensus Tigurinus’ (1549), that his position and that of Zwingli on the Lord’s Supper were compatible.”

“But Melancthon was different from Luther when it came to outspoken, frank avowal of inward thoughts. Luther always wore his heart on his sleeve.”

“One of the earliest orthodox Lutheran pastors to speak out against the encroaching pro-Calvinistic interpretation of the Lord’s Supper was Westphal of Hamburg. As early as 1552 he noted how deep was the inroad into Lutheran churches and theology. Others, like Chemnitz and Moerlin, took a stand against Hardenberg, pastor in Bremen for his Crypto-Calvinism.

“But in Wittenberg the tide flowed towards compromise ... and the two ringleaders, Melancthon’s son-in-law, Kaspar Peucer, professor of medicine, and personal physician for Prince August, and Georg Cracow, professor of jurisprudence and personal counselor to the Elector, were able to gain the ear of their patron and sympathy for the “new theology” in Wittenberg.”

“Melanchthon knew the real Luther and the mind of Luther, they argued. This new statement was also known as the *Corpus Philippicum*, (1560), and it became the official teaching or confessional base for all Saxony.” Opposition was immediate and intense. Two students expelled from Wittenberg. Whole faculties like those at Jena and Weimar stood opposed.

“What transpired in Wittenberg was duplicated in other Lutheran territories, some of which were eventually and entirely lost to the Lutheran cause, as in the Palatinate (Heidelberg). But elsewhere there was stiff, knowledgeable resistance. Moerlin and Chemnitz, among others, were successful in withstanding the influx of the Calvinistic view on the Sacrament in northern Germany, particularly against a confirmed pro-Calvinist like Pastor Hardenberg of Bremen. Yet the sympathies in this famous free city of the old Hanseatic League still were for the most part against the strict Lutheran position. In Wuerttemberg it was Brenz who became the stalwart defender of the Real Presence of Christ’s true body and blood in the Sacrament. There were many others, for example, Chytraeus in Rostock and Andreae at the University of Tuebingen, in Swabia. It was Moerlin who gave the lie to the “Heidelberg Fable” (*Heidelberg Landluege*) which portrayed Luther as having confessed to Melanchthon late in his life that he probably had been too severe in his castigation of the Sacramentarians and the Calvinistic position on the Lord’s Supper.

With the new Wittenberg catechism of 1571 and Elector August persuaded, the Calvinistic take-over was all but complete when in 1574 the “*Exegesis perspicua*” came out clearly supporting the Calvinist position. But through a misdelivered letter the Elector’s eyes were opened and it was apple cart upset. “Professors and pastors who had been deposed were reinstated, and the land rejoiced over the reintroduction of Luther’s writings and Lutheran theology. From this point on it was men like Andreae, Chemnitz and Selnecker who became the trusted advisers of the elector in matters theological.”

The introduction to the article is really an unmasking. 1 Corinthians 10: 16 indicating four elements in the Lord’s Supper will not budge, no matter what facades are put up cryptically. The first paragraph of the affirmation is simple and beautiful: “We believe, teach, and confess that the body and blood of Christ are truly and essentially present and are truly distributed and received with the bread and wine in Holy Communion.”

The article, points out Luther, had taught the foundations: Jesus both God and man in one person; God’s right hand is everywhere ... capable of these things; God’s Word is not false; the real presence of the body and blood by sacramental union. The unworthy also receive the true body and blood. And the unworthy guest is the unbeliever - John 3: 18. Worthiness consists solely in the most holy obedience and perfect merit of Christ...not at all through our virtues, our internal and external preparations.

The *Negative* rejects transsubstantiation, and unmasked any “cryptic” presentation: 5. “That the body of Christ is not received with the mouth in the Holy Sacrament together with the bread, but that the bread and wine are received only by mouth, while the body of Christ is received only spiritually by faith.” Rejected as blasphemy is the thought that God can’t cause the Real Presence, and the Word, not faith creates and causes the presence. (14) “On the basis of the simple words of the testament of Christ we believe in a true, but supernatural, eating of the body of Christ and drinking of His blood - which human senses and reason cannot comprehend. But we have taken our reason captive to obey Christ, as in all articles of faith. Such mystery is revealed only in the Word and comprehended solely by faith.”

Concerning the Person of Christ, it is important to note the state of the controversy: “The principal question wasp whether the divine and human natures *realiter* that is, in deed and truth, have a mutual sharing with each other for the sake of the personal unions sharing also the attributes of each in the person of Christ, and how far this sharing extends.”

The *Affirmative* states: “That the divine and human natures are personally united in Christ, so that there are not two Christs, one the Son of God, the other the Son of man, Luke 1: 31 - 35; Rom. 9:5.” It is still a mark of Calvinism to separate in practice the natures.

After indicating that each nature retains its essential properties and noting those properties: “This union is not such a joining or combination, that neither nature has anything personally in common with the others that is, because of the personal unions as if one laminated two boards together, where neither gives anything to the

others nor receives from the other. Here is, rather, the very highest communion which God has with man...The ancient church fathers explained this union and communion union of natures by the comparison with glowing iron and the union of body and in man.”

“Therefore the Son of God has truly suffered for us, but in the attribute of the human nature, which He assumed into oneness with His divine persons and made it His own.” “We are purchase with God’s own blood,” 1 Cor. 2: 8; Acts 20: 28.

Nor did the Son of God not possess his divine majesty during the humiliation. “He did without it” and “did not show His majesty at all times.” As God and man all things are now under His feet.

The second last paragraph indicates the importance of the correct teachings on the Person of Christ and communication of attributes for the Lord’s Supper (VII).

The last paragraph indicates that indeed, there is nothing new under the sun: “Through this our doctrines faith and confession the person of Christ is not divided, as Nestorius did. He denied the communication of attributes, i.e., the true sharing of the properties of both natures in Christ, and thus divided the person, as Luther declares in the book on the councils. Neither does our pious doctrine (L.) fuse the natures with their attributes into one essence, as Eutyches mistakenly did. Nor is the human nature in the person of Christ denied or abolished. Again, neither nature is changed into the others but Christ is and remains God and man in all eternity in one undivided person. This is the greatest mystery after the Holy Trinity, as the apostle testifies (1 Tim. 3: 16), on which alone rest all (L.) our comfort, life, and blessedness.

The *Negative* largely is covered by the *Positive*, yet several points stand out. The “Straw man” set up by the opposition is condemned: “That the human nature of Christ has been in space to all places in heaven and earth, a matter not even attributed to the divine nature.” The expression “share in” is to be noted in 12: (Condemned) “ That only the bare humanity suffered for us and redeemed us, and that the Son of God had no share in the suffering with the human nature in this function, as if it did not concern Him.” Also to be noted is the inadequate solution some would use in regard to the glorified Christ in 16: (Condemned) “Thus they invent a mediocre power, i.e , a power between the omnipotence of God and the power of other creatures, and this, they hold, was given to Christ according to His human nature after His exaltation, less than divine omnipotence, but greater than the power of other creatures.”

### **IX. Of the Descent of Christ to Hell**

Triumph! See 1 Pet. 3:18-20 and Col. 2: 15. Luther also noted Ps. 16 and Acts 2:24, 27. “The controversy which occurred in the Lutheran church was rather limited, gravitating around Aepinus of Hamburg.” The article speaks for itself. In deference to the fact that this subject is on the conference agenda, I will omit quoting it here.

### **XI. Of God’s Eternal Foreknowledge and Election**

It would be naive for the writers of the Formula not to see the potential threat of false doctrine in this area. They saw it and wrote well. Walther in 1877 also observed that there was no division in the Lutheran camp of 1577 but well knew the dam might break - and it did, in 1881 when the Norwegian (large) Synod led by Prof. F. A. Schmidt, who had been a member of Walther’s faculty in St. Louis, broke with the Synodical Conference. The issues were the same. We may begin that story with the man-centered humanism of Erasmus as contrasted with Luther and his *Bondage of the Will*. Man’s salvation, including God’s election and man’s conversion is entirely by grace, from start to finish. If man is damned, it is entirely man’s own fault. Why one and not the other? Let not man’s logic determine the doctrine. “Here one must put his finger on his lips and maintain silence; for we do not know.”

“So Luther rejected on the one hand the synergistic tendencies, which traced the reason for man’s salvation to something in man’s own volitional capacity and, on the other hand, the answer of Calvin which solved the dilemma by positing two sovereign wills in God, one to the election of some by sovereign decrees, and the other to the reprobation, or damnation, of the rest by another sovereign decree.”

“Calvin himself believed that before the fall of man into sin God has purposed the reprobation or damnation of the greater portion of mankind. This was known as supralapsarianism. Most of his followers, however, opted for a somewhat milder view, namely that after the fall it was the decision of God to pass some by, while he elected others. This was known as infralapsarianism.”

The strife of Zanchi of Marbach in this matter (1561-1563) appeared small perhaps, Apparently settled in 1563 by the Strasbourg Formula, a document apparently written by Andreae. But one can not help but note the providence of the Lord to include this article and its companion, (II) On Free Will, in the *Formula*. Thank God that it was included! It reminds one of the Osiander justification situation. “The role of the latter (Andreae) at this time may also explains in part why it was held to be imperative to include an article in the *Formula of Concord*.” “When that document (*Formula*) appeared in 1577 Marbach in turn became one of its strongest supporters and promoters, and Zanchi openly acknowledged his pro-Calvinistic feelings.” Andreae had come a long way from the earlier diplomacy in the long schooling of the Lord, and not only realized that Bible based union was the only right kind, but used the schooling and gifts the Lord gave him, not the least of which was the spotting of and zeroing in on a genuine issue.

“Synergism, it must be seen, is an effort not only to credit man with powers to cooperate in his conversion, but also an effort to locate the reason why some are saved and others not in man himself. Calvinism, while upholding the *sola gratia*, a teaching of Scripture, denies the universality of God’s grace (contrary to hundreds of passages, including John 3. 16). In an effort to show that what God intends is also that which finally happens because He is sovereign. And that thus the eventual damnation of some must be found in the ternal (sic) intent of the sovereign Lord.” (Klug)

The article itself is a model of writing - if indeed, the Word of God and his gracious good will are kept in mind rather than to have the wisdom of the flesh as base. Much has been covered by the above remarks - let me urge full reading. The Affirmative gets off on the right foot when it makes an early distinction between foreknowledge and election. This distinction seems so elementary but is very important. If it would be kept in mind, many a false doctrine could be avoided. The foreknowledge extends to the good and bad - universal grace. The election only over the godly! Within the Word is the garden of grace - predestination is not to be researched in the secret counsel of God. The Word leads to Christ. Thus: God’s election is by God’s grace in Christ. “We must not make a judgment regarding our election to eternal life according to our reason. The revealed will of God holds Christ before us as “The Book of Life.”

The *Negative* condemns false methodology - when this doctrine is not treated according to the Word and will of God, but according to reason and the prompting of a despicable Satan. One can not marvel enough concerning the clarity of the article. The cause (latin *causa*) and the comfort are spotlighted at the end of the *Negative* and the summary. Condemned: “Again, that the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ are not solely the cause of God’s election, but that a cause exists in us also, for which God predestined us unto eternal life.” “All these are blasphemous and horrendous false teachings, by which Christians are deprived of all comfort which they have in the holy Gospel and In the use of holy sacraments. Therefore they should not be tolerated in the churches of God.”

### **Article II. Free Will**

Erasmus had attacked Luther’s position of free will in order to try to redeem himself in the eyes of the Romanists. “While regretting Erasmus’s action, Luther thanked him for zeroing in on the crucial issue, or ‘hinge on which our discussion turns,’ namely, ‘to investigate what ability ‘free will’ has in what respect it is the subject of divine action and how it stands related to the grace of God,’ rather than on peripheral matters, like the papacy, purgatory, indulgences, and such like.”

“As long as Luther was alive he was able to keep the synergistically inclined theologians around him under control.” “But Melanchthon could never completely put down the tendencies of his humanist background. Implicit in this thinking were the inherent capabilities of the human will and its freedom to act. Again and again he posited the non-resisting will of man as a factor in conversion. The later editions of his *Loci*, as well as the

*Variata* of 1540, show him stressing man's assenting will as a third cause, besides the Holy Spirit and the word, in conversion." It is to be noted, conversion is spoken of, rather than post-conversion, another subject but a subject wherein all fruits of faith are also all traceable to God's grace.

Pfeffinger: "Man cooperates, he stated, by preparing himself for God's grace and by not resisting when grace comes to him. In 1555 Pfeffinger published his controversial treatise 'Five Questions Concerning the Liberty of the Human All.'" "To Pfeffinger's side came Strigel, professor at Jena." And soon we have the Weimar disputation (1560), at which Flacius and Strigel became the two leading participants.

"Luther had taught that man, with his God-given endowment of mind, will, and heart, is indeed a fit subject for conversion. God did not make heaven for geese!" (Indeed, Luther had noted the distinction between birds and cows, on the one hand, and humans as God's creatures, on the other hand, in explaining why God used common words to communicate to men. *D. Martin Luthers Summarien ueber die Psalmen und Ursacheh des Dolmetschens*. 1533. St. Louis edition Vol. IV, 125-137.) "But man could not in any way begin, assist, or cooperate in his conversion with his native powers." "Thus man, as regards his conversion, said Luther, is mere passive or completely passive (Weimar ed. 18, 697)."

Needless to say, it was a very tragic time. Of all the controversies, the Synergistic was the most bitter and vexing."

"Synergism is very similar to Semi-Pelagianism, which Luther had shown to be contrary to Scripture. Melancthon, therefore, had revived old heretical notions by teaching that there are 3 cooperating causes in conversion: God's grace, His Word, and the assenting will of man. Human reason has always found this viewpoint appealing. It was the *Formula of Concord*, in its 2<sup>nd</sup> article, which spoke the definitive word against this heresy, describing it fully and repudiating it unequivocally."

The *Formula*: "Holy Scriptures ascribe conversion, faith in Christ, regeneration, renewal, and all that belongs to their efficacious beginning and completion, not to the human powers of the natural free will, neither entirely, nor half, nor in any, even in the least part, but in *solidum*, that is entirely and solely, to the divine working and the Holy Spirit. (FC SD 11, 25).

In the introduction, the *Formula* takes note of four dissimilar states of the will of man: 1. Before the fall; 2. After the fall; 3. After regeneration; 4. After the resurrection of the flesh. Man's reason and intellect is blind in spiritual matters. 1 Cor. 2: 14. Therefore we also, as of ourselves, are not capable of thinking anything good, but that we are 'qualified' (NEB) is from God, 2 Cor. 3, 5. "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15: 5). "With these few words He removes all powers from the free will and ascribes all to the grace of God, so that no man could boast of anything before God, 1 Cor. 9: 16."

It certainly fits into the subject of fanaticism, for the *Negative* labels the fatalistic compulsion idea of the Stoics and Manichaeans as a *Schwarm* or delirium (L.). Of course, Pelagianism is condemned. But Semi-Pelagianism also. "We reject also the error of the Semi-Pelagians, who teach that man can make a beginning of his conversion by his own power, but that he cannot complete it without the grace of the Holy Spirit." Rejected likewise: that man after conversion can keep the law perfectly, that enthusiasm which says God works salvation without means, that the substance and essence of the Old Adam is annihilated in conversion, any statement introduced to confirm the role of natural free will in the conversion-of man, contrary to the doctrine of the grace of God.

On the other hand, the *Formula* separately speaks also of post-conversion in an important statement: "After such conversion manes regenerated will through daily penitential practice will not be inactive, but will cooperate in all the works of the Holy Ghost, which He performs through us." "...Then the new will of man is an instrument and tool of God, the Holy Spirit, so that he not only accepts grace but also cooperates in works of the Holy Ghost."

Despite the many facts, facets, and negations, what we have reviewed of the last five and one half articles suggests, in the world of ecumenism and unionism a simplicity for us in vital discussions for and with parishioners and others - the Sacraments, particularly Holy Communion (it is probably easier to discuss) and the

Third Article of Luther's Catechism, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, nor come to Him; But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel..."

## **XII. Of Other Heresies and Sects (Second Part)**

We move toward the "freer" manner of thinking and acting reprov'd. Of should we say a more "free-swinging" group? The free spirits were often antiestablishment against church, state, home. The list of leaders is many and varied: Zwingli, Melchior Hoffmann, Matthys and John of Leiden of Muenster fame. More moderate were Philips, Menno Simons, stressing the congregation of the truly regenerate. Kaspar Schwenkfeld, though only a few of his formal followers exist today, was perhaps in principle a forerunner of many a modern way of, thinking today. "Involved was a strange combination of 'spiritualism' and 'rationalism,' in which the human spirit mounted in importance over the inspired Word of God." Sebastian Frank followed in the humanism of Erasmus, and Juan de Valdes claimed direct, divine inspiration. And then there was Servetus, the Anti-Trinitarian whom Calvin burned at the stake, and Socinus and the Racovian Catechism. Their effects were not unfelt in Unitarian and Congregationalism. All generally do have things in common: subjectivism, theological meanderings, "*Traumpredigten*."

A singularly fine phrase occurs in connection with a negation. It is "in line with their powers" in regard to the activities of the government. All students of Church-State relationships will do well to take note. (Condemned) "That a Christian may not use the office of civil government in cases arising against criminals. Neither may he call upon its agents for protection and defense in line with their powers, which they have received from God." Prof. J. P. Meyer was well aware of the implications and it is evident also in his *Commentary on II Corinthians*. It seems to me that the dilemma roots of modern Church-State relationships have been stated fairly well by David Poling. Reformed Presbyterians by no means start with the two kingdoms doctrine of Luther. Nor do they in effect place the priority with the Kingdom of the Gospel. Poling says: "Much groundwork was laid for the theological support of the Revolution of 1776. For at the heart of the Presbyterian teaching was the conviction that the individual believer, when forced to make the choice of being loyal to God or yielding to a Prince or King, must choose to serve God. When this doctrine became broadly supported, it really meant the end of the Divine Right of Kings and the formation of true democracy within Church and State. The Formula hit a simple bullseye when it noted that (in contrast to the church's role of Gospel teaching) the state has its proper role, carrying out its proper role "in line with its powers" (those of the common, outward life, Greek *Bios*).

And today's modern marriages may note: (Condemned) "That married people may be divorced on account of differing (L.) faith and forsake the other to marry another of his own faith."

Paragraph 3 is basic and remains basic today, pointing to the Word as the tool of the Spirit bringing Christ to hearts. We have already quoted it. To shift ground today in dealing with the Pentecostals would be easy but vain. The reformers used the methodology of standing on and presenting Scripture also in regard to all the enthusiastic sects. We do well to follow.

## **VI. Of the Third Use of the Law**

Disobedience and rebellion against God's laws in church, state, and home, has an ally in the sometimes setting aside, today, in supposed "evangelical" fervor, of God's law in general. Again, one can not but think of the rejection of the command to baptize by some who consider themselves to be of pentecostal fire.

The Formula points out that antinomianism fails to cope with the lingering problem of the Old Adam and all it involves. "In the spirit of their minds the believers are engaged in a constant battle against the flesh, that is, against the corrupted nature and manner, which adheres to us unto death. On account of the Old Adam, who still abides in the understanding, will, and all powers of man, it is necessary that the law of God should always light their way before them..."

Indeed, the law of God is not incompatible with the concept of the fruits of the spirit.



“Thus the Law is and remains the same, both for the penitent and impenitent, for the regenerate and unregenerate, namely, the unalterable Will of God. The difference, where obedience is concerned, is found in men, among whom the one, who is not yet regenerate, does what is required by the Law out of compulsion and unwilling, even as the regenerate does what is demanded of him according to the flesh. But the believer does without compulsion and with a willing spirit, what no threat of the Law could ever extort from him, because he is born again.”

Thus the *Negative* condemns antinomianism as adverse to Christian discipline and true piety. Free thinking, in summary, can probably be characterized in most cases briefly and fairly thus: the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

### I. Original Sin

Strigel the synergist set the trap, and Flacius fell into it, calling original sin of the “substance” of human nature. He would not retreat. His purpose was well meant - to guard against synergism in conversion. To the end of his life he insisted he was being loyal to Luther, but therein is also a lesson: Scripture alone - and throughout. I suspect that much has been and could be written on the relationship of Luther and Flacius to the subject and to each other. I have already pointed out that Allbeck, *Studies in the Lutheran Confessions*, P. 59 - 62 is essential reading for the understanding of the different situations the two men faced. It is noted early then, that Luther’s name is referred to and that he is thus “interpreted correctly” (Klug) in 10 and 11 of the *Negative*, which we shall quote shortly.

The question: “Whether original sin is to be identified without distinction with the corrupted nature, substance, and essence of man, or perhaps with the noblest and best part of his being, namely the rational soul itself in its highest state and powers; or, whether there is a difference between the substance, nature, essence, body, and soul of man also after the fall, and original sin, so that nature is one thing and original sin another, which adheres to the corrupted nature and defiles it.”

1. “We believe, teach, and confess that a difference exists between the nature of man, not only as he was originally created by God, pure and holy, without sin, but also as we possess it now after the fall, namely between original sin and our nature, which after the fall still is and remains a creature of God and that this difference is as great as the difference between the work of God and the devil.”
2. “We believe, teach, and confess also, that this distinction is to be held with the greatest diligence. The teaching, namely, that no difference exists between our human nature and original sin, is in conflict with the chief articles of our Christian faith: creation, redemption, sanctification, and the resurrection of the flesh, and cannot be harmonized with them.”

“For God is not the Creator only of the body and soul of Adam and Eve before the fall, but also of our body and soul after the fall. Even though they are corrupted, God recognizes us as His creation, as it is written in Job 10:8: “Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about.” Deut. 32: 6; Is. 45: 9; 54: 5; 64: 8; Acts 17:25-28; Ps. 100:3; 139:14; Eccl. 12: 1.”

“We believe, teach, and confess furthermore that original sin is not a slight corruption, but one so deep-seated in human nature, that nothing in the body and soul of man has remained sound or incorrupt, whether in his internal or external powers, but as the church sings: ‘All mankind fell in Adam’s fall, One common sin infects us all.’”

“This unspeakable harm cannot be recognized by reason, but only with the aid of God’s Word. Nor can anyone separate such corruption from the nature of man except God alone. This will be accomplished completely through death, in the resurrection, when the nature which we now bear will rise without original sin and live eternally, wholly separated and removed from sin, as it is written in Job 19: 26, 27: “I shall be clothed with this my skin and in my flesh shall I see God. I will gaze upon Him myself, and my eyes shall behold Him.”

We quote paragraphs 10 and 11 referred to above concerning correctly quoting and interpreting Luther: “Luther calls this original sin ‘natural, personal, or essential evil’, not intending that ‘man’s nature, person, or essence’ is itself ‘original sin’ without distinction, but that these words should distinguish be-original sin (sic), which has become infixed into man’s nature, and the other sins, which are called actual sins.”

“For original sin is not a sin which one commits; it is a condition infixed into the nature, substance, and essence of man. Therefore, even if no evil thought should arise in the heart of corrupted man, if no idle word were spoken, nor evil deed committed, his nature would yet be corrupted by original sin, which we inherit from sinful seed as a fountain of all actual sins, showing itself in evil thoughts, words, and deeds, as it is written: “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,” etc. Again: “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.”

In the following three paragraphs, among other things, 9 good advice concerning the usage of the terms involved is given. 12. “It is well to take note of the variant conceptions of the word ‘nature,’ by which the Manichaeans bemantle their error and confuse many innocent people.. For at times the essence of man is meant, as when it is said: God created human nature. At times ‘nature’ signifies the good or bad character of a thing which inheres in its nature or essence, as when it is said: It is the serpent’s nature to strike, and it is man’s nature and character to sin and to be sinful. Here the word ‘nature’ does not designate the substance of man but something which adheres to his nature or substance.”

13. “As to the Latin words *substantia* and *accidens*, since they are not Biblical terms, also strange to the common man, they should not be used in sermons before the general unlearned public; the simple folk should rather be spared these terms.”

“But in the academies and among the learned such words are rightly retained in the discussion of original sin. Here they are well rightly retained in the discussion of original sin. Here they are well known and used without any misunderstanding to designate the essence of each things, and what is to be distinguished as an added quality.”

The concluding paragraph is appropriate. Any given doctrine is of God or the devil. It is no different with the teachings of original sin and the teachings surrounding that teaching. “The difference between God’s work and the devil’s is most clearly demonstrated in this way. The devil cannot create substance; he can only by God’s permission corrupt the substance created by God in aspects not related to the substance (*per accidens*, L.).”

Surely, the ecumenical and non-unionistic *Formula* is of the Lord and to the glory of the Lord. Our prayer is that it not be forgotten, but used in a world which is just as “*Schwaermerisch*” today in 1977 as it was in 1577.