

# MELANCHTHON'S DOCTRINAL COMPROMISES

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Philip Melanchthon, the great German humanist and reformer, was born at Bretten in the Palatinate on February 16, 1497. His father was Georg Schwarzerd, armorer of Count Palatine Philip; his mother, Barbara Reuter, daughter of Hans Reuter, who at the time of her marriage was Burgomaster of Bretten. Both parents were pious and god-fearing people. Georg Schwarzerd originally hailed from Heidelberg. Here the fine gifts of the boy attracted the attention of Count Palatine Philip, who drew him to his court and then had him trained at Nuernberg in the trade and art of armor making. In this art Georg soon became so proficient that even Emperor Maximilian had a suit of armor made by him, which served him well in numerous battles. Beside Philip, the first-born, Georg and Barbara Schwarzerd were blessed with four other children, a son, Georg, and three daughters. Philip was first sent to the city school of Bretten, but since a dangerous plague broke out at this school, the grandfather Reuter had his highly gifted grandson transferred to the private school of a pedagogue by the name of Johann Unger. Under the excellent tutelage of this fine teacher and drill master young Philip received an excellent training in a number of disciplines, especially in the Latin language. Even in his adult years Philip Melanchthon still spoke in glowing terms of this most wonderful schoolmaster, and said of him: "He loved me as a son and I loved him as a father."

In October, 1507, both the father and the maternal grandfather of Melanchthon died only a few days apart. The grandmother, Elizabeth Reuter, now moved from Bretten to Pforzheim, her birthplace. She took three of her grandsons, Philip and Georg Schwarzerd and Johann Reuter, with her in order to continue their education there.

Elizabeth Reuter, by the way, was the sister of the famous Humanist, Johann Reuchlin, who was at this time judge at Stuttgart. Reuchlin frequently came over to Pforzheim to visit his sister and the talented son of his niece, Philip Schwarzerd, to whom he took a great liking. There was at this time an excellent school at Pforzheim, at which another famous pedagogue of his time, Georg Simler von Wimpfen, taught. Melanchthon became one of his outstanding students. Simler was an excellent Latin grammarian and knew Greek and Hebrew, a rare thing in those days. Some of his best scholars, among them Melanchthon, Simler gave private instruction in Greek and also introduced them into, and trained them in, Latin poetry, and explained to them some of the comedies of Philip's great-uncle, Reuchlin. Apparently Reuchlin recognized very early the excellent gifts of his grand-nephew and encouraged him to ever greater efforts in his studies. Also he helped him otherwise by the gift of numerous books, among them a copy of the Bible. It was also Reuchlin who induced Philip Schwarzerd to change his name to the Greek form, Melanchthon, the name by which he is known in the pages of history even to our own time.

After two years at Pforzheim, Melanchthon, in the fall of 1509, transferred to the University of Heidelberg, to the natal city of his father and other relatives. He was quartered in the home of Pallas Spangel, a Doctor of Theology, who though still adhering to the old faith, nevertheless, seems to have been a thoroughly evangelical Christian. Melanchthon, here at Heidelberg, took up the study of philosophy, rhetoric, astronomy, and of course, Greek. His knowledge of Greek was soon so outstanding that he excelled all other students in this branch and was known as "the Greek." Since the lectures at the University were not satisfactory to Melanchthon, he did most of his work by reading and studying privately for himself. He had developed his style to such an extent that he on occasions was asked to write orations for the professors, which were delivered publicly by them. It was here at Heidelberg that he wrote his *Fundamentals of Greek Grammar* for some of his students, which later on was put into print. It was at Heidelberg also that Melanchthon received his first academic degree, that of Bachelor of Arts, June, 1511, at only 14 years of age. His petition for the next academic degree, that of M.A., was turned down by the authorities of the University, because of his extreme youth, since the conferring of this degree carried with it the privilege of teaching at the University. Partly

because of his disappointment over this refusal and because the University of Heidelberg didn't have much to offer him any more, Melanchthon on the advice of his former teacher, Georg Simler, now professor of law at the University of Tuebingen, and of his great-uncle Reuchlin, matriculated at the University of Tuebingen in September, 1512. Here at the University of Tuebingen, which had been founded only 35 years before Melanchthon's entrance, a new refreshing and exhilarating academic spirit was much in evidence, to which spirit young Philip readily and quickly responded. For in spite of the fact that Tuebingen was officially still a scholastic university, the new spirit of humanism was making itself felt there very strongly. Melanchthon here took up anew the study of dialectics, especially after he had learned from Agricola what a fine trainer of the human mind this discipline really is, especially if you use it for a practical purpose, namely, as the foundation for rhetoric. Besides dialectics and rhetoric Philip also took up the study of jurisprudence, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. The study of all of these disciplines Melanchthon climaxed by the study of theology. We don't know whether it was ever the wish of his parents that Philip should become a theologian; we know for sure, however, that it wasn't his wish and plan. Yet the insatiable thirst for an encyclopedic knowledge sent him also into the lecture halls of the theologians. But what he got there amounted to little. Thus one of the lecturers, a monk, claimed that even though the whole Bible were lost, you could reconstruct it again out of the "Ethics" of Aristotle. So, since the lecturers and sermons did not give him that which he sought, Melanchthon again turned to reading, perusing, and studying eagerly everything possible and impossible. But since these readings did not satisfy him either, since most of the books were written by scholastics, Melanchthon invariably would turn again to the reading of that one book that Reuchlin had presented to him as a gift, a copy of the Latin Bible in octavo form, which Philip carried with him wherever he went. This copy of the Latin Bible, the Vulgate, soon became Melanchthon's most precious possession, for in it his eagerly searching spirit found what he needed, the eternal truths of God, that alone can and do make man free. After having thus kept himself more than busy for a year and four months, Melanchthon thought that it would not be presumptuous if he again petitioned the university authorities for the promotion to the degree of master of the arts. It was granted this time. And on January 25, 1514, Melanchthon, ranking first of eleven candidates, was given the degree of master of arts. The new degree gave to Philip Melanchthon the privilege and the right (license) to lecture and to teach. Let us not overlook the fact that Melanchthon at this time was less than seventeen years of age. Soon he was lecturing to ever-growing audiences on Virgil, Terence, Cicero, Livy, and other Latin authors. It was almost self-evident that Melanchthon during all this time kept right on with his studies of the Greek and Hebrew languages and literature. In the bitter strife which broke out about this time between his uncle, J. Reuchlin, and the converted Jew, John Pfefferkorn, of Cologne, who demanded that all Hebrew writings excepting the Old Testament should be destroyed, Emperor Maximilian I had appealed to Reuchlin for an opinion. Reuchlin condemned the demands of Pfefferkorn. It was quite natural that Philip would fully side with his grand-uncle, support him and help in the defense against the attacks of Pfefferkorn and the man behind him, the Dominican prior and chief-inquisitor Jakob von Hochstraten. For the famous collection of letters defending Reuchlin, the *Epistulae Virorum Clarorum*, Melanchthon wrote one of the prefaces. For the sequel of this collection, the satirical *Epistulae Virorum Obscurorum*, Melanchthon is supposed to have contributed the most comical of all the letters, "The Wanderings and Sufferings of Magister Philip Schlauraff of Cologne." During all this time Melanchthon quite naturally was ever busy with his lectures on Latin and Greek authors and in the writing of numerous pamphlets and books, among the latter the outstanding one being his Greek Grammar, which came off the press in Tuebingen in 1518, when Melanchthon was only 21 years of age. Indeed, the fame of Philip Melanchthon as an outstanding scholar, lecturer, and author was so great and was spread so far and wide that even the great Oracle of Humanism, Erasmus of Rotterdam, as early as 1516 wrote a eulogy on Melanchthon in glowing words. In the face of this fame and splendid reputation of Philip Melanchthon, what was more natural but that his grand-uncle, J. Reuchlin, when the Duke Elector Frederick the Wise of Saxony asked him to propose the name of two outstanding Greek and Hebrew scholars for his newly founded University of Wittenberg, proposed the name of his favorite nephew? The proposal was acted upon by the Elector. Philip accepted. And so in August, 1518, Melanchthon left Tuebingen, and traveled by horse back, arriving at Wittenberg on the morning of August 25. Already the very next day he was installed in his office as the first

professor of the Greek language. Four days later, on August 29, he entered on the duties of his office with an inaugural address entitled: *De corrigendis adolescentiae studiis*, with which he aroused great admiration of all who heard him.

Melanchthon's arrival in Wittenberg seemed to imbue the University with new life. He presented a clarion challenge to lead forth in education, and within a remarkably short time the outward effects could be seen. Luther said, "At the university they are as industrious as ants." Subjects that were devoted almost exclusively to scholasticism became fewer, studies in languages increased, new lectures on the classics were offered, and interest in Biblical sources awakened. Philip sought to lead the students to the sources of theology by means of logic, language, and classical literature, and they responded readily to his enthusiasm and sincerity. From all over Germany and from foreign countries young men came to hear him. In the winter semester of 1518 only 120 students were enrolled; the following semester the enrollment doubled. By the summer of 1520, 333 were on the official rolls; in the autumn of 1520 Spalatin reported that 600 were present at one of Philip's lectures. Another observer remarked, "Sometimes Melanchthon had nearly two thousand hearers, among whom were princes, counts, barons, and other persons of rank. He taught over a wide range of subjects, including Hebrew, Latin, and Greek grammar, rhetoric, physics, and philosophy, thus serving the common weal of church and state, and in teaching accomplished as much in all his subjects as other professors did in one." So genuine was the success of the "Grecian" that Luther exclaimed: "No one living is gifted with such talents. He is to be esteemed. God himself will despise anyone that despises this man!" Most important of all was Melanchthon's interest in theology. Conversations with Luther and wide readings stimulated his study. The doctrine of justification by faith he readily accepted, for he brought to it a compatible knowledge and experience. By September 1519 he had already completely rejected the fundamental Roman doctrine of transubstantiation. It was the debate at Leipzig in the summer of 1519, however, which dramatically thrust Philip into the forefront of the evangelical movement. He described himself modestly as an "idle spectator," but his debate and his thesis on transubstantiation placed him squarely beside Luther in a dispute which was little short of open revolt.

Melanchthon called himself an "idle spectator," and indeed, he did not participate in the debate, but he kept the Wittenbergers supplied with a constant stream of information and arguments to use against Eck and his party. At times he did seem indeed to be one of the disputants, so that finally Eck, angered by this activity of Philip, protested, "Keep silent, Philip! Mind your own business. Don't bother me!" At another time Eck tried to discredit him by calling him the "very arrogant nephew of Reuchlin." Luther felt quite differently about him. To Spalatin he wrote, "I return to Philip, whom no Eck can make me hate. In my profession I count nothing better than his favorable testimony. This one man's opinion and authority mean more to me than many thousands of miserable Ecks. I would not hesitate to yield my opinion to this ingenious grammarian if he should disagree with me, even though I am a master of arts, philosophy, and theology, and adorned with nearly all of Eck's titles. I have often done this, and do it daily, on account of the divine gift, bountifully blessed, which God has placed in this frail vessel, so contemptible to Eck." Four days after the debate Melanchthon wrote a letter to Oecolampadius in which he described the debate as an attempt to distinguish the early theology of Christ from the recent Aristotelian innovation of scholasticism, and when Eck heard of this letter and its content he viciously attacked Philip in a venomous reply from Leipzig to "the Wittenberg grammarian who knows some Greek and Latin," and tried to show that Melanchthon falsely reported, or did not understand, the fine points of the debate. He satirized Melanchthon as "the Wittenberg teacher of languages who fared like the shoemaker who wanted to know more than his last, the literalist, the upstart who tried to assume the office of the university of Paris, and the dusty schoolmaster." In August Melanchthon wrote the answer to this vicious attack of Eck in a letter to Johann Lang. With a clear insight into the basic issues he reviewed the Leipzig dispute, sustained the arguments of Luther, and enunciated the principle of scriptural authority in unmistakable terms. "I greatly revere," he writes, "the historic leaders of the church, those illustrious vindicators of Christian doctrine. However, the holy fathers often have conflicting views, and when they do, they are to be judged by Scripture, not vice versa. Sacred Scripture has simplicity and unity that can be comprehended by anyone who will carefully follow the text. For this reason, we are told to search the Word. It is an anvil on which to test the doctrines and views of men." "The scholastics," Melanchthon continued, "have turned Scripture into a Proteus,

a sea god, who can change at will; they have metamorphosed the Word of God into a word of man. But why go on? The divine canonical Scriptures alone are inspired and true and pure in all things.”

Following the Leipzig debate Melanchthon produced a series of critical writings which struck at the very foundation of the church’s pretensions. However, he desired not to institute a rebellion but to restore his church to its pristine purity.

For the Bachelor of Theology Melanchthon posted on the university bulletin board 24 brief statements on justification by faith and on a number of basic Roman errors, which he stood ready to defend publicly regardless of consequences. Of these Luther wrote in a letter to Staupitz: “You have seen, or will see, Philip’s theses. They are bold, but they are certainly true. He defended them in such a way that he seemed to us all a veritable wonder, and such he is. Christ willing, he will surpass many Martins and will be a mighty foe of the devil and of the scholastic theology. He knows their tricks, and also the Rock, Christ.”

For these 24 theses Melanchthon received the degree of Bachelor of Theology, formally bestowed upon him on September 9, 1519. It was the only theological degree that Melanchthon ever accepted. Let us note that at this time he was only 22 years of age.

To show you the uncompromising stand which Melanchthon took as of 1520 let me quote a number of propositions or theses which he composed for an academic disputation in July, 1520. “Justification is solely by faith. Love proceeds from faith. Faith and love are the work of God, not of natural man. The mass is no sacrifice. Baptism helps, or is profitable to, the baptized only, the Lord’s Supper to those only who partake of it; their fruits can not be transferred to others. Both of them are sacrificial signs (symbols) through which God testifies to the fact that He forgives sins. So-called good works are never meritorious, for they are all sinful. The primacy of the pope can not be upheld. What Aristotle, and, after him, the scholastics, teach concerning true blessedness wars against Christianity.”

We are interested to know what opinion Melanchthon held concerning Luther. Let me quote from a letter written in the fall of 1520: “He (Luther) is much more wonderful than that I could describe him in words. I know,” he adds, “as a true humanist, as Alcibiades admired his Socrates, so I admire my Luther, yet much more, and in a different sense, namely in a Christian sense. As I observe him, he seems to me to be ever greater.” At another time he ranked him along with Isaiah, John the Baptist, Paul, and St. Augustine, and again: “I would rather die than be separated from this man; nothing worse could happen than to have to do without Martin.” And soon Melanchthon would be confronted by the situation in which he for eleven long months had to do without Martin.

It is quite evident from his active participation in this act that Melanchthon was fully in agreement with Luther’s act of breaking officially with Rome by the public burning of the papal bull of excommunication on the morning of December 10, 1520. For it was Melanchthon who posted the following significant announcement on the University bulletin board: “All friends of evangelical truth are invited to assemble about nine o’clock, at the church of the Holy Cross, beyond the city wall. There, according to ancient, apostolic usage, the godless books of the papal constitutions and the scholastic theology will be burned, inasmuch as the presumption of the enemies of the Gospel has advanced to such a degree that they have cast the godly, evangelical books of Luther into the fire. Let all earnest students, therefore, appear at the spectacle; for it is now the time when Antichrist must be exposed.”

This was Luther’s, and in a way, also Melanchthon’s reply to the papal bull of excommunication, “Exsurge Domine,” issued on June 15th by Pope Leo X against Luther and all his followers, allowing them 60 days to recant. So here, then, in front of the Elster Gate, Melanchthon watched as his friend and colleague Luther threw volumes of the Canon Law and various theological writings plus a copy of the “Exsurge Domine” into the flames. After singing the “Te Deum” and “De Profundis,” the faculty returned to the University and the students riotously celebrated this event—parading, burning the pope in effigy, and conducting a funeral for a six-foot copy of the bull.

We move on now to the next year, 1521. The pope had finally succeeded in inducing Emperor Charles V to move against Luther. On March 6, he summoned Luther to appear on April 16 before the Imperial Diet at Worms. Luther bade Melanchthon good-bye, saying, “If I should not return, and my enemies should kill me at

Worms, as may very easily come to pass, I adjure you, dear brother, not to neglect teaching, nor to fail to stand by the Truth. In the meantime also do my work, because I cannot be here. You can do it better than I can. Therefore, my absence will not be a great loss, provided you remain. The Lord still finds a learned champion in you.”

What happened at the Diet of Worms, and what happened to Luther after the Diet of Worms—how, because Luther was placed under the ban of the empire and outlawed by the Edict of Worms, his friends spirited him away to the safety of the Wartburg with the Elector’s knowledge and Luther’s consent—all this is so well-known that I need not repeat it here. We are interested here rather in Melanchthon, on whose frail and youthful shoulders was now placed the whole burden of heading and guiding the Reformation at Wittenberg during Luther’s extended absence. Melanchthon also at first believed the rumor started by Luther’s friends themselves, that the Romanists in some foul manner had put him to death, until on May 12 he received a short message from Luther showing that he was still alive. Jubilantly he wrote to his friend, Wenceslaus Link: “Our most beloved father lives!” But the message in Luther’s letter was another matter, for it warned that Melanchthon was the next on the list. Luther wrote: “Stand, Philip, as a servant of the Word and guard the walls and gates of Jerusalem until they come upon you also. You know your calling and your gifts. I pray for you before all other things, and I do not doubt that my prayers are heard. Do you likewise. Let us bear our burden together. We stand alone in the battle. After me they will fall upon you.” But as the days passed, and the problems that fell on his shoulders multiplied, Melanchthon began to long for Luther’s return. “Our Elijah is not yet with us, but we wait and hope for him,” he wrote. “My longing for him tortures me grievously.” Luther did not feel that his own absence should cause any anxiety. He wrote: “Even though I should be lost, the Gospel will lose nothing by that; for in Scripture you can excel me, and you are Elisha, who succeeds Elijah, with a double portion of the Spirit, which the Lord Jesus may bestow upon you in His mercy.”

But there soon was more cause for worry than Luther imagined. Carlstadt, a colleague of Luther and Melanchthon, turned radical. He was soon joined by Zwilling, then by three prophets who arrived at Wittenberg fresh from Zwickau: Storch, Stübner, and Marx. Back of them all stood Thomas Münzer, a radical but eloquent preacher. These radicals declared that Luther had indeed reformed but his reformation had not gone far enough. They would introduce, and carry out, the true and full reformation. They insisted that celibacy should be abolished and the clergymen be permitted, no, even encouraged, to marry; that the baptism of infants be abolished, because infants did not as yet understand the meaning of Baptism, and could not as yet believe. Luther himself had taught, so they declared, that one person could not believe for another. The whole Roman Mass together with the use of Latin and all of the clerical garbs were to be removed; the churches cleared of all pictures and statues (*Bilderstürmer*). Above all this they preached the dangerous error that all learning was superfluous, unnecessary; that the Spirit would provide everything, without human assistance, and the leaders of this radicalism, above all Carlstadt, with their violent preaching and ranting soon found a following which grew in number and violence day by day. Soon numerous clergymen, both regular and secular, denounced celibacy and married. Parents became confused and were undecided whether they should have their new-born babies baptized or not. If education, if learning, was superfluous, why study?—argued the students; as a result they stayed away from the lecture halls.

How did Melanchthon, who after all was taking the place of Luther during the latter’s absence, meet this certainly difficult situation? He showed an attitude, a spirit, for the first time, which he was to display repeatedly later on during his career as a reformer. It was a spirit of uncertainty, hesitancy, and indecision. He at times seemed not to know what to make of the whole thing. He did not seem to know whether the Spirit of God spoke through these people or the spirit of darkness. In great excitement he wrote to the Elector, “I cannot express how deeply that which I have heard of these people has affected me. Many valid reasons impel me not to despise them. Much of what I have heard of them proves to me that a spirit dwells in them which nobody is able to judge properly. At any rate, everything should be done that is possible that Luther might meet with them, especially since they fall back on him.”

To Spalatin he wrote: “There is a spirit in them (the radicals), of what sort, I know not. They will cause a good commotion, which, if Luther does not intervene, may have very serious consequences. I well know that it no doubt is not advisable to ask the Elector to permit Luther to return. But to whom shall I turn in this distress?”

Upon these repeated appeals and entreaties of Melanchthon, some addressed to Luther himself, the Elector finally called Melanchthon and Amsdorf in for consultation. Melanchthon insisted that Luther must prove these spirits, for this thing cannot be settled by force. Especially is this necessary because of Baptism, “for Dr. Martin knows full well what is behind this question.” It is strange, is it not, that Melanchthon does not trust his own judgment when it comes to proving the spirit of the radicals, but insists that the Elector must permit Luther to leave the security of the Wartburg and return to Wittenberg and again take over? The repeated, and ever more fervent, entreaties of Melanchthon, to which finally was added an official appeal of the city council of Wittenberg, finally moved Luther to return. After having informed the Elector of his intentions, who earnestly entreated Luther not to return, since he, the Elector, would then not be able to protect him, Luther returned to Wittenberg traveling right through the midst of the territory of his bitterest enemy, Duke George of Saxony. Luther had left the Wartburg on the 1st of March, arriving at Wittenberg on the 6th, a Thursday. Beginning with the Sunday following, March 8, Luther delivered a series of eight sermons on eight successive days against the errors of the Enthusiasts. The effect of these eight simple sermons was truly remarkable. The people quieted down again; the students returned to the lecture halls, and the Zwickauer prophets left Wittenberg, with the exception of Carlstadt, who stubbornly held out a little longer. But finally even he left, after he had had a heated discussion with Luther, during which he cried, “I will, will not be misled by that which others do, and I also know that I cannot mislead anyone but a non-Christian.” The storm that for a while threatened to sweep away most of the work that Luther had done had blown over. Things returned to normalcy again. And though the evil after-effects of the work of the Zwickau prophets were felt for some time, yet, after the last one of them had left Wittenberg, the movement led by these radicals did not seriously impede the natural and normal growth and progress of the Protestant Reformation.

Before we take up the next topic, I would like first to bring a brief presentation and discussion of a vitally important product of Melanchthon’s pen, one which turned out to be an extremely valuable contribution of his to the Protestant Reformation, his *Loci Communes*, a truly scholarly work, the first systematic statement of Protestant theology. It was the fruit or result of a series of Melanchthon’s lectures on Romans and First Corinthians, but especially of those on Romans. Melanchthon had extracted the fundamental doctrines as they are presented in Romans and had arranged them in an orderly fashion in pamphlet form, as an aid for his students. They were so pleased with the work that they had it published, much to the surprise of its author. Since Melanchthon was not satisfied with this first form, he rewrote or recast it, and then issued it under the title, *Loci Communes*. The book came off the press in April, 1521. Before the year was out two more editions appeared in Wittenberg and one in Basel. By 1525 eighteen Latin editions had been published in addition to various printings of Spalatin’s German translation. In his *Loci* Melanchthon followed the order of topics which had first been introduced by the Church Father John of Damascus, and which also Peter Lombard had followed in his *Sententiae*. Beginning with the study of the Triune God, he descended to the study of man; then he proceeded to the study of sin, of Law and Gospel, of the fruits of grace, and of the Sacraments. Here Melanchthon loosely appended the articles on the state and government and church government; at the end came a discussion of the last things, of hell and damnation, and of heaven and eternal bliss. Melanchthon treated every article sparingly, “because,” as he said, “I did not want my book to take the place of the Divine Scriptures. I have nothing in view,” he continued, “but to assist, in one way or another, the studies of those who wish to be conversant with the Scriptures. If this little work will not seem to fulfill this task, may it perish.” Luther had this to say about it: “Whosoever now wants to become a theologian has decided advantages, for first he has the Bible, which is so clear now that he can read it without difficulty. Next he should read the *Locos Communes Philippi* diligently and thoroughly, that he might have it in his memory. If he has these two things, he is a *theologus* whom neither the devil nor a heretic can hurt. You can find no book among all books in which the sum total of all religion and the whole of theology is found together as nicely as in the *Locis Communibus*. There is found no better book next to the Holy Writ than Philip’s *Loci Communes*. Read all the books of the

Church Fathers and Scholastics. They are nothing compared with this book.” And at yet another time Luther wrote: “This is an invincible book not only worthy of immortality but also worthy to be taken up in the ecclesiastical Canon.”

And it did not take the enemies long to recognize the importance of the *Loci*. Dr. Eck, at the urgent request of the papal legate Campeggi, wrote a refutation of it. Johann Cochläus, one of the most vicious of the enemies of the Reformation, wrote a refutation in which he remarked that the *Loci* was a new Koran, far more dangerous than Luther’s writings, for Melanchthon’s style of writing, he held, was much more ingratiating, its *ingenium* nobler, his way of treating the Bible much more efficient and careful than Luther’s. “Unfortunate Germany,” he exclaimed, “what will become of you if this destructive beast, this tempting siren is not soon swept off the earth!”

Whatever the opinions of men might have been, the *Loci* together with Luther’s essays of 1520 and the *Augsburg Confession*, was regarded throughout the sixteenth century as one of the foundation pillars of the Reformation. For over fifty years after the author’s death it was still being used as a textbook of Lutheran dogmatics in the churches and schools of Germany.

We now move on to the Colloquy of Marburg. The final resolution of the Second Diet of Speyer (1529), which demanded that the Protestants return to the Roman fold within a specified time, else the Edict of Worms would be enforced, showed the Lutherans that they were in grave danger. Landgraf Philip of Hesse, who was the most aggressive of the Lutheran primates, believed that they could strengthen their position by establishing a union with the Swiss. But in order to effect this union they would first have to remove their doctrinal differences. He therefore proposed that a meeting of representatives of both sides be held for that purpose. Both Luther and Melanchthon at first opposed such a meeting believing that the time was not propitious for this kind of discussion. Melanchthon, however, expressed willingness to comply if the Elector so commanded. The Elector consented to have the colloquy held at Nuremberg. The Landgraf changed the meeting to Marburg. On September 29, 1529, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Bucer, Hedio, and Jacob Sturm arrived at Marburg. The next day Luther, Melanchthon, Jonas Cruciger, Menius, Brentz, Osiander, and Stephan Agricola arrived. No doubt in anticipation of the discussion with the Zwinglians Luther and Melanchthon had drawn up a preliminary set of beliefs. These articles were to be used as a guide by the Wittenbergers at Marburg. They were known as the *Schwabach Articles*, because they were presented by representatives of the Elector and the Markgraf George of Brandenburg at a convention held at Schwabach on October 16. Later Melanchthon incorporated them in the *Augsburg Confession*.

On October 1 the Marburg Colloquy began. Since it was known that Zwingli and Luther were easily roused to anger, Prince Philip paired Melanchthon with Zwingli and Luther with Oecolampadius for the first meeting. Zwingli and Melanchthon discussed the divinity of Christ, original sin, the Scriptures, the Trinity, and the Eucharist but came to no conclusions; so Bucer reported. Melanchthon reported to the Elector that he found Zwingli poorly informed and in error on many points. The discussion between Luther and Oecolampadius also was fruitless. The next day they continued their discussions. At the suggestions of Zwingli they immediately began the discussion of the Eucharist, specifically the location of Christ’s body. Could it be in more than one place at the same time? On the answer to this question would depend whether Christ was, or was not, actually present in the Lord’s Supper. Luther and Melanchthon on the basis of the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Incarnation said, “Yes”; Zwingli on the basis of Christ’s exaltation to the right hand of God said, “No.” At the end of the day it was clear that the different approaches to the problem made an agreement impossible.

On the afternoon of October 3, the colloquy was terminated with apologies all around. Oecolampadius pleaded for continuation of the discussion for the sake of unity. The disputants, in a private session held in the evening of October 3, did draw up a set of 14 points on which they agreed and added a fifteenth on which they still disagreed. This fifteenth point read in part as follows:

“Although we are not at this time agreed, as to whether the true Body and Blood of Christ are bodily present in the bread and wine, nevertheless the one party should show to the other Christian love, so far as conscience can permit; and both should fervently pray God Almighty, that, by His Spirit, He would confirm us in the true understanding.”

“When it was all over,” said Melanchthon, “the Zwinglians asked to be considered brethren, but this we were not willing to grant by any means. They have attacked us so severely that we wonder with what kind of conscience they would hold us as brethren if they thought we were in error.”

With the failure of the Marburg Colloquy the first step of the Reformation toward ecumenicity had failed.

## **The Augsburg Confession**

The Protestant outlook at the beginning of 1530 was far from hopeful. The attempts of the preceding year to unify evangelical Germany had failed miserably. Emperor Charles had finally concluded his wars with Francis I and finished his conquests in Italy, and after a nine year’s absence from Germany was at last in a position to do something about the religious issue there. The Emperor and the Pope had composed their differences in a treaty signed at Barcelona, June 1529, and the Emperor now had pledged himself to bring the Protestant dissidents back to the fold. In a formal speech of May 9, 1530, the papal Legate Campeggio warned the Emperor that if firm action were not taken quickly, “there is cause to fear that this devilish pest will not only spread over the rest of Germany but contaminate the whole world.” But already in January 1530, the Emperor had issued the mandate that a diet was, “to give a charitable hearing to every man’s opinion, thoughts, and notions, to understand them, to weigh them, to bring and reconcile them to a unity in Christian truth, to dispose of everything that has not been rightly explained or treated of, on the one side or the other, to see to it that one single, true religion may be accepted and held by us all, and that we all live in one common church and in unity.” The Elector of Saxony, deceived by the conciliatory tone of the mandate, immediately asked his learned counselors, Luther, Jonas, Melanchthon, Musa of Jena, Agricola, and Spalatin to drop everything and to come immediately to Torgau and to compose and bring with them statements about doctrines and evangelical practices which might be made the basis for their discussions at the Diet. At the appointed day, Luther, Melanchthon, Jonas, and Bugenhagen arrived at Torgau, bringing with them 17 statements, or articles, pertaining to Christian doctrine and practice, the so-called *Torgau Articles*. On April 3, the first three named left for Augsburg by way of Koburg. Here they spent the Easter holidays, Melanchthon taking advantage of these days thoroughly to work over the *Torgau Articles*.

Leaving Luther behind on the Koburg, the other two with Agricola left for Augsburg, where they arrived on May 2. Melanchthon had at first conceived of the document which he was preparing as an apology. But new developments at Augsburg and the warning which he received that the Emperor could not and would not listen to a lengthy document, showed Melanchthon that it must be more brief, more like a confession. The new development was the unexpected appearance of a sensational book, entitled, *The 404 Articles*, compiled by none other than Dr. Johann Eck of Ingolstadt, and which was a violent attack on all the basic Protestant doctrines. *The 404 Articles* was made up of extracts from the writings of Luther, Melanchthon, Carlstadt, Zwingli, and many others. These passages were often torn out of their connections, changed, wrongly quoted, etc. The appearance of *The 404 Articles* made it clear to Melanchthon that they must absolutely defend their basic doctrines, that not simply a vindication but a confession of their faith had to be prepared. So this new turn of events had a decisive effect on the course of events at Augsburg. It cut short the influence of Luther on the composition of the Confession. There was little time for consultation with Luther, hardly enough time to have the document finished before the arrival of the Emperor, and so Melanchthon had to fall back on his own resources. This does not mean, however, that Melanchthon did not seek, nor get, help, aid, and advice from the other Protestant theologians. Indeed, from reports we know that Melanchthon consulted incessantly with the Protestant theologians, added words, omitted phrases, and reconstructed sentences. He worried over each preposition, verb, and noun. He sweated over every portion of the apology, for he wanted to state the core of evangelical doctrine without alienating the Roman Catholics. War with all its horror, and the complete destruction of everything that the Reformation had achieved thus far, he believed, would be the result of his failure. Emaciated, exhausted, nervous, and anxious, Melanchthon spent many moments in tears. At times he felt the *Augsburg Confession* was too mild and pacific—made so by his earnest desire for ecumenical peace,



and at other times he was convinced that the *Augsburg Confession* was too severe and polemic, made so by his keen understanding of the implications of the Protestant-Catholic differences.

In a letter addressed to his friend Camerarius, Melanchthon writes: “I proceeded with the greatest caution and do not believe that one can express himself in these matters in a milder manner. Indeed, I proceeded much gentler than the hatred of the foes deserved. I have gathered and presented only those things that are absolutely essential in this affair.”

Even among his friends there were such as accused Melanchthon of having stepped too cautiously and tried to arouse the ire and opposition of Luther against him, hoping that Luther would come out publicly against Melanchthon. This Luther refused to do, but rather came out in defense of him. For in a letter addressed to Melanchthon, September 11, Luther writes: “Dear Philip, do not let the judgment of those people disturb you too deeply, who say that you have given in too much to the Papists. There must naturally also be among us such weaklings whose ways and shortcomings you simply must bear.”

Luther did not see the completed Confession until after it had been presented to the Emperor. On May 11, Melanchthon did send a copy as far as it was ready at that time (articles 20 and 28 on “Faith” and “Good Works” and “Ecclesiastical Power” were not yet written) to Luther with the remarks: “Our apology is sent to you, though it is more truly a confession, for the Emperor does not have time to read a long discussion. Nevertheless I have said those things which I thought to be either specifically profitable or proper. With this design I have brought together about all the articles of faith, because Eck has published the most diabolic slanders against us. Against these I wished to oppose a remedy. Do you in accordance with your spirit judge of the whole writing.”

Four days later, on May 15, Luther sent his well-known reply: “I have read over M. Philip’s Apology. It pleases me very well, and I know of nothing therein to be improved or changed, nor would it become me, for I cannot step so softly. Christ our Lord grant that it may bring much and great fruit, as we hope and pray.”

On May 22, Melanchthon again wrote to Luther, apparently assuming that Luther still possessed a copy, though it seems as if Luther had returned the first copy to Melanchthon by this time. Melanchthon writes: “In the Apology we change many things daily. I have taken out the article ‘On Vows,’ because it was too brief, and I have supplied in its place another on the same subject somewhat longer. I am also not treating of the ‘Power of the Keys.’ I wish you would run over the articles of faith. If you think there is nothing defective in them, we will treat the rest as best we can. For they must be changed and adapted to circumstances.

“I wish I had the time to narrate all of the events that transpired at Augsburg and at the Diet during the ten days from the spectacular entrance into the city of Emperor Charles on June 15 to the reading of the Confession in the afternoon of June 25. But since we are really interested in a different matter, I will have to forego that pleasure. We shall continue with the final work on the Confession, the affixing of the signatures of its backers, and, last, the reading of it before the Emperor and the Diet.”

On June 22 the Emperor curtly notified the Protestants to have the Confession ready to present not later than June 24, but the document was not yet ready; so Melanchthon met with various representatives and theologians and feverishly worked to perfect the Confession as a mutual document. Their common danger had united them in the struggle. But since time was running short, Melanchthon spent both night and day with a few others to bring the Confession to a satisfactory completion. Melanchthon spent June 23, revising the entire text, while Brück and Jonas rewrote the preface and conclusion. The representatives of Nuremberg reported: “Last Thursday early we and the delegates from Reutlingen were summoned before the Saxon, the Hessian, Markgraf George, and Lüneburg. There in the presence of all their princely graces, their counselors, and the theologians, of whom there were twelve, besides others, scholars and doctors, the aforesaid Confession was read over, examined and considered in order to present the same to his Imperial Majesty.”

Landgraf Philip insisted on several final changes. Articles 20 and 21 were added (pertaining to faith and good works; pertaining to the worshiping of the saints), and the article on justification was revised. For political reasons, no mention was made of the Zwinglians or the Sacramentarians in the rewritten preface. Then, at this same meeting, the signers affixed their signatures: Elector John of Saxony, Markgraf George of Brandenburg, Landgraf Philip of Hesse, Prince Wolfgang of Anhalt, Duke Ernst of Brunswick-Lüneburg, and the cities of

Nuremberg and Reutlingen. At the afternoon session of June 24 so much time was wasted by the Catholic representatives on other matters like the Turkish menace that there was not sufficient time left for the reading of the Confession. The Emperor proposed that the Confession be handed to him without being read. But the Protestants did not accept his proposal. Dr. Brück reminded the Emperor that a public reading had already been promised and insisted that the reading of the German Confession be allowed. Though Eck strongly objected and King Ferdinand protested, stating that the mixed audience could not follow the German language, Elector John reminded the Emperor that on German soil the German language would be more fitting; so permission was finally granted to have the Confession read to the Diet the following day. In the afternoon of June 25, not in the Rathaus but in the lower hall of the Episcopal Palace, where not more than 200 people could be seated, Dr. Beyer read the German copy so clearly that every word could be heard even by those standing in the castle court. Dr. Brück then handed both the Latin and the German copies to the Emperor, remarking (so it is reported): “Most gracious Emperor, this is a confession which, with the grace and help of God, will prevail even against the gates of hell.”

The following day brought Melanchthon into a public clash with the papal legate Campeggio. In an assembly of clergy, Campeggio vehemently denounced the Protestants. In a fearless display of evangelical conviction Melanchthon replied: “We cannot yield, nor can we desert the truth, and we pray that for the sake of God and Christ our adversaries will concede to us that which we cannot with a good conscience relinquish.” Campeggio shouted: “I cannot, I cannot, for the Keys do not err!” Rejecting the infallibility implied in Campeggio’s remark, Melanchthon exclaimed: “To God we will commit our cause and ourselves! If God be for us, who can stand against us?” Melanchthon, anxious to know what Luther thought of the transaction, sent a letter to Luther stating: “Our defense has been presented to the Emperor. I send it to you to read.” Luther in his reply declared that he “rejoiced that he had lived to see the hour when Christ was confessed by such great confessors in such a glorious Confession,” but Luther was also angry, angry that he had not been consulted, angry that Melanchthon had not been more bold, and angry because he thought that the Augsburg representatives were trusting too much in the rationalization of men. “You will not accomplish anything,” he said, “by being overly careful. What more can the devil do than kill us?” On June 30 Luther sent another letter, which referred to Melanchthon’s “exceedingly wicked and perfectly useless cares,” stating: “If we fall, Christ will fall with us, and He is the great ruler of the whole world. And if it were possible for him to fall, yet I would rather fall with Christ than stand with the Emperor. You are killing yourself and utterly fail to see that the matter lies beyond the power of your hand and counsel, and that it will be carried on regardless of any concern which you may feel. I pray for you, have prayed, and will pray, and doubt not that I am heard, for I feel the Amen in my heart! Your Martin Luther.”

There was no immediate action on the part of the Diet though it was controlled by the Catholic majority. This was due to the fact that the Catholic princes themselves were not united in their opinion.

Indeed, even some of the Catholic members of the Diet were genuinely and deeply impressed by the Protestant Confession. Thus an ardent Catholic prince like Duke William of Bavaria said to Duke John of Saxony: “Thus no one has as yet spoken to me about this matter and doctrine.” And turning to Dr. Eck he said: “You have confronted me with the claim that it would be an easy matter to refute the Lutherans. Now, how about it?” Dr. Eck replied, “With the Church Fathers I would undertake to do it, but not with the Scripture.” Replied the Duke, “So I must hear, that the Lutherans sit in the Scriptures, but we Papals outside of them.”

The papal legate, Campeggio, then suggested that a committee of qualified theologians study the Confession and specify the heresies contained in it. If the Protestants, when confronted with such a report did not immediately recant, then the Emperor aided by the Catholic Estates should forcefully extirpate this heresy with his “temporal arm.” The suggestion was accepted and a committee appointed. Heading this committee was Dr. Eck, who was well qualified to draw up this report, since he was already the editor of *The 404 Articles*. In less than two weeks he completed his *Confutation* which numbered 351 pages. The Emperor rejected this as being much too voluminous. So it was revised downward four times, from 351 to ultimately 31 pages. In this last form it was acceptable to the Emperor and declared to be a sufficient refutation of all of the Protestant errors or heresies. The Lutherans asked for a copy of the *Confutation* only to be told that they could have a copy

on the condition that they promised to accept its provisions and not to publish a reply. Fortunately, however, Melanchthon's friend, Camerarius, had taken extensive notes during the reading of the *Confutation*, and on the basis of these notations and on what could be remembered, Melanchthon undertook the task of writing a reply, which we know as the *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*.

It is interesting to see Melanchthon's reaction to the *Confutation*. He wrote: "All good men in our party seem calmer and firmer.... They know that among our adversaries there is no acquaintance with religion. The *Confutation* is childish and silly.... Our rulers could easily obtain peace if they would court the Emperor and the more moderate princes. But there is a marvelous indifference, and, as I think, a quiet indignation that keeps them from such business."

When the Emperor announced that he would abide by the *Confutation* and commanded the Protestants to do likewise, all previous overtures for peaceful settlement seemed completely doomed. Every possible pressure was now brought to bear upon the Lutherans to compromise their stand in religion. Thus, for instance, Charles threatened to withhold the investiture of Elector John of Saxony, and Markgraf Joachim of Brandenburg warned the Elector John that his lands might be confiscated and he himself sent into exile, if he would not submit. Eck freely predicted war if the Protestants rejected the *Confutation*. In disgust Philip of Hesse requested permission to leave Augsburg, and when it was withheld, he left anyway on August 6, and then wrote a letter to Elector John of Saxony that he would stake himself, his people, and all his possessions behind the Elector and God's Word. And in the background there lurked at this time a common danger for both sides, the Turks.

Alarmed over the situation, the Protestants made a last desperate effort to keep negotiations going. Chancellor Brück and Melanchthon wrote revealing letters. Dr. Brück in his letter of August 3 wrote that the Protestants were not satisfied with the mere reading of the *Confutation* nor with its contents. And he proposed that a small committee be appointed which was to consider the disputed articles, with the aim of effecting an agreement.

Melanchthon wrote a letter to the papal legate, Campeggio, on August 4. This letter did not represent a willingness to submit, as has been often charged, but rather set the final or ultimate limit to which he could go in setting up the agenda for further discussion. The desire for peace and unity which this letter revealed was a part of the very fiber of Melanchthon's character. It was a polite letter, and politeness showed good taste. Philip was not going to arouse the ire and opposition of the foe by harsh terms. Neither was he abandoning the evangelical principles when he held out the olive branch on the basis of the Sacrament in both kinds, the marriage of the priests, and the Protestants' acceptance of the episcopal rule, provided the bishops would act properly and promote sound doctrine.

These two letters together with the fear of a costly civil war and the Turkish menace induced the Emperor to appoint a committee of 14, with equal Protestant and Catholic representation, to consider the doctrines. The Protestants believed that they could convince the Roman Catholics of the orthodoxy of their evangelical teachings, knowing that certain Catholic theologians were already favorably disposed. The special committee began its work on August 16, and several tentative agreements were soon reached, but it could not agree on the *Eucharist* in both kinds, clerical marriage, private masses, canon rules, and monastic vows. Melanchthon on August 21 presented 14 points for discussion. These 14 points clearly show that Melanchthon was not forsaking evangelical truth, as his enemies and even some of his friends charged, for they contain the very heart of the Protestant reform. These 14 points of Melanchthon were:

1. Faith justifies us before God, not the works that precede, nor those that follow.
2. Good works are necessary, although one cannot thereby earn grace or justification before God.
3. It is not necessary to name all the sins in confession.
4. Although contrition must and should be present in repentance, sin is not forgiven on account of contrition but on account of faith.
5. It is not necessary for remission of *poena* that special satisfaction be laid upon man in repentance.

6. The Holy Sacrament does not justify *ex opere operato* without faith.
7. For a true unity of the Church and of faith unity of human ordinances is not necessary.
8. Church services for the purpose of thereby obtaining merit are contrary to the Gospel, and obscure the merits of Christ.
9. The monastic vow and life when instituted to merit grace are contrary to the Gospel.
10. Human ordinances which may be kept without sin and are beneficial to good order in the Church should be observed in love, for the sake of avoiding offense.
11. Those who forbid both forms in the Sacrament act contrary to Christ's institution and Scriptures.
13. Those who forbid matrimony do so contrary to God's command.
14. The mass is not a work which *ex opere operato* merits grace.

The Protestants could not forsake these articles nor could they concede that the *Confession* had been refuted by the Roman Catholics. So the wrangling went on. What was Luther's stand? He was opposed to further negotiations, since he was especially suspicious of the papal movements, and anxious lest Melanchthon in his earnest desire for peace concede something in good faith that would be used for self-gain by a foe smiling behind a mask. Melanchthon on August 22 wrote Luther a letter in which he depicts some of the wrangling and strife in the committee and the Protestant concern with the wily manipulations of the papal representatives. Luther answered him on August 26 in a letter which reads in part: "It is not in our power to place or tolerate anything in God's Church or in His service which cannot be defended by the Word of God, and I am vexed not a little by this talk of compromise, which is a scandal to God. With this one word 'mediation' I could easily make all the laws and ordinances of God matters of compromise. For if we admit that there is a compromise in the Word of God, how can we defend ourselves so that not all things become compromises? In fine, I am thoroughly displeased with this negotiating concerning union in doctrine..." On August 28 Luther called upon Melanchthon to stop the negotiations, for he feared a gross intrigue was under way to beguile the Protestants. "My dear Philip," he wrote, "you could do nothing more right in my opinion than to free yourself from these gross intrigues by saying you would give to God what belongs to God and to the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor... Deal in a manly way, and let your heart be comforted!"

All negotiations came to a sudden halt when the Emperor tentatively ordered an imperial recess on September 22. Politely but forcefully Charles said that the purpose of the Diet had been fulfilled, that both sides had been heard, and that he after careful consideration had found the Protestants thoroughly refuted, by means of the Gospel and other writings. In manifest leniency and for the sake of peace and unity, the imperial mandate granted the Evangelicals until the following April 15 to confess the same beliefs as the Roman Catholics, until a general council could be convoked.

The conference had failed. And the time had come to present the Protestant reply to the *Confutation*, for it could not be granted that the *Confutation* had refuted the *Confession*.

Relying on notes taken during the reading of the *Confutation* by Camerarius, and on the memory of those present at the time, Melanchthon had set about preparing an answer early in August. Intermittently, while the committee negotiations were going on, Melanchthon had been working on the reply, as were the Nuremberg theologians and lawyers, who were ordered to do so by their city council. When it was evident that the special committee would not establish concord, the reply to the *Confutation* was again taken up. Chancellor Brück and other Saxons were officially commissioned to prepare a reply. The task of composing the reply was turned over to Melanchthon, however. In a letter written to Camerarius on September 20, Melanchthon referred to his writing of the defense of the *Confession*, and he implied that he had not used the arguments of the Nurembergers.

When the Imperial Recess was read on September 22, the Lutherans hurriedly decided that Chancellor Brück should present Melanchthon's reply. So Chancellor Brück with an excuse for the incomplete form of the document offered it to the Emperor. However, on the whispered advice of his brother Ferdinand, the Emperor

refused to accept it. The reply is known as the *Prima Delineatio Apologiae*, a cursory document in comparison with the extended Apology on which Melanchthon worked during the following six months, and which was published in April 1531, after the *Augsburg Confession* had left the press in November 1530. This first short apology clarified the Lutheran stand at the Diet and made no weak concessions to the Roman Catholics.

Since the Emperor had refused to accept the Apology and had on the 22nd of September recessed the Diet with an Imperial Decree, in which he stated that the Confession of the Protestants had been thoroughly refuted by the Holy Gospel and other writings and rejected, but that his Imperial Majesty granted to the Protestants time until April 15, 1531, to consider their stand further and to decide whether they would not unite again with the common Christendom until a general church council had thoroughly discussed and settled their stand; the Protestants, who refused to accept this Imperial Decree, left Augsburg on the next day, September 23. The Diet had indeed failed to heal the breach, but for the Protestants it had nevertheless been of inestimable value, for it had given them the opportunity to confess publicly, freely, and boldly their common faith before the Emperor and the Reich.

Already on the homeward journey from Augsburg to Wittenberg, which Melanchthon undertook in the company of Elector John, Spalatin, and Luther, whom the three picked up at Coburg, Melanchthon was working on the extension and completion of his Apology. At Altenburg, where he was writing at it even during the evening meal, Luther gently took the pen from his hand, remarking, "Dear Philip, one can serve God not only with work but also with rest and relaxation."

On October 4 they reached Wittenberg again. Here Philip finished his work on the *Apology*. But it did not come off the press until the middle of April, 1531. Of his *Apology* Melanchthon writes in a letter to Brenz, dated April 8, 1531: "I have now divested myself of my moderation. Since they did not wish to have me as a bringer of peace, but preferred to have me as an enemy, I am going to do what this affair demands and faithfully defend our doctrine."

In his *Apology* Melanchthon follows the *Confutation* step by step. The points of doctrine in which there was agreement he passes over, but the points over which there was conflict he defends with tremendous force. In order to give our Confession the death blow the confutators brought the vicious charge that our doctrine of justification by faith was diametrically opposed to the Gospel truth. This, then, had to be, and was, the very center, core, and heart of the *Apology*, the defense of the doctrine of justification by faith, as it is indeed the very heart of our whole Christian faith. Through his thorough exposition of this central doctrine, in which he not only throws a brilliant light on the hollowness and hopelessness of the Pelagian system of his adversaries but also on the immovable and eternal foundation of our Scriptural truths, Melanchthon has performed a service of inestimable value to our Christian saving truth. But in stressing the central doctrine of justification by faith, Melanchthon does not overlook the other contested points, as for instance, the true concept of the Church, of penitence and its parts, of the freedom of the will, of original sin, etc., at the same time letting the brilliant light of the Gospel fall on the Roman sentences pertaining to satisfaction, the sacrifice of the mass, celibacy, monastic vows, etc.

At a conference of Roman intermediaries and evangelical representatives held at Schweinfurt in the spring of 1532 the latter already presented the *Apology*. Of it Brenz had declared earlier that the *Confession* carried the *Apology* on its back, that it was a genuine and true declaration of our confession, and therefore a binding and valid norm of the Evangelical Church.

Whosoever reads and studies this *Apology* of Melanchthon objectively, with an open mind, can hardly come to the conclusion that the author in any one of its 28 articles makes concessions to Rome or compromises his stand in any way. On the contrary, in refuting and rejecting the arguments with which the *Confutation* claimed to have refuted completely the heresies or errors presented in the *Augustana*, Melanchthon restates the contested doctrines with tremendous force and firmness and with a warmth and conviction which shows that Melanchthon here does not speak as a scholar and theologian but as a Christian and a child of God, who knows and is fully convinced, that, in what he believes and writes, he stands on the immovably solid rock of God's eternal Word. The firm and uncompromising stand that Melanchthon takes in his *Apology* is strange and hard to reconcile with the rather weak stand that the same man took in the long debates and discussions that took place

at the insistence of the Emperor between groups of Protestant and Roman theologians between June 25 and September 22. Thus in a letter to Luther of June 27, he had written: "Show me how far, if the affair demands it, we may give in to our adversaries. We have, as you know, discussed these matters earlier, but often things shape up differently under different circumstances than one has anticipated." To the papal legate, Campeggio, whom he asks for a private conference, Melancthon wrote, "In matters of doctrine we are in agreement with the true Catholic Church. Against its errors we ourselves have fought. We are ready to obey the Roman Church provided she allows us to abolish certain false practices. You must concede that there are many shortcomings in the Church, and you can't blame us that we wish them removed. If this leads to war, there will be turmoil and misery without end. We only request the Lord's Supper under both forms, the marriage of the priests, and the bishops may be retained in their old capacity as rulers of the Church. And even if there is a lack of uniformity in certain things, the unity can still be retained if the Church obeys the bishops."

In Melancthon's remark concerning the danger of war and all its accompanying misery I think we have the main cause for Melancthon's willingness to compromise; it was fear. Not personal fear, fear for his own personal safety and security. Melancthon did not know this kind of fear. It was rather fear for the security of the Church. He feared that a war over religious differences would mean the destruction and end of the Reformation and all of its achievements. The other reason sometimes given for Melancthon's shifting stand is this: Melancthon for some time apparently lived in the hope that some kind of understanding or agreement could still be reached between Rome and the Protestants, provided the Protestants would not state the differences in too strong a form. When, however, this hope was dashed by Rome's curt rejection of the *Confession* and the condemnation of it as heretical, Melancthon was no longer checked by considerations of a possible agreement. In his *Apology* he now stated all the differences in strong, emphatic, and unmistakably clear terms.

As the Diet of Augsburg drew to a close, Emperor Charles, convinced that the *Augsburg Confession* had been thoroughly discredited and proven heretical through the *Confutation*, had apparently decided to suppress and crush the Protestant heresy with the sword and to do so immediately. The majority of the members of the Diet demanded, however, that such action be postponed. The Emperor gave way to this demand, and in his final resolution of September 22, Charles declared that the Protestants be given until April 15, 1531, to consider whether they wanted to return to the fold or not. If at the expiration of this time of grace the Protestants had not decided to return, the Edict of Worms would be strictly enforced. This meant war. When the Emperor's resolution was presented to the Protestant members of the Diet remaining at Augsburg, they unanimously and very emphatically rejected the demand, declaring that the Emperor had no right to issue orders to his subjects in matters of faith. The Protestant members, therefore, met in convention at Schmalkalden on December 22, 1530, and there, after lengthy discussions, formed the League of Schmalkalden, which was joined by all on March 29, 1531. The League was to be in effect for six years. As heads of the League the Duke Elector of Saxony and the Landgraf Philip of Hesse were chosen. To Melancthon this seemed a dangerous undertaking, for to him this meant war and destruction. It was his old fear which manifested itself here again, strengthened this time by the claim of an old woman that was supposed to have the gift of prophecy, "that in the next month a most terrible war would break out." But this war didn't come. Instead of war there followed further negotiations and discussions through the mediation of Albrecht of Mainz between the Protestants and Romans, which finally ended on June 23, 1532, with the signing of the Religious Peace of Nuernberg. The latter declared that, until the calling of a general council or diet, the *status quo* should be observed by both sides.

### **Melancthon and the Years 1534–1536**

The year 1534 became a rather important one for Melancthon. For in this year he received two invitations, one from Francis I of France, the other from Henry VIII of England, to help these rulers with the introduction of the Reformation in their respective countries. These invitations seem to indicate quite clearly that the general opinion obtaining was that Melancthon was much more conciliatory, peaceful, and conservative, much less radical and aggressive, than Luther and the other leaders of the Reformation. Francis I,

no doubt, was partly led by reformatory leanings, but more so by the hope of eventually establishing a union, or league, with the Protestant princes against Emperor Charles, with whom he had been at war for quite some time. On the advice of his councilor, Willi du Bellay, and his brother, the bishop of Paris, a young German scholar by the name of Dr. Ulrich Geiger was sent to Melanchthon at Wittenberg with the request for his opinion concerning the possibility of reestablishing a union between the Protestant and the Roman Church.

Melanchthon in his reply declared that according to his opinion such a union would be possible, provided the conscience were not bound, and the pope would permit the bishops freedom the Gospel. This opinion of Melanchthon caused quite a lot of mockery and ridicule on the part of his Roman enemies, and much concern among his friends, who believed he had gone much too far. Indeed, many Protestants were very much embittered over Melanchthon's attitude of believing that reconciliation, peace, and union with Rome were still possible. At that, the motives of Francis in asking Melanchthon for his opinion and inviting him to come to Paris were primarily political, not religious, as subsequent developments clearly showed. The Duke Elector, John Frederick, apparently saw through Francis' scheme and therefore refused permission to Melanchthon to leave Wittenberg and go to France. Besides this the Elector apparently also feared that Melanchthon, because of his conciliatory and peaceful attitude, would allow many things which later could not be supported and accepted anyway, and would only cause further trouble. Subsequent developments proved the Elector to have been right.

In this same year, 1534, Melanchthon also received an invitation from Henry VIII of England to come to England to give advice and aid in the intended coming break with Rome. This was not the first time Henry VIII approached Melanchthon. Already in 1531, Henry, through the mediation of a Swiss scholar, Simon Grynaeus of Basel, had asked Melanchthon for an opinion concerning his planned divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Melanchthon at that time had advised against a divorce and had proposed instead that Henry seek to obtain a papal dispensation. Melanchthon held that Henry's marriage with his sister-in-law was not contrary to divine law as recorded Leviticus 18:16. From the same passage Henry had argued that his marriage with Catherine had been illegal in the first place. In his opinion Melanchthon had held that this rule now had to be looked upon as a purely human ordinance since it was a part of the Mosaic law now dissolved by the new dispensation in the establishment of Christianity. Strangely, a few years later, in 1536, Melanchthon reversed himself concerning his opinion of 1531 in that he now declared that the Mosaic law of Leviticus 18:16, forbidding the marriage of brother-in-law with sister-in-law, was still a divine law and ordinance binding on the Church.

Apparently Henry did not pay too much attention to Melanchthon's opinion, for he continued to negotiate at length with the pope through Cardinal Wolsey for the granting of a divorce. But the new pope, Clement VII, either for conscience's sake, or because he feared to arouse the wrath of Emperor Charles, who as we know was Catherine's uncle, finally refused to grant the divorce. Thereupon Henry, taking as it were the bull by the horns, made Cranmer Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of England. It was Cranmer who in May of 1533 pronounced the desired divorce in his own court. However, Henry had already without waiting for the action of the court secretly married Anne Boleyn.

We return now to the invitation and negotiations of 1534–36. In these negotiations, which were carried on by Henry's chaplain, Antony Barnes, Melanchthon urged the king to study not only the writings of the enemies of the Reformation. but also the writings of the Reformers themselves in order that he might get a clear understanding of the Reformation and its aims. and thus come to recognize that the Reformers wanted to achieve nothing else but the full agreement and union with the true Catholic Church. Since Barnes had intimated that the king would be highly pleased and honored if Melanchthon would dedicate the newly-revised edition of his *Loci Communes* to King Henry, urging the monarch to study the *Loci* and from its contents learn to know what those doctrines were that were being condemned in such a harsh and unrighteous manner. Melanchthon sent a copy of his *Loci* to King Henry through the Scotchman Alexander Alesius, who had been living in Wittenberg as a fugitive since 1532. Through him Melanchthon also sent a copy of the *Loci* to Archbishop Cranmer. King Henry replied by sending a letter of thanks including a gift of 200 gulden to Melanchthon. This dedication of the *Loci* to King Henry VIII was received by many with deep concern and strong resentment. It was even hinted that Luther was much displeased with the letter of dedication. This, however, was apparently not true, for as far as our knowledge goes, there is no evidence of Luther's displeasure

over Melanchthon's letter of dedication. And Luther certainly had good reason to be displeased with the king because of the vicious attack which Henry had hurled at Luther as early as 1521.

But to come to the close of this episode: the lengthy and protracted negotiations showed that Henry's interest in these negotiations with the German theologians was not so much prompted by his concern over doctrinal matters as by his desire to obtain their recognition and support of his divorce and second marriage. True, he had shown some willingness to join the League of Schmalkalden, but his interest here was to get the support of the Protestant princes against the Emperor. The whole union matter, for that's all it was, was eventually dropped, especially after the shocking news reached Germany that King Henry on May 19, 1536, had the unfortunate Anne Boleyn beheaded.

In the spring of 1536 rumor had it that Pope Paul III had issued a bull calling for a general church council to convene at Mantua May 3, 1537. Immediately the Duke Elector hurried to Wittenberg to consult with the theologians and jurists in order to determine how they should answer the papal legate, whom they expected to come with the invitation or citation. The opinion of the majority was—and one can see here the spirit of Melanchthon—that it would be inadvisable to reject the invitation point blank before they knew what was to be taken up by the council. If they accepted the citation unconditionally, it would certainly seem as if they had dropped their appeal to a general church council; and if they failed to appear, they would certainly be condemned as *contumaces* (stubborn and stiff-necked bullies). The many attempts at reconciliation in which Melanchthon had participated had not as yet convinced him of the impossibility of reconciliation and reunion with Rome. If only the Protestants would be willing to make certain concessions in externals to Rome, so he seems to have argued, a reconciliation still seemed possible. Melanchthon, therefore, urged the Landgraf Philip of Hesse and the Duke Elector to call a conference or council of theologians to determine just what doctrines or articles they would have to, and would be willing to, defend to the utmost at the coming council. The upshot of these discussions was that a convention of theologians was called for February 1537 at Schmalkalden.

This convention met at Schmalkalden at the appointed time. Luther was given the task by the Duke Elector of composing the articles that were to be placed before the body. Luther did this after he had consulted and discussed the whole matter with Melanchthon and the three Wittenberg pastors, Agricola, Amsdorf, and Spalatin, who had been called especially for that purpose to Schmalkalden. Luther's articles comprised all of the doctrines and practices contained in the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Apology* with this difference that the contrast with the Roman system was expressed in much sharper and very much more decisive terms. Luther at this time was already fully convinced that there was left absolutely no possibility of a reconciliation with Rome. He most emphatically rejected the primacy of the pope, stating that the pope is not according to divine ordinance the head of the Church, but only the bishop of Rome, and that during the first few centuries the New Testament Church existed and fared very well without him. The Church, he continued, can only then be ruled rightly if we all place ourselves under the one and only head of the Church, Jesus Christ, since the pope is the Antichrist.

Melanchthon signed these articles of Luther together with all the rest of the theologians present, but with this very significant addition: "I hold that the above articles are right and Christian. But concerning the pope I hold, that, if he allows the Gospel to stand, for the sake of the peace and unity of those Christians now under him and those who in the future wish to remain under him, the superiority over the bishops which he now has should also be recognized by us according to human rights." On the third of January Luther sent these articles to John Frederick. The Duke's ire was thoroughly aroused over the appendix which Melanchthon had added to his signature. He wrote to Luther: "If we, out of a benevolent attitude and for the sake of peace, as Master Melanchthon proposes, allow the pope to rule over us, our bishops, pastors, and preachers, we would expose ourselves to the danger (since the pope and his successors would not rest until they would have attained their objective) of being completely rooted out and destroyed, we together with all our descendants. And this we, whom God has redeemed from all this, certainly need not suffer."

Armed with Luther's articles and their defense, the Duke Elector, accompanied by Spalatin, Luther, Melanchthon, and Bugenhagen journeyed to Schmalkalden the end of January. There they were met by the Landgraf Philip of Hesse and a number of other princes, plus about 40 other theologians. The assembled



theologians were given the following tasks: first, to gather and present for the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Apology* the necessary proofs from Scriptures, from the Church Fathers, and from the Church Councils; secondly, to formulate and present clear and concise statements concerning the papacy, something that had not been done at Augsburg; and finally, to state the articles which were to be defended to the utmost at the coming Church Council. The work on the *Confession* and the *Apology* was postponed to a future date because of a lack of time and of the necessary books. Since the theologians could not agree on the number and nature of the articles to be defended, this matter was also postponed, and Luther's articles were read to the Convention. Then came the last task, that of composing the articles on the power of the pope. This was at first also assigned to Luther, but since he, who had already come to Schmalkalden as a sick man and was now very seriously ill, begged to be allowed to go home, the Elector excused him and sent him back to Wittenberg in his own carriage. As he left the city, he bade farewell to the friends who had accompanied him to the city gate with the words: "God fill you all with hatred against the pope!"

The task of composing the articles on the power of the pope was now given to Melancthon. It was a strange thing that the same man who had but a very short time before signed Luther's articles on the power of the pope with the reservation that according to human rights he would allow the pope to retain his power and primacy over the bishops, now had to write the official Protestant manifesto on the position and power of the pope. But he went to work with his usual determination since he was now no longer hindered by all sorts of considerations.

"The pope," Melancthon declared, "glorifies himself in claiming that he is by divine right the head of all bishops and pastors of Christendom; secondly, that he also by divine right possesses both swords; and thirdly, that it is his will that all men are in duty bound to believe this, or suffer the loss of their eternal salvation."

"These are the reasons why the pope calls himself and glorifies himself as the vicar, or personal representative, of Christ on earth. These three articles we hold and declare to be false, ungodly, tyrannical, and thoroughly harmful to the Christian Church."

This positive, concise, and emphatic declaration Melancthon founded on the Scriptures by adducing the relevant passages from the New Testament and the facts of history. "This horrible error," Melancthon then continues, "that he claims to be by divine right the head of the whole Christian Church, and to possess the keys to bind and loose the souls of all men, and tries to fasten these errors on all men by sheer brutal force, are reasons enough for all Christians to separate, to emancipate, and free themselves from this tyranny, no matter how much they will be condemned as schismatics and heretics by the enemies." To set this forth still more clearly Melancthon then names the most dangerous errors and false practices of the church of Rome and closes by declaring: "We have therefore great, necessary, and evident reasons not to obey the pope. They comfort and strengthen us against all the vicious attacks and violent contumelies the opponents may hurl against us. Whosoever still holds with the pope, sullies himself and his conscience with errors and superstitions and makes himself guilty of the blood of the righteous, hurts the honor of God, and hinders the salvation of the Church." This article of Melancthon, composed with great clearness and with concise logical reasoning, completed the break with the papacy and was signed by all theologians present at Schmalkalden. Together with the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Apology* it represents the official and common confession of the Schmalkaldic Convention.

Concerning the question of whether to attend the promised Council or not, the Convention rejected as politically unwise the opinion of Melancthon not to refuse the invitation point blank, the fear being expressed that the mere acceptance of the invitation would be interpreted by the pope as a recognition of the pope's judicial power and supremacy. Melancthon now submitted to this final resolution.

In the year 1535 appeared also a new and revised edition of Melancthon's *Loci Communes*. Already in 1530 Melancthon had contemplated a revision. In 1533 he lectured on the *Loci* with the object of revising them. But because of the press of other business he could not find the time to carry out this task. In 1534 he complained in a letter to Camerarius: "Now I am in France with my thoughts, now in England, now here with our local problems. If I belonged to myself I would withdraw to some solitude instead of living here midst the turmoil of our problems." But in spite of all of these obstacles Melancthon finished the revision in 1535, and

dedicated it, as we have already seen, to King Henry VIII of England. In a general way the new *Loci* proceed in the same manner as the first edition of 1521. And yet the book is different, both as to content and form. The attacks on the Sorbonnists and other opponents have disappeared. The Church Fathers and even some of the medieval theologians are not treated in such a disdainful manner any more. The whole form is more scientific, almost scholastic. What is presented in the first edition in an easy flow of living language is now changed into syllogisms, into logical deductions, in scholastic fashion. Most of the articles are carried out in greater detail and in a different sequence. Each *Locus* is carried out systematically, then the testimonials of Scripture and of the works of the Church Fathers follow in order to demonstrate the agreement of the Protestant theology with that of the Old Church. The revised *Loci* apparently found the full-hearted support of Luther, for to his students he is reported to have said: “Read the *Loci* of Philip as well as the Bible. It is the finest book, in which the pure theology is brought together in a quiet and orderly fashion. St. Augustine, Ambrosius, Bernhard, Bonaventura, Lyra, Gabriel Biel, Staupitz, and others have many good points, but our Magister Philip can interpret Scripture and think through and grasp the truths and gather and organize them in a brief form. In crosses and afflictions he has learned to pray, and has discussed these things with the greatest and most learned of his adversaries. And he is in dead earnest with his theology.”

Now as far as the content and the changes are concerned that Melanchthon presented in the revised edition of his *Loci*, we cannot, of course—because of the lack of time—nor need we, discuss them all, but we must and will confine ourselves to a few, to those which we deem to be the most important. These are three: the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, of the Freedom of the Will, and of the Lord’s Supper. What induced Melanchthon to treat these doctrines more fully and differently was perhaps the appearance of a number of errorists who taught and preached thoroughly unscriptural and heretical views, especially pertaining to these doctrines. One of these was a Dutchman by the name of Johann Campanus, a native of Luettich or Liege. He was an Anti-Trinitarian, an Anabaptist, a *Schwaermer* (Enthusiast), and one who held thoroughly unscriptural views concerning the Lord’s Supper. At Cleve, where he became pastor for a number of years, he preached with such fanatical conviction on the immediate coming of the Day of Judgment that most of the members of his flock sold all their earthly possessions in anticipation of the final event only to have the shocking experience of still finding themselves very much in the flesh and on old *terra firma* on the day which Campanus had designated as the last. As a result the irate peasants chased Campanus out. The Cleve authorities had him arrested and kept in prison to his end. This Campanus had turned up at Wittenberg already in 1528. Since he immediately began to preach his irrational and heretical views, the Duke Elector had him arrested; but since Melanchthon pleaded for him, the Elector had him released from prison. He showed his gratitude and his true nature by turning right around and writing and publishing shortly thereafter a most vicious attack on the “horrible” Lutheran errors. Luther, when asked for his opinion, shrugged his shoulders. Melanchthon, however, when similarly approached replied: “My opinion is that he should be strung up on the highest gallows.”

The other errorist that caused quite a stir at this time was the Spanish doctor, Michael Server. He had written quite a number of heretical books on a number of topics. Outstanding was a very learned and scientific treatise against the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, for which he had found a publisher at Basel. Melanchthon in his *Loci* does not directly try to refute the views of Servet but rather presents his own views, or theories, pertaining to the Trinity, building them on the basis, almost purely, of religious speculations. He tries to penetrate the divine mystery of the Holy Trinity by the use of human analogies. “In man,” he writes, “there is first the essence of the soul, then the thoughts, and thirdly the will, love, joy, and sorrow. The thoughts are images of all things that one perceives; the words express these thoughts; then follow joy and sorrow. All of this is an adaptation of the God-head. The Father sees Himself, looks at Himself, and knows His thought. And thus viewing Himself, His essential image is born. The Father in whom there is nothing transitory creates through His viewing of Himself His essential image, and that is the Word, the Son. And the Holy Ghost is the essence of eternal love and joy between Father and Son, who are well-pleased with each other.” These purely speculative views of Melanchthon, pertaining to the divine mystery of the Holy Trinity, incidentally, were not adopted by the Protestant fathers. On the contrary, he was roundly and sharply criticized for them by the Lutheran theologians later on. And he richly deserved it.

Melanchthon apparently also felt the need of a revision of the article on the Freedom of the Will as he had presented it in the first edition of his *Loci* of 1521. To Melanchthon it apparently had become increasingly more clear that if you want to speak of the conversion and justification of man, you must assume that man personally through a free acceptance acquires the salvation that is offered freely in Christ Jesus through the Word. And therefore Melanchthon developed ever more clearly the doctrine of a certain freedom of action in man aside of and in conjunction with the working of the Holy Ghost. Melanchthon, then, taught that there were three factors, or causes, involved in man's conversion, namely: The Word, the Holy Spirit, and the will of man; the latter is not to remain inactive but becomes definitely active, opposing the human weakness. Melanchthon therefore holds that the preachers are, of course, to praise in the highest measure the grace of God and the powerful help of the Holy Ghost, but also admonish the hearers that they must not remain indifferent and secure. "For God, indeed, draws man, but he draws only those that are willing to be drawn." Here appeared for the first time Melanchthon's synergistic doctrine pertaining to the cooperation of man's will with the will of God, because of which he was later on so roundly and harshly attacked and condemned.

This view concerning the freedom of the will Melanchthon takes up once more in another revised edition of his *Loci*, that of 1544 or 1545. Here he formulates the doctrine as follows: "God does not make man righteous because of his own good works but because of the grace and mercy of God, in order that the glory might not be ours but Christ's through whose works we are freed from our sins. Nevertheless, the merciful God does not deal with us as with blocks, but draws us in such a fashion that our will also cooperates with God when we have reached mature age."

It was a strange thing, but a fact, that his opponents at first thought very highly of this revised edition of his *Loci*. For in June of 1549 one of his harshest critics and opponents, Flacius, wrote: "As little as I wish my own destruction, as little do I wish the destruction of your *Loci*!" Yet later, when Flacius and the other opponents of Melanchthon tangled with him again, they condemned this view of Melanchthon in the harshest of terms.

It was quite evident from Melanchthon's words and actions that he was anxiously working towards a concord or union with the South German and Swiss Reformers. Numerous meetings were held by individuals and groups of theologians from both sides for the purpose of discussing and ironing out, if possible, the points of difference. One important difference pertained to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. In his revised *Loci* of 1535 Melanchthon presents the results of such discussions and also of his own searching studies on this subject. He writes, and we quote: "I have said before that the word sacrament means an external sign which God has attached to His promises and through which He offers His grace. This external sign (bread and wine) is therefore also a sacrament, for one is to understand it and accept it as an external divine token and seal of the whole Gospel. And it is therefore profitable to accept this external sign if we believe the divine promises, namely, that through Christ we have salvation, comfort, and forgiveness of sins. And the external sign God places before our bodily eyes, and permits us to eat, drink, and enjoy, so that we might be awakened or strengthened in our faith and be made more certain and sure in our knowledge of Christ. For if Christ gives us His body, He accepts us as His members and most comfortingly shows us thereby that His grace and goodness is there for us. For how could God come closer to us with His grace and His gifts than when Christ gives us His body and we become His members? If we, however, are to partake of all of these blessings, then faith must be there, faith in His divine promises, and we thus through the external sign and the word receive comfort and strength. St. Paul has said, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' (I Cor. 10:16). If therefore in the Lord's Supper bread and wine are given, there is given to us in truth the body and the blood of Christ, and Christ is truly there and is strong in us as Hilarius says: 'This eating and drinking achieves that Christ is truly in us, and we in Him. It is indeed a most wonderful and precious token and earnest of His great divine love for us and His great mercy towards us. And now since Christ in His Last Supper gives us His body and His blood to eat and to drink and makes us His members, we know that He loves us and that He will care for us, that He will protect and keep us to the end.' " Into the investigation of the problem of just how Christ (His body and blood) are united with the external elements (bread and wine) Melanchthon did not enter, no doubt in order to avoid

fruitless debate. For to his friend Veit Dietrich of Nuremberg he writes: “Concerning the problems of how the body and blood unite with the external elements, one reads nothing in the writings of the Fathers, and I do not intend to bring futile disputations into the Church either. That’s why I have said so little about such questions and fruitless disputations.”

As a result of the numerous gatherings and discussions between the leading theologians of South Germany, Switzerland, and Wittenberg, the general desire developed for a formal concord of union of all these parties. And so a meeting was held at Wittenberg in May 1536 in Luther’s home because of his illness. Here the assembled theologians decided to set up a formula of concord on the basis of which they could all unite. It was again left to Melanchthon to draw up such a formula. It dealt only with the Lord’s Supper, Baptism, and Confession. And since Melanchthon presented the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper nearly the same as he had recently done in his revised *Loci*, it will not be necessary for us to repeat this. And since the articles on Baptism and Confession agreed pretty well with our genuinely Lutheran concept of the same, it will not be necessary for us to present them here either.

This formula was signed by Bucer, Capito, and 14 other theologians. The Swiss representatives refused to sign it, however, primarily because of the view expressed in it that the unworthy guests also receive the body and blood of the Lord, a view which they held as unscriptural and heretical. A formal union was not established at this time, however, because of the small number of theologians present, and possibly also because of the refusal of the Swiss theologians to sign it. The document itself has gone down on the pages of history as the *Wittenberger Konkordie*, the “Concord of Wittenberg.”

In order to show how easy it was to arouse suspicion even against such an outstanding scholar and reformer as Philip Melanchthon and raise the charge against him of drifting away from the pure doctrines of the Protestant Church and inclining ever more to Catholic doctrine, we now proceed to relate briefly the strife of Melanchthon with two other Protestant theologians, the pastors Cordatus and Schenk.

The scholar Melanchthon, as we know, was constantly working on the forms of the basic Lutheran doctrines, filing and changing them in order to remove all ambiguity and thus to eliminate all danger of misunderstanding. Now, in working over the doctrine of justification, Melanchthon had written that repentance and good works were the *conditio sine qua non* of justification and salvation. What Melanchthon wanted to say was the simple fact that without good works faith would be dead, so without repentance preceding and good works following faith there would be no justification. The expression was picked up by one of Melanchthon’s colleagues, Prof. Kaspar Cruciger, who used it in one of his lectures. In his audience was a certain Pastor Conrad Cordatus of Niemek. Cordatus immediately smelled a heresy and demanded an explanation of Cruciger. Since he didn’t give any, Cordatus threatened to issue a charge of heresy against him with the theological faculty, that he was spreading popish or philosophical views which were wholly contrary to the Protestant article of justification. Cruciger now tried to explain how he understood the expression, but Cordatus would not accept it but rather carried the charges further to Luther and Amsdorf and finally even to the Electoral court. Since it eventually became known that Melanchthon was really the author of the “heretical” expression, Cordatus also hurled his charges against him. And as Melanchthon at this time was absent from Wittenberg, Cordatus spread the rumor that Melanchthon had had a falling out with Luther and that he would not return to Wittenberg again. There now broke out in the ranks of the Protestant theologians a serious turmoil, strife, and division. It was in the year 1537. As soon as Melanchthon heard of all this, he wrote to Luther and his colleagues explaining how he meant the expression, and why he had thought that he could use it in order to eliminate certain common errors in connection with the doctrine of justification. At the same time he offered to submit the whole affair to Luther’s and his colleagues’ judgment. Luther apparently saw no reason why he should not trust his good friend and accepted his explanation. So the case was laid to rest. But not for long. The fanatical and hot-headed Cordatus apparently could not control his temper, but opened the case again by appealing to Chancellor Dr. Brueck, to the Rector of the University, Justus Jonas, and to Bugenhagen, declaring, “that he could not suffer that at Wittenberg such a large mob should oppose the pure doctrines of our dear man of God, Luther.” Now also Melanchthon’s temper flared up, and he sent a sharp reply to Cordatus, declaring that if he, Cordatus, had such a sharp mind that he could solve all the problems and controversies that

had arisen in the Church, he wished him luck; he, Melanchthon, did not possess such a mind but could, and did, commit errors, which he, however, was perfectly willing to submit to the judgment of the Wittenberg faculty and other theologians. Rector Justus Jonas now ordered Cordatus to keep his peace. The latter did so, declaring in a reply however that he had really not meant Melanchthon at all with his attacks, but Cruciger.

The cause of the strife between Melanchthon and Jacob Schenk, court pastor at Freiburg, was an opinion which Melanchthon had given to Schenk on his question, whether it were permitted to administer the Lord's Supper under one form only. Melanchthon's answer had been that in order to avoid giving an offense one might administer the Lord's Supper under one form only to such guests as had not been sufficiently instructed and indoctrinated. Schenk thereupon complained to Melanchthon that he had not given him an answer sufficiently strong. He also saw papal tendencies in the reply to the Elector's court. Here Cordatus had already aroused suspicion. Added to this were rumors that had reached the court recently to the effect that Melanchthon was teaching something special on the Freedom of the Will, that he had changed the *Augsburg Confession*, and that he, Cruciger, and numerous masters and students of the university differed in a number of points with Luther. The Elector, by nature somewhat inclined to suspicions, now commissioned his chancellor, Brueck, to go to Luther, but secretly, and find out if, according to his (Luther's) opinion, the charges were well founded. If so, Melanchthon would have to be removed from the University, even if through his removal the University suffered a serious loss. Luther and Bugenhagen apparently gave a favorable opinion, for they remained silent, and Melanchthon never found out about this action of the Elector.

There is no doubt, however, that Luther was somewhat disturbed in his heart pertaining to his dear friend and colleague, Philip, who during the last years had become rather independent in his thinking and was going his own ways. Luther, however, was disturbed not so much over the strife between Melanchthon and Cordatus and Schenk as by the signs of high regard or esteem which a number of leading Catholics were showing Melanchthon. Thus in this year 1537 Melanchthon received a letter from Cardinal Sadolet in which this learned and in a catholic sense deeply devout prelate offered Melanchthon his friendship, since both of them, so he declared, did not belong to that class of people that hate everybody that thinks and believes differently than they do. A little later Sadolet directed a letter to the Rector, Johann Sturm of Strassburg, in which Melanchthon, Bucer, and Sturm are pictured as men who do not possess Luther's vehemence and with whom the cardinal therefore wishes to have scholarly and theological intercourse. Both Catholics and Protestants soon carried copies of this letter around with them to prove to anybody who was willing to listen that Melanchthon was not far away from Catholicism. Melanchthon never answered Sadolet's letter but wrote to his friend Veit Dietrich: "I believe the cardinal actually thought that through his mild letter, as through the lyre of Orpheus, I would be softened and moved to deny our doctrines." Luther in all seriousness saw in the esteem which the Catholics showed Melanchthon a sly trick with which they hoped to induce him to defect. "If Philip would show willingness to comply," writes Luther, "he would and could easily be made a cardinal and would nevertheless be allowed to keep his wife and children." Luther, of course, knew well enough that Melanchthon would never comply. What troubled him was the mildness, gentleness, and moderation through which Melanchthon was making friends even among the Catholic opponents.

The strife with Cordatus over the *conditio sine qua non* problem was finally settled when Melanchthon, after having studied the whole situation once more and consulting even Aristotle and the Scholastics as to the meaning of the expression, dropped it because of the danger of its being misunderstood.

The strife with Schenk pertaining to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper dragged on for quite some time. Numerous meetings and discussions took place without much progress. Finally it was agreed to hold a general meeting at which a number of questions or articles were to be placed before Melanchthon in order thus to clarify the situation and settle the whole problem once and for all. In a letter to Veit Dietrich Melanchthon declared that he was perfectly willing and ready to meet the issue in the manner proposed; that he was already composing something in defense of his position, and that the meeting would give him the opportunity to state the reasons why he had changed many things, and stated some things in a milder form, "that the object of all of my work is indeed not to be the founder of a new sect, or to fight against Luther, but for the benefit of youth to develop and state the vital Christian doctrines in a simple and clear manner."

The general meeting never took place.

## The Variata

In our discussions we have now reached the year 1540. And it is in this year that Melancthon issued his revised edition of the *Augustana*, known as the *Variata*. In spite of the fact that the *Augustana* through the signatures of its backers and through its reading before Emperor and Diet had attained official status, Melancthon nevertheless continued to work on its form, altering, changing, and extending it, with the one object in view of improving its wording, and thus setting forth the basic truths pertaining to man's eternal salvation with ever greater clarity. Already the German octavo edition of 1533 showed quite a number of changes and a considerable extension of a number of articles. Through all these alterations and extensions no doctrinal changes were introduced. But all this was changed in the revised quarto edition of 1540, the *Variata*. It was issued under the title: *Confessio fidei exhibita invictissimo Imperatori Carolo V. Caesari Augusto in Comitibus Augustae. Addita est Apologia Confessionis diligenter recognita*. According to this title only the *Apology* was revised; and the text of the *Augustana*, together with its original preface and the names of the first signers, was added. Thus the reader does not expect to find any important changes in the documents. But in reality Melancthon here issued a new partly revised edition of the *Augustana*, in which he did not hesitate to introduce a number of decided changes or alterations. That he changed the sequence of the different articles, especially in the second part, did not affect their content, and therefore is of little consequence. It was no doubt done for the sake of greater logical order. More significant, however, is the fact that many of the articles were lengthened considerably so that the page numbering of the *Variata* is more than double that of the *Invariata*. Many of these extensions, no doubt, were due to Melancthon's desire for greater clarity of the various articles, and for sharper polemics against Rome. By a liberal use of the *Apology* and a much more liberal reference to Holy Writ the work-righteousness and legalism of Rome is emphatically rejected, while the all-sufficiency of Christ's merits for our righteousness and eternal salvation is thoroughly stressed. But unfortunately over against this strengthening of our Confession there is, on the other hand, found a decided weakening of the same. Thus in Article V the preaching of repentance is stressed as the first function of the Gospel. And in Article XX, in spite of all the stressing of faith as the source of good works, their necessity is at the same time stated and stressed in unmistakably clear terms. In Article XVIII Melancthon speaks of the working of the Holy Spirit, without whose *gubernare et adjuvare* there is no fear, faith, nor righteousness, and whom we receive, if we, and when we, give assent (*assentimur*) to the Word of God, in a manner which in connection with his well-known swing towards a synergistic position in his *Loci Communes* of 1535, forces on one a synergistic interpretation. In Article X, which deals with the Lord's Supper, Melancthon not only leaves out the reprobation of *secus docentes*, but also changes the wording of the original form of the doctrine. In the *Invariata* Melancthon had written: *De coena Domini docent, quod corpus et sanguis Christi vere adsint et distribuuntur vescentibus in coena Domini; et improbant secus docentes*. In his *Variata* Melancthon had changed this to *Quod cum pane at vino vere exhibeantur corpus et sanguis Christi vescentibus in Coena Domini*. While the *Invariata* speaks of a real presence and distribution of the body and blood of Christ to the *vescentibus*, in the *Variata* this has been toned down to: "That with the bread and wine truly are exhibited the body and blood of Christ to the partakers." It is certainly true that the new form of the *Variata* does fully reject the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation while the original form of the *Invariata* found the approval of even the *Confutatio Pontifica*. There is also nothing un-Lutheran in the wording of the *Variata*, since the preposition, *cum*, was never objected to by Luther, and since the expression *vescentibus* assures the meaning of the actual eating and drinking by mouth. Nevertheless, the wording allows the assumption of only a simultaneous relation between the heavenly gift and the earthly sign or symbol and lessens the mediating character of the latter. In addition to this, there is furthermore a bright light thrown on the expression by the twofold fact that, first, the *Wittenberg Concord* contained the words, *Cum pane et vino vere et substantialiter adesse, exhiberi et sumi corpus et sanguinem Christi*, and secondly, that Luther, who in his first draft of the *Smalcald Articles* had written: "Under the bread and wine is present the true body and blood of Christ," had later changed this to: "Bread and wine in the Lord's

Supper is the true body and blood of Christ.” Melanchthon not only never accepted this formula of Luther, but also left out the expressions of the *Wittenberg Formula of Concord* of 1536, which were pointed to exclude the Swiss *variata*, a sufficient proof of the fact that he thereby not only hoped to uphold the union with the South German reformers (Bucer, etc.), but that this union could also eventually be expanded to include the Swiss.

As little as one can deny the dogmatically not indifferent change in Article X, so little can one be in doubt as to the motive for this change. While the formula of 1530, in the *Augustana*, tried to stress the fact that there was still a certain amount of agreement between it and Rome, so the formula of 1540, that of the *Variata*, no doubt intended to meet the Swiss at least so far that Calvin’s doctrine could be found in it. It is quite self-evident that a document which had been accepted officially by the Lutheran Church only 10 years before now because of its most indifferent and inadmissible changes, and also because of the motives behind these changes, became unacceptable to the Lutheran churches as an official confession of their faith.

Nevertheless, it took some time until the adherents of the *Augsburg Confession* rejected the *Variata*. Since it was well known that Melanchthon loved to alter, to change, to correct, and improve the confessions, this latest altered edition of the *Augustana* at first aroused little, if any, opposition. The only person that expressed concern about it was the Elector of Saxony, John Frederick. But even his opposition soon subsided. Even Luther seems to have said nothing against it. For the expressions of disapproval ascribed to him: “Philippe, you have no right to change the *Confessionem Augustanam* so often, because it is not your confession but the churches’,” cannot be verified. Even though we must assume that Luther knew of these changes or alterations of the *Variata* and disapproved of them, he apparently did not voice his disapproval but let it pass in silence, as he sometimes did, especially since in this case its author was his dear friend Philipp. It is certainly somewhat unreasonable or presumptuous to claim, as the Philippists and Reformed did, that Luther’s silence was a proof of his approval.

The first one publicly to express his disapproval of the *Variata* was, strange to say, none other than Dr. Eck of Ingolstadt. It was Eck who at the Colloquy of Worms, in 1541, where the *Variata* was made the basis of the disputation, pointed out the *Variata* as being, because of the altered form, especially offensive to him and all the Roman theologians. But just as Melanchthon was not at all impressed by these attacks, but rather in the new edition of 1542 introduced some more changes, so the *Variata* was used by many theologians without reservations. Thus it was used, as has already been noted, at the Colloquy of Worms in 1541. Again it was used at Regensburg in 1547, as also at the congress of the princes at Naumburg in 1561. Here at Regensburg the *Variata* was recognized in the *praefatio* as the “excellent and thorough repetition of the *Invariata*,” since it was by this time used by most of the schools and churches.

But at the same time, it was here at Naumburg that it was first stressed that the *Variata* was only recognized in so far as it agreed in principle with the *Invariata*, but that the *Invariata* was to remain henceforth, as heretofore, the only generally recognized norm of faith. Also here at Naumburg strenuous opposition was raised against the *Variata* by those who had come to recognize the far-reaching differences between it and the *Invariata*, and they most emphatically rejected the attempts of the Cryptocalvinists to have the *Variata* sanctioned, recognized, and accepted.

The first Lutheran theologian publicly to criticize and condemn the *Variata* was Flacius. This he did at the Colloquy of Weimar in 1560. He was soon followed by a growing number of other theologians like Mörlin and Stössel, while the Philippists adopted the *Variata* as their party symbol. As early as 1559 they had taken it up in their *corpus Philippicum*. It is also significant that the Cryptocalvinists glorified the *Variata*. And Calvin declared publicly that he was in full agreement with it. It was almost self-evident that Flacius should continue his sometimes most vicious attacks on, and condemnation of, the *Variata*. But also other conservative men like Andreae and Martin Chemnitz rejected it emphatically. Chemnitz was in favor of letting the *Variata* stand as an extension of the *Invariata*, from the polemic angle, and asserted that it certainly would be advisable to restore to the Church the original *Augustana*. And so it came about that when the *Book of Concord* was compiled only the *Augustana* came at all into consideration. The *Formula of Concord* stresses in the introduction to the *Epitome* and the *Solida Declaratio*, that only the first unaltered *Augsburg Confession* of the year 1530 belonged to the Symbols of the Lutheran Church. And in the introduction of the *Book of Concord* every attempt to smuggle into

the Church under the cover of the *Variata* false and impure doctrine is emphatically rejected; and it is asserted that the *Variata*, since it is contrary to the first and adopted Confession, has never been recognized nor accepted by the Church. Therefore it was quite natural that all later attempts in the interest of union to obtain for the *Variata* official recognition along with the *Invariata* failed because of the well-known fact that the Lutheran Church from the very beginning recognized the *Variata* only in so far as it agreed with the original Confession, the *Augustana*, and immediately rejected it when it was placed beside the *Invariata* with the object of carrying differing, not to say false, doctrines into the Church. It certainly is perfectly proper, meet, and right that to this very day the Lutheran Church binds and obligates its servants to the unaltered form of the *Augsburg Confession*.

### **The Meeting and Colloquy of Worms, 1540**

In spite of the fact that the numerous conventions or meetings which were held by representative Protestant and Catholic theologians in the years following the presentation of the *Augsburg Confession* had led to no positive results, the Emperor still did not give up the hope of eventually dissolving the obtaining differences peacefully through further discussion. Thus in April of 1540 he ordered that a convention be held at Speier in June, 1540, where the religious or theological problems which were plaguing the Empire were once more to be discussed publicly by leading theologians of both sides. But because of the plague at Speier the colloquy was transferred to Hagenau in Alsace. Nothing positive was accomplished here; so the Emperor ordered another colloquy to be held at Worms. In the meantime Melanchthon had taken up and finished the revision of the *Augsburg Confession*, the *Variata*. This *Variata* was to form the basis of the theological discussions at the colloquy of Worms. Almost everybody, both in the Protestant as well as in the Catholic camp, seems to have been optimistic about the outcome of this colloquy, believing that this time there would be positive results. Both sides began to prepare for the coming discussions with great zeal and enthusiasm. The Duke Elector of Saxony instructed his theologians, Melanchthon, Cruciger, and Myconius, to take their stand firmly on the *Augsburg Confession*. Among the Catholic theologians there were a few moderates, like Heinrich Stall, professor of theology at Heidelberg, and Julius Pflug of Mainz; but the majority belonged to the radical wing, men like Dr. Eck, Cochläus, and Michael Helling. Of the South German liberal Protestant theologians there appeared Bucer, Capito, Brenz, and others. With them came John Calvin and Johann Sturm. Dr. Eck is supposed to have declared jubilantly that he would defend the Catholic doctrines and forms so successfully that the Protestants would not succeed in having even the holy water abolished. Indeed, Melanchthon expected very little from the colloquy, for to his friend Myconius he wrote: "Everything is uniting against me, trying to make me believe that our opponents merely want to separate us in order that they might the more easily and surely suppress the firm and positive among us. In nothing are they less interested than in union." To his friend Camerarius he wrote: "With the help of God I will do my utmost to explain and defend the all-important doctrines about which we are fighting, without sophistry. I can do this more easily since I have stopped being concerned about the will of the princes, and therefore am much more unconcerned and quiet than I was formerly."

The Protestants now requested Melanchthon to compose a formal protest, in case the papal legate would demand of them that they should submit to the judgment of the Pope. Melanchthon had already composed such a protest at Gotha on his way to Worms in anticipation of just such a demand. This protest he now presented to the Protestants. In it Melanchthon states that they have always demanded the free judgment of the Church in their affair and have always been perfectly willing to defend their cause. "And since the Emperor has demanded this discussion of all doctrines," he writes, "we hope that he wants a public presentation of the truth in order really to help the Church. We promise to do that very thing in simple and plain words, adducing no other testimony than that of the Bible, as God has enjoined, expecting the same also of our opponents. And as we also have already before rejected a council called by the Pope, so we now also refuse to submit to the judgment of the Pope, for the Pope has shown and declared himself as our enemy; and we charge and accuse him here of error. And no matter how great the dangers of a separation or split might be, our conscience has forced us to break with the papacy." Since this declaration seemed too sharp to some of the secular advisers, it was



somewhat toned down by the vice-chancellor of Saxony, and in that slightly modified form was read to the Protestants, and by them unanimously adopted on November 11. Melanchthon then proposed that they present and defend their doctrines in an emphatic and thorough-going manner, and not allow themselves to be drawn into an attempt to refute the Catholic doctrines, since that would only lead to endless and futile debates and squabbles; and that, finally, they firmly protest against any attempt at having the Pope or his legate function as judges but treat them as enemies.

It soon became evident that the Catholic theologians were not at all ready for the discussions, and were, besides, quite thoroughly divided into a radical and a moderate group, while the Protestants on the other hand were fully prepared and solidly united. Because of all this the leaders of the Catholics, the imperial chancellor, Granvella, and the papal legate, Campeggio, followed a dilatory policy. Thus a lot of time was wasted with futile meetings, debates, and plannings. Not until January 14, 1541, was the colloquy finally officially opened. Melanchthon and Dr. Eck were chosen as the official leaders or speakers. The Protestants insisted on, and finally succeeded in, having the *Augsburg Confession* used as the basis for all discussions.

The first topic that was taken up, according to agreement, was the doctrine of original sin. A lengthy debate ensued in which Melanchthon, because of his quiet and stable ways and through the clarity of his arguments and the elegance of his Latin, caused general admiration, while Eck with his haughty and overbearing ways and his sophistries made a poor impression on all, even on Granvella. The Protestants were full of hope. Franz Burkhart wrote to Chancellor Brück: "Dr. Eck has found his master. It seemed to me as if David fought with Goliath. Others have said, 'The speech of Mr. Philip over against that of Dr. Eck is like the song of the nightingale against the screeching of the raven.'" But in spite of all of the debating and discussions the negotiations led to no positive results. Then rumors reached Worms that the Emperor was planning to transfer the colloquy to Regensburg, at which city Charles was intending to call the Imperial Diet into session for the twofold purpose, first, of discussing the Turkish War, and secondly, of finally settling the religious squabble. On January 18, the imperial order actually did reach Worms. On the preceding day Dr. Eck, acting on orders from Granvella, presented an article on original sin, composed by him in a decidedly scholastic fashion. On the surface of it, it did not seem to differ greatly from the Protestant view. To Melanchthon it was entirely unsatisfactory. However, the rest of the Protestants accepted it, but with reservations. So the only fruit of more than three months of labor was one article, Dr. Eck's article on original sin, and that was lacking in clearness.

The experience which Melanchthon had had at Wittenberg no doubt strengthened him still more against all attempts at doubtful and ambiguous reconciliations or compromises. For to a friend he wrote: "A new generation of sceptics has risen among us which strives after reconciliation with our enemies. I hereby declare bluntly that I accept only those doctrines which our Church has laid down in its public confessions. For I hold that only in them the full agreement with the Universal Church of the Son of God is found. Therefore I shall never separate from her and never will agree to a union as long as our opponents insist on their errors."

### **The Colloquy of Regensburg**

To the new generation of sceptics of which Melanchthon here writes belonged above all the Duke Elector Joachim of Brandenburg and his pastor, Johann Agricola, the old enemy of the Wittenberg theologians. Joachim had just recently sent to Luther a formula of reconciliation, which Luther had, however, rejected as impossible. Luther, fearing that this formula might be presented to the Diet and there find partial acceptance, advised his Elector not to send any theologian to the Diet at Regensburg. This warning the Elector did not heed, however, declaring that his failure to send representatives would be interpreted as an act of fear, namely, the fear of publicly confessing his faith. So Melanchthon and Cruciger received orders to journey to Regensburg via Altenburg, where other representatives would join them. The Elector realized that the Landgraf Philip of Hesse would be at the Diet. Since it was rumored that because of his doubtful marriage he was ready to make dangerous concessions to the Emperor, the Elector feared that he might try to influence Melanchthon to the same end; so he did a strange thing: he ordered his advisors to spy on Melanchthon, to watch over him, to keep him as much as possible in his quarters, and to prevent all secret meetings between Melanchthon and Philip of

Hesse and the Catholics. That these misgivings of the Elector were completely unwarranted is proved by a letter which Melanchthon wrote to his friend, Veit Dietrich, a few days before he left for Regensburg. He wrote: "What could be more foolish and dangerous than these repeated attempts at reconciliation, which at the most can lead only to a sham-peace? Why don't we declare openly that we believe in that which is written in our confessions, and that we will neither before a synod, nor on the demand of the Emperor or any other authority, defend ourselves for our faith. That would be a sensible and manly action. You can not believe how much this whole affair worries me, when I think of all the tricks, treachery, and sophistry with which our opponents will attack us. And our Paris [i.e., the Landgraf Philip] is supporting these ways, not only out of fear but also because of a certain evil bent of his heart." From these words we can readily see that there was little danger of Melanchthon being influenced by the Landgraf, whose unsteady and vacillating attitude he had already noticed at Worms.

Many princes and bishops came to the Diet of Regensburg, but comparatively few Protestant theologians showed up, much to the disappointment of Melanchthon, who feared that these few would have a hard time of it trying to hold their own in the tricky disputations that they would have to face here at Regensburg. To friends he wrote that they had resolved not to debate on any point until they had first carefully discussed it among themselves.

After a lengthy delay the Colloquy of Regensburg was finally officially opened by the Emperor himself on April 5th with a short address, in which he indicated the mode of procedure that was to be followed, namely, that he the Emperor would select a few theologians from both sides who were to discuss the points of difference and present their conclusions to the Diet and to the papal legate, Contarini, whom the Pope had sent "as a lover of peace and as a prelate famous for his common sense." The Protestants, and especially Melanchthon, were thoroughly disappointed with this announcement, for they had hoped for, and expected, a thorough public discussion. They made a counterproposal, which the Emperor rejected, however, and insisted on his own plan of action. Of the Protestants Charles selected such as were known for their moderation, namely, Melanchthon, Bucer, and a Hessian pastor by the name of Johann Pistorius. Of the Catholics whom Charles appointed, two were also known for their moderation, namely, Julius Pflug and Johann Gropper. But the third member of the Catholic group was the well-known implacable adversary of Luther, Dr. Eck, whom the Emperor added to satisfy the more radical Catholics. After the Catholic representatives had proposed a series of articles which were to form the basis of the discussions, the whole proceedings were suddenly and unexpectedly stopped and changed by the Emperor when he presented through Granvella to the debaters a book that became famous under the name of *Regensburger Buch* and which was to form the basis for the debate in place of the articles proposed by the Catholic theologians. This book had been kept a secret up to this point. Now what was the content of this book, and who had written it? The idea originally had come from Philip of Hesse, who at Worms, when that colloquy was getting nowhere, had determined to try his hand at the task of reconciliation. So he ordered Bucer to meet secretly with Johann Gropper and Gerhard Volkruk, an imperial adviser and Granvella's secretary, respectively, and discuss with them what might be done to further the Christian reformation. The three entered into this plan with enthusiasm. And as the Colloquy of Worms drew to a close, Gropper with the help of Volkruk drew up a booklet composed of 23 articles, which he handed to Bucer and Capito. Through Bucer it was sent to Philip of Hesse and Joachim of Brandenburg. Strangely, Philip was not at all pleased with it, while Joachim was completely taken in by it. This compilation of 23 articles became known as the *Regensburg Buch*, the *Book of Regensburg*. It was this booklet which the Emperor in a surprise move now handed to the theologians at Regensburg and insisted that it must form the basis of their discussions. It is interesting to see what the opinions of the leading reformers concerning this booklet were. Luther, to whom the Elector Joachim had sent a copy, wrote: "These people, that is, the authors, are well-meaning, but the Pope, the cardinals, and the bishops can never accept these impossible proposals. It is futile that one tries to use these means. It also contains articles which our people will never accept." Melanchthon merely wrote on its cover: "Platonic [that is impractical] politics!" And the book did indeed, as had been expected, satisfy neither the Protestants nor the Catholics. Melanchthon found the book full of ambiguities and held that it would be much more profitable to the Church if one called things by their right names and said that a ship is a ship and a fig a fig. He derided the

book as a *Talmud*. These remarks of Melanchthon clearly show that the fears of the Elector of Saxony and of Luther, that Melanchthon might follow the example of Johann of Brandenburg and be taken in by the book, were groundless. Indeed, repeatedly he declared in the presence of Granvella that he would rather die than allow anything to be done or adopted against the Gospel and his conscience. Luther again had full confidence in Melanchthon. In a number of letters he encouraged him to stand fast and expressed the hope that the discussions would not prove fruitless because they after all gave them an opportunity to testify.

“The Lord,” wrote Luther, “who has called you, whose ambassador, disciple, and witness you are in these grave matters, rule you and keep you spotless unto the end, that you might bring forth much fruit. I am with you in the midst of the wolves with my sighs and prayers.”

The Colloquy finally got started on April 28. Before each session the Protestant collocutors called all of the Protestant theologians together for a meeting in order to discuss with them all of the questions, or problems, that were to be under discussion at the next session. Even Calvin, who had come to Regensburg with the representatives of Strassburg, took part in these discussions and was allowed to express his opinions! Again as at Worms, Melanchthon and Dr. Eck were the chief spokesmen.

Now what was the content of the 23 articles which made up the *Book of Regensburg*? It would lead us too far if we wanted to name and discuss them all in detail.

The first four articles pertained to the status of man before the Fall; the freedom of the will; the cause or origin of sin; and original sin. These four articles were accepted by all as written, since they expressed the doctrines of the Ancient Church, though not always with the same clearness. But Melanchthon let them pass, since, as he explained, they could be correctly understood. On the second day, April 29, the discussion of the next article was taken up, that on justification. As it was stated in the Book, it contained many strange opinions, or views, the sum of which was that, “When once man stands in the status of grace, he can keep God’s commandments and refrain from sin.” Melanchthon wanted to change this into, “When once man stands in the status of grace he can resist sin and has the beginning of obedience.” Since Eck objected to this form, as he also rejected that of the Book, they decided to drop the discussion of this form and take up the study of the doctrine itself, and if they should agree on this, draw up a new article. Strange as it may seem, Dr. Eck seems not to have opposed the Protestant view very strongly, only that he was trying to find a more ambiguous formula in order to save at least something of the Catholic formula. Melanchthon, who did not want to lend his hand to such confusion, was of the opinion that they might just as well bring the whole colloquy to an end, for if they could not even agree on the central doctrine of justification, there was little hope of coming to an agreement on the rest of the articles, the less important of the Book. But Bucer and Jakob Sturm insisted that they continue, since, as they put it, it would be a great gain if they would succeed in having the opponents accept and adopt the Protestant doctrine of justification. They were placing their hope in Gropper and Pflug, both moderate Catholics, who had all along strongly opposed the sophisms of Dr. Eck and had tried to tone down his temperamental outbursts. When Melanchthon still insisted on ending the colloquy, they accused him of being a willing tool of the Elector of Saxony, who was bent, so they charged, on sabotaging the whole colloquy. Then Melanchthon finally consented to continue.

Cardinal Contarini now proposed a formula which the two other Catholic collocutors, and after some changes, also the Protestant representatives, consented to. The formula is so long and involved that I shall not attempt to quote it here. But in spite of these shortcomings the formula contained and held to two points on which Melanchthon absolutely insisted, namely, justification by faith alone because of the merits of Jesus Christ, and the necessity of repentance and good works following the spiritual rebirth. Though Melanchthon would have liked to find certain clarifying statements included, he nevertheless, so as not to wreck the whole undertaking again, agreed to it. Many Protestants were enthusiastic over their gains. Calvin wrote to Farel: “You will be surprised to see how much we have obtained from our opponents. Our representatives have held fast the sum of true doctrine. There is nothing in this formula which you will not find in our confessional writings.” The Elector of Saxony, however, was not at all impressed by the so-called “gains.” To him the formula seemed dark and full of scholastic expressions which allowed a number of different interpretations, so that now one would have to charge the Protestants that they had through their submission proved that they had

thus far taught false doctrine. Again Melanchthon as the chief spokesman of the Protestants had to stand the brunt of these charges. Again he was spied upon, his letters to his friends at Wittenberg opened, and all sorts of rumors spread concerning him, often contradictory in nature. To some Melanchthon was untrustworthy, weak and submissive; to others he was too harsh, too stubborn, and stiff-necked. The Elector of Saxony ordered his representatives not to accept any more formulas unless Luther had first seen and passed judgment on them. And though Melanchthon in a letter to Luther wrote that if they could agree on the rest of the articles of the Book, then the formula pertaining to the doctrine of justification would easily be explained; that he had consented to the formula only in order not to lose everything; and, finally, that nothing that had been adopted thus far was final, nevertheless, the Elector sent Nicolaus Amsdorf to Regensburg to watch over Melanchthon, and if necessary, to impress upon him the need of taking a firm and uncompromising stand.

When after much labor an agreement had been reached on the doctrine of justification but representatives of both sides began to add restrictions and explanations to the text, both Melanchthon and Eck hoped that they were now done with the *Book of Regensburg* and that they could and would now continue the colloquy with the *Augsburg Confession* as a basis. But since Granvella insisted that they continue with the *Regensburg Book*, and Bucer and Gropper supported him in this, the rest of the colloquists including Melanchthon finally agreed to this demand. So they continued with the discussion of the next articles of the Book: first, On the Church; then, On the Sacraments; and next, On Confession. But no agreement could be reached on them. And when Gropper very staunchly defended the auricular confession, and Melanchthon with equal vigor opposed him with numerous quotations from Scripture, which Gropper, however, did not recognize, the argument grew rather heated. This finally induced Melanchthon to propose and demand very emphatically that they break off with the discussion and end the colloquy. He was now accused before the Emperor of being primarily responsible for the deadlock in the negotiations for reconciliation through his stubbornness. He was furthermore accused of working under secret orders and instructions of Luther not to give in on any single point. Melanchthon countered with informing the Emperor that he was not acting under any orders from Luther, nor of any one else, but that he took this stand because his conscience would not permit him to deviate from that which he had recognized as the truth. And because he saw absolutely no possibility of ending this colloquy successfully, he begged to be released and allowed to go home.

But on the 18th of May the Emperor ordered the Protestants to proceed and continue with the discussion of the remaining articles of the Book. So on the next day they took up the next article, namely, that On the Power and Authority of the Bishops and the Pope. Under this article the *Regensburg Book* had combined or summarized five points or articles. First, On the Necessity of a Supreme Bishop; second, On the Apostolic Succession Reaching Back to the Apostles; third, On the Right of the Bishops to Introduce (new) Ceremonies; fourth, the Authority of the Same to Change Customs Introduced by God; and fifth, On the Duty of All Christians to Obey Them. Melanchthon revealed his reaction to this article in a letter to a friend in which he wrote: "When I saw the numerous points, all in one article and craftily put together, I became impatient and attacked (and rejected) the whole article. And there I had a fight on my hands, and not only with Gropper and Granvella but also with Bucer and the Hessian vice-chancellor."

Granvella accused him of wrecking and preventing the whole Christian reformation if he remained obdurate and refused to accept the article under consideration. Melanchthon now hurriedly composed a counter-article, which however was not acceptable to the Papists. In this he conceded the ordination of the clergy by the bishops, provided that the Christian reformation which they had promised the Protestants for so long would finally be enacted. But all these offers proved futile: Rome conceded nothing. Burkhart reported to the Electoral Chancellor: "Herr Philip with the help of God very staunchly defends the truth so that I am convinced that our people will consent to nothing that is contrary to Scripture. They simply want to uphold the *Augsburg Confession*. I was, and still am, deeply concerned, but Philip's firmness and fearlessness comfort me, so that I do not doubt at all that these our transactions will redound to the honor of the Gospel and the glory of God."

### The Regensburg Interim

On the 22nd day of May the Colloquy of Regensburg came to an end, and on the 24th and 25th the *Book of Regensburg* was once more read to the assembly, and the few articles on which they had come to an agreement were given their final form. Concerning all the rest, Melanchthon wrote counter-articles, which were handed to the Emperor on May 31. This was done at the request of the Emperor. Numerous attempts were made to induce the Protestants to make concessions concerning the contested articles, but to no avail. One of the most active in this direction was the Elector of Brandenburg, Joachim. He even had a delegation of theologians sent to Luther at Wittenberg to see whether he would not make concessions where Melanchthon had refused. Luther's answer was that an agreement was impossible. For even if the Emperor were in dead earnest about this whole matter, the Catholics were not; otherwise they would not so stubbornly have insisted on the retention of the articles on which they had not reached agreement, knowing full well that the rejection of these articles followed necessarily from the acceptance of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

A few days later, on June 8, the Emperor called the princes and delegates together in his residence and there ordered that, since they had come to an agreement on some, and not the least important, of the articles, and since the Protestants had stated their opinion concerning the rest of the articles, they now take cognizance of the *Book of Regensburg* and state their opinion concerning it. This, no doubt, was an imperial edict ordering the Protestants to accept the *Book of Regensburg*. Some of the Protestant princes as for instance the Elector Joachim of Brandenburg and the Landgraf Philip of Hesse apparently were willing to comply, provisionally; the former declared that if they did this, the Catholics no doubt would also be willing on their part to make certain concessions. Melanchthon, however, declared that he held this to be as impossible as that they themselves, the Protestants, could and would make any concession. Some of the Protestant princes now left Regensburg, quite certain that no agreement could be reached.

Melanchthon, Bucer, and Pistorius were now asked by the Protestant princes and delegates to put into writing their opinions concerning the *Book of Regensburg* and the discussions pertaining to it. Melanchthon wrote that he could not accept the Book. The princes and delegates should in this matter do what they deemed to be right and justifiable. So far as he was concerned, he was bound by his conscience to teach the Christian doctrine purely and correctly. He implored God to guard and protect his church and was sure that God would not permit this light to be suppressed. Pertaining to the opponents, he wrote: "I cannot understand how a reformation, of which they speak so much, is possible as long as the Pope, the bishops, and the prelates, as this book declares, retain their present power and riches. For as long as they remain as they are, the many abuses, about which so much complaint has been heard, will also remain. On the basis of these and other considerations I do solemnly declare, bound by the Word of God and my conscience, that I cannot and will not accept this Book. I implore God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that he grant to all of us good council and help, and that he uphold, guard, and protect his church, which he has purchased and redeemed through his Son unto eternal life." Practically all of the Protestant theologians present agreed with Melanchthon's opinion and accepted it. Also Luther supported it. So also did all of the Protestant princes and delegates, declaring that Melanchthon's opinion was also an expression of their own views and convictions.

After some more discussions of this whole matter before the imperial Diet, which extended over a number of days, the Emperor, on July 19, issued his decree to this effect: "The final decision in these negotiations will be postponed until the calling of a general Christian church council in Germany, which the Emperor promises to bring about. Should he fail in this, that is, the calling of a council, the whole matter is to be placed before the *Reichstag* or *Diet*. In the meantime the Protestants are not to write on, or against, those articles on which an agreement had been reached. Until the calling of the next church council or imperial diet the Religious Peace of Nuremberg is to remain in force." This final decree of the Emperor became known as "The Regensburg Interim," or "The Interim of Regensburg."

Now as favorable as these concessions were which the Emperor was forced to make in the Regensburg Interim, they were still far from representing true Christian freedom and a true, lasting peace. The Protestants, realizing that they could not obtain more at this time, gratefully accepted the promises and concessions given. They insisted, however, that the article pertaining to the promises of a free Christian Church Council was understood by them to mean that a general free Christian council would be called in Germany; and that the

contested doctrines and problems would be settled by the council, not according to the authority of the pope, but according to the authority of the Word of God.

Melanchthon, deeply disturbed by the five months of endless, and apparently hopeless, disputations about some form of agreement, was again filled with cares and dire forebodings. The *Book of Regensburg*, the cause of much of the present trouble, was in his eyes a most “detestable” thing. Day and night it occupied his mind. Even in his dreams it appeared to him as an horrible beast, whose picture he was commissioned to paint. He did compose a long Latin poem about it, with which I will not trouble you. But the Latin satirical epigram which he composed, I will not withhold from you. In its German translation it reads like this: “*Willst du den Trug und Mangel des Buches verbessern, so brauchst du wenig Mühe nur; Ein Strich durch das Ganze genügt.*” Yet the imperial decree of July 29, which brought the Regensburg Colloquy to a close, brought to Melanchthon a certain amount of comfort nevertheless, since it seemed to indicate that at least at this time the Emperor was determined to keep the peace in Germany.

### **Renewal of the Strife Over the Lord’s Supper, Luther’s Sharp Attack on the Swiss Reformers, and His Suspicion of Melanchthon**

In the years 1542 and 1543 the Elector of Cologne, Count Hermann von Wied, had attempted to introduce the Protestant reformation on Cologne. Melanchthon of Wittenberg und Martin Bucer of Strassburg had been invited to give advice and aid in its introduction. The task of composing the formula of reformation was given to Bucer. In this formula was also contained an article on the Lord’s Supper, which naturally presented Bucer’s view of this sacrament. This article was destined to be the cause of much trouble and strife, as we shall see presently. To Melanchthon Bucer’s formula, including the article on the Lord’s Supper, must have seemed perfectly acceptable. Indeed, he supported it and valiantly defended it against the attacks of the cathedral chapter which that body directed against it when it was presented to them for discussion and eventual adoption.

The more Melanchthon became convinced that all attempts at reconciliation with Rome would end in failure, the more did he desire a union of all of the confessors of the Gospel of Jesus Christ against the common foe. Thus he was hoping for, and planning on, some sort of understanding with the Reformed, who, so he believed, differed from the Lutherans more through their doctrine of the Lord’s Supper than through their speculative theories of predestination. He had met Calvin repeatedly, and it seems as if they regarded each other rather highly. After all, they were kindred spirits. This fact coupled with his deep concern for the welfare of the whole Christian Church on earth strengthened in Melanchthon more and more the desire for a firmly knit union of all of those that sought their salvation solely through faith in Christ Jesus the Redeemer. Thus it pained Melanchthon rather deeply that certain Lutherans continued with their sometimes rather harsh attacks on the Reformed; for this, as anybody could see, was hardly conducive to an understanding and an eventual union with the Reformed.

We now go back to Bucer’s formula of the Reformation of Cologne, and especially to the article on the Lord’s Supper. Bucer defined this “as the communion of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which communion we are to remember Him in order that we through faith in Him be strengthened, and completely remain and live in Him, and He in us. And since this giving and receiving of the body and blood of Christ Jesus, our Lord, is an heavenly work and an act of faith, people should keep all carnal thought out of this mystery.” The essential presence of the body was passed over. And the eating and the drinking of the body and the blood was presented as a matter of faith. Surely, a presentation like this would produce a violent reaction in a person like Luther, if he ever should get hold of a copy of the formula. The first person to express his displeasure over the formula was the Duke Elector John Frederick of Saxony. He received a copy while at the Diet of Speier in June, 1544. He observed that it did not in all of its parts conform to pure doctrine and retained some popish ceremonies. The Duke sent a copy to Bishop Nicolaus Amsdorf of Naumburg to get his judgment and opinion. Amsdorf criticized and condemned the book most harshly, especially the articles on the freedom of the will and

the Lord's Supper, and then sent his criticism to Wittenberg. Thus Luther did get to see and read a copy. Melancthon was deeply concerned over the impression that Amsdorf's opinion would have on Luther. Indeed, he was ready to leave Wittenberg if Luther, aroused through Amsdorf's criticism, "would again raise a new battle cry." And truly, Luther's ire and his old warring spirit were again aroused. In a letter written to Chancellor Brück, Luther's great excitement becomes quite evident. Let me quote just a few of his remarks: "Concerning the article on the Lord's Supper, there is nothing that pleases me. There is much lacy-winded speech concerning the value, the fruit, and the honor of the sacrament. But concerning the substance it only mumbles, in order that one might not understand what it holds concerning it, in every respect as the enthusiasts (*Schwärmer*) do. In no place does it clearly state whether the true body and blood are really received with the mouth or not. To sum up, the book is not only pleasing to the enthusiasts but also comforting to them. It is truly more favorable to their doctrine than to ours. That's why I am sick and tired of it all and thoroughly disgusted. And it is altogether too long, too loquacious, that I readily sense the 'blabber-mouth' Bucer in it."

Luther prepared himself for a battle with the Sacramentarians with the same enthusiasm that he had shown in his war with Rome. In private conversations and in public lectures and sermons he expressed himself in harsh terms about them. Hurriedly he journeyed to Naumburg to consult with Amsdorf about the mode of action. Amsdorf was the only one that incited Luther. The people at Wittenberg on the other hand were apprehensive and looked ahead to the coming storm with fear and trembling. Melancthon was told that Luther was preparing a pamphlet in which both he and Bucer were attacked. Were the rumors that Luther was about to attack publicly his most intimate friend and faithful co-laborer, Melancthon, entirely without foundation? We do not know. It is very well possible that the old bonds of friendship proved stronger than the feeling of suspicion and disappointment which he no doubt experienced. At any rate, in the booklet which Luther published the beginning of October under the title: "A brief confession concerning the Holy Sacrament, against the Enthusiasts," neither the name of Melancthon nor that of Bucer was mentioned. But Zwingli and Oecolampadius were branded as heretics and murderers of souls, as indeed all Reformed were called people with blasphemous hearts and lying mouths.

The rumor of a rift between Luther and Melancthon spread like wildfire through all of Protestant Germany and filled the hearts of all lovers of peace with sorrow and fear. What a spectacle a break between Luther and Melancthon would represent! How the Papists would gloat and glory over it! Landgraf Philip of Hesse immediately addressed an appeal to Chancellor Brück begging him for the sake of the honor of Christ to do something about this rift. And Chancellor Brück immediately took the necessary steps to mediate between the two parties. This task did not turn out to be very difficult, for Luther was too closely bound to Melancthon, through the bonds of long years of intimate friendship and close association, coldly to drag him into his strife with the Sacramentarians. Melancthon on the other hand carefully avoided everything that might have aroused and antagonized Luther again. The danger that this rift would tear the Lutheran church apart had passed, at least for the time being. Whether some doubt and suspicion remained alive in Luther's heart we cannot determine. Some historians hold this view, claiming that the personal relation between Luther and Melancthon was clearly disturbed and after this episode was never again the same as it had been before.

But whatever the status of Luther's heart may have been, he did not long have to suffer under it. For less than a year after this highly disturbing episode had come to a close, the Lord freed Luther from all further cares, pain, and strife, when on February 19, 1546, He called his faithful servant home. This, of course, threw practically the whole burden of leading the Lutheran Church through the storm and strife of the following fateful years on Philip Melancthon.

### **The Schmalkaldic War and Its Consequences**

On September 18, 1544, Emperor Charles V concluded the Peace Treaty of Crespy with Francis I of France. With this peace treaty the last of four wars between Charles V and Francis I came to a close, to a successful close for Charles V. He now, finally, had his hands free and was able and ready to turn his full attention to the German affairs, especially to the religious issue. The Protestant princes recognized this fact

immediately. Rumor had it that the Emperor intended to transfer to Augsburg the Diet which he had summoned to Worms, and that here he would begin his work of settling the religious issue by restoring the Catholic worship in all the churches of the land. Strangely, the Pope issued a very strong protest against the Emperor's intended action, declaring that the religious issues did not properly belong to the Emperor's domain, since he was a layman, nor to that of the Diet, but that they must be settled either by the Roman Pontiff or a general church council. But Charles paid no attention to the Pope's protest. The Duke Elector of Saxony now ordered his Wittenberg theologians to compose the resolutions and protestations which were to be presented to the Diet. It was again left to Melanchthon to compose and formulate them. Realizing that there was absolutely no hope of a reconciliation, he merely described briefly, but with great clearness and conciseness, what constitutes the essence of a truly Evangelical church: 1. Pure doctrine; 2. The true and proper use of the sacraments; 3. The retention of the office of the preacher and obedience to the pastor; 4. The upholding of law and order in the church through the ecclesiastical courts; 5. The keeping of schools and the insistence on education and learning; and finally, 6. The insistence on providing for the necessary bodily and physical needs and protection of the servants of the church. This very brief, simple, and concise presentation of the principles of a truly Evangelical church became known as the "Wittenberg Reformation." Besides Melanchthon it was signed by Luther, Bugenhagen, Cruciger, and Georg Maior. On January 14, 1545, it was sent to the Duke Elector, who, as Melanchthon had anticipated, found the Wittenberg Reformation too weak, too moderate. He remarked that Magister Philip had not devoted enough effort to it; that it was not stately enough. Chancellor Dr. Brück, to whom the Elector sent a copy, expressed a far different opinion, declaring that it was altogether precious and good, adding, however, that it was very mild, and that one misses in it the "rumbling spirit of Dr. Martin."

After lengthy discussions of the document also with other theologians, the Duke Elector finally declared that he was satisfied with the Wittenberg Reformation. He sent it to Philip of Hesse and to the Count Palatine of the Rhine, who adopted it; so did the Hessian theologians, after a few minor changes had been made. The Elector then had Melanchthon compose a supplement to the Wittenberg Reformation, which declared that the Protestants on the basis of these writings would not refuse a reunion; but that they would have to refuse to recognize the recently convened Council of Trent as not being a free council. The Duke then expressed the wish that Luther might, as a private citizen, write something strong (*kräftiges*) against the papacy because of the recent protest which the Pope had hurled against the Emperor. Luther gladly consented, and the result was his famous booklet: *Das Papsttum zu Rom, vom Teufel gestiftet*, "The Papacy at Rome, founded by the devil."

The *Reichstag*, or Diet, did convene at Worms, and not at Augsburg. The Saxon Vice-chancellor Burkhart presented the Wittenberg Reformation. But it and the proposals of the Wittenberg theologians and those of others were not discussed at all. The Emperor instead peremptorily demanded that the Protestants submit to the Council. Against this the Protestants voiced their protest and demanded a continuation of the peace, this peace not to be dependent on their participation in the Council of Trent.

It was now rumored that the Emperor was merely trying to gain time with the object of striking in the following year with all his might at the Protestants. In the Emperor's final declaration he announced that at the next Diet, to be held at Regensburg, a new attempt would be made to bring about by means of a colloquy a reconciliation of both parts. The Protestants now resolved that they, prior to the opening of the promised Diet at Regensburg, would meet in order to discuss the whole situation, which was becoming ever more serious. In December they met at Frankfurt in order to renew and extend the life of the League of Schmalkalden. This league unfortunately had already become rather weak and ineffective since a number of the more powerful princes remained absent while most of the rest of the members were lacking in unity and determination.

In the same month in which the League of Schmalkalden was renewed and extended, the Council of Trent was also finally officially opened, December 13, 1545. In the same month was also to be held at Regensburg the colloquy which was to precede the promised Imperial Diet. Among the Protestant colloquists who met at Regensburg there was at this time missing the man who otherwise usually was the spokesman of the Protestant representatives at such and similar meetings, Philip Melanchthon. Because he was just recovering from a serious illness and was in a weakened condition, and because of the pleas of a number of his friends who feared for his life, the Duke Elector did not permit him to travel to Regensburg in the middle of a cold winter.



The Protestant colloquists then proposed on the advice of the absent Melanchthon to start their work with the discussions of the article on justification, and then, after a short while, break off their discussion with a formal protestation since it was absolutely certain that the Catholic colloquists would never accept the doctrine of justification in its biblical and pure form, that is, in its Lutheran formulation. “What good can still come of a colloquy,” Melanchthon remarked, “since the Council of Trent has begun its discussions, and the assembled fathers are no more concerned about the welfare of the church of God than Homer’s Cyclopes?”

What the Protestants, and especially Melanchthon, feared, happened. After many days of fruitless discussions on the doctrine of justification, it became quite clear to everybody that the colloquy was getting nowhere. Then the Emperor gave an unusual order, namely, that no minutes were to be kept of the proceedings, and secondly, that all of the colloquists were to be bound by an oath not to inform anyone, not even their own estate, of the results of the discussions before the Diet had passed on them. The effect this imperial order had on the Protestants was as could be expected: They were shocked! Brenz wrote to Amsdorf: “See how much these night owls fear the light!” But it was not fear but trickery that induced the Emperor to issue this order. He realized that the Protestants would never submit. So he wanted to break off the proceedings, but the odium of this break was to fall on the Protestants. Melanchthon exclaimed in a letter to Camerarius: “The Emperor may give such orders to his Spaniards but not to us Germans, for the name, ‘German,’ signifies upright, honest, and free men.” In agreement with two of his colleagues he advised the Duke Elector to recall his representatives. This was carried out. On March 20 the Protestant colloquists submitted a formal protest against the order for silence and left Regensburg.

At the time of the Colloquy of Regensburg Melanchthon did not want to believe as yet that the Emperor was bent on making war in Germany. But numerous acts and events showed with ever greater clarity that both Emperor Charles and his brother, Ferdinand, were planning and preparing for just such a thing, for war. The suspicion of the Protestant princes against the Emperor was so strong, however, that they did not show up at all at the Diet of Regensburg, the diet that followed the Colloquy of Regensburg. The only exception was Duke Moritz of Saxony. Aroused over the absence of the Protestant princes, the Emperor, instead of making proposals for reconciliation, issued the order that all members of the Schmalkaldic League submit to the Council of Trent. The Emperor singled out especially the Duke Elector of Saxony and the Landgraf Philip of Hesse, stating that he was going to force “these disobedient, unfaithful, and obstinate destroyers of the common peace and justice into submission, in order that the German nation might finally have peace and unity.” At the same time that the Emperor thus threatened the Protestants with force, he concluded a treaty of alliance with the Pope, which was to remain a secret. The Pope himself, however, divulged it. All signs clearly showed that the coming war was not to be fought for political but rather for religious reasons. When all these things were reported to Wittenberg, Melanchthon’s eyes were finally opened as to the Emperor’s plans and intentions. What he had feared through all these years was now coming to pass, was now upon them, war, a war between the enemies of the Gospel and the faithful believers and followers of the Gospel. Now that the thing feared was upon them, Melanchthon was singularly composed and fearless. Remembering the words of Gamaliel: “If this counsel or work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it,” he remarked, “Even if we all fall, the church of God will nevertheless stand and remain. The Lord, who led Israel safely through the waves of the Red Sea, will also rescue his people from these dangers.” Examining himself to see if he had failed anywhere and thus helped to bring about this war, he declared that his conscience was clear; “for I know that I have sought nothing but the truth, and I will not now deny it. The outcome I place into the hands of God.”

In this spirit Melanchthon now wrote a book against the Council of Trent. This had been assigned to him some time before. While formerly at diets and colloquies Melanchthon had usually spoken in a conciliatory tone and in favor of reconciliation, he did not do so now; in this booklet he met the Emperor and Pope without any concessions, but boldly and fearlessly spoke up against the oppressors. On July 10, 1545, Melanchthon reissued a pamphlet of Luther’s of the year 1530, entitled: “A warning to my dear Germans,” for which he wrote a preface. In this preface Melanchthon clearly shows that he now holds that the Protestants not only have the right but also the duty to defend themselves in the war which the Emperor is now ready to wage against them. We

quote briefly: “Since it is quite clear that the main reason for this war is the fact that the Pope, the bishops, and the monks want to strengthen their idolatries, therefore we are sure that self-defense in this case is right. And of this fact everyone should take notice. For God certainly has planted into nature the law or principle of self-defense. And one certainly must distinguish between self-defense and rebellion. For if a murderer would attack you, your wife, or child, it certainly would be a god-pleasing work if you would defend and protect them, even if, in so doing, the murderer would be destroyed.” This appeal of Melanchthon to the people for self-defense seems to be decidedly at variance with his former stand, according to which he was opposed to any and every kind of self-defense. His measure of submission quite evidently was exhausted. And since there was absolutely no hope of a reconciliation left, therefore the submission of the Protestant princes would have meant the end of the Reformation and the destruction of the Evangelical church.

On July 15, 1546, the Duke Elector John Frederick and the Landgraf Philip of Hesse issued a manifesto in which they declared that they were taking up arms in self-defense and for the defense of their faith only, since it was quite evident that the Emperor was starting this war for religious reasons only. And just five days later, on July 20, the Emperor placed both princes under the imperial ban (the *Reichsacht*). The war was on. This war was, of course, the well-known Schmalkaldic War, so called because it was waged against the League of Schmalkalden. It will not be necessary to go into the history of this war to any extent. But with a few important facts we will trouble you.

The League had completed its military preparations and was ready for action much sooner than the Emperor. While the League had an army of more than 40,000 men ready for action in 1546, the Emperor’s army was mostly still in the planning stage, that is, he was still gathering his troops from various countries, from Italy, Hungary, Spain, the Netherlands, and eventually even from the Papal States. If the League would have struck at this time with all of its forces, as its commander, the burly and fiery Schärtlin von Burtenbach persistently proposed and demanded, the Emperor no doubt would have been thoroughly defeated. But unfortunately the head of the League, Duke Elector John Frederick of Saxony, hesitated and as a second Cunctator (Fabius Maximus) repeatedly postponed the decision until the best opportunity had passed and it was too late. For suddenly came the shocking news that one of the leading Protestant princes, Moritz of Saxony, had defected, had betrayed his faith and his brethren, and joined forces with the Emperor. Moritz, having been promised the Electorate of Saxony as well as the electoral office of John Frederick by the Emperor as payment for his betrayal, hastened to invade and occupy the promised territory. By this complete reversal of the situation John Frederick was forced to act. Splitting the forces of the League, he hurried with a part of them, only 6,000 men, northward, to prevent the Emperor from occupying the Electorate. But he was completely defeated in the battle of Mühlberg, April 14, 1547, was wounded, and taken prisoner. The Emperor’s victory was complete when two months later Philip of Hesse, advised and urged to do so by his son-in-law, Moritz, surrendered voluntarily to the Emperor at Leipzig. The Emperor, however, did not keep his promise to Moritz to deal leniently with his princely prisoners but imposed on both the death sentence, one which he, however, wisely never carried out but changed into imprisonment for life. The Emperor now marched with his forces, primarily Spanish troops, to Wittenberg and laid siege to the city. Wittenberg defended itself valiantly for a short time but was forced to surrender on May 13, 1547, under condition that the Elector would remain a prisoner of the Emperor, and that his lands would be divided and apportioned, a part to King Ferdinand, the rest to Duke Moritz, who, of course, from now on bore the title of “Duke Elector of Saxony.”

As the imperial army approached Wittenberg, consternation and terror gripped the inhabitants of the city. Many fled. At the university the lectures ceased. The student body was advised to leave the city. Some of the professors also left and sought and found a place of refuge in the free city of Magdeburg. Melanchthon held out to the last. Only when the Spanish troops appeared before the gates of the city did he leave with his family for Zerbst, where he found, at least for a short time, a haven of safety. Melanchthon now made an appeal to the Bishop of Merseburg, Georg von Anhalt, that he would beg of Moritz to intercede for the university that it might not be destroyed, since this would represent a great triumph for Rome. The bishop complied, and so did Moritz, to whose plan naturally did not belong the destruction of this famous school, now his school, since he was now the Elector of Saxony. Later on Melanchthon also fled to Magdeburg. But his plan to resume his

lectures for those students who were present in the city of Magdeburg could not be carried out since the magistrates would not grant him their permission.

The Emperor stood now at the zenith of his power. He called the Diet into session, as he had already provisionally promised. It met at Augsburg on September 1, 1547. Evidently there was no closed and organized Protestant opposition present in this numerous and splendid assembly. Charles was powerful enough to force the Protestant princes to promise that they would submit to the church council, provided it were brought back to Trent, from which place the Pope had recently moved it to Bologna. But since both the Pope and the theologians assembled at Bologna refused to comply, the Emperor finally resolved to settle the religious issue himself by his own authority, without the cooperation and support of the Pope. This was done; and the resultant instrument became known as the *Augsburg Interim*.

### **The Augsburg Interim**

This document had been drafted at the order of the Emperor by the Catholic theologian, Julius Pflug, on the basis of the *Book of Regensburg*. It was found completely satisfactory by Bishop Michael Heldink and was declared acceptable by the Protestant Johann Agricola, court pastor of Duke Joachim of Brandenburg. This prince apparently also was satisfied with it. These two Protestants were primarily interested in the retention of the doctrine of justification, the distribution of the Lord's Supper according to Christ's institution, the removal of the idea of the sacrifice from the mass, and the marriage of the priests. Pertaining to these points Pflug had, indeed, made some slight concessions, adding the significant remark, however, that these articles would have to be discussed before the Church Council and finally fixed and settled by that body. Pertaining to the other articles Pflug had, however, made no concessions whatsoever. Thus the papacy had to be retained. The reminder was added, however, that his authority was given the Pope only for the purpose of "building up," never, of "destroying" or "tearing down." Concerning the Roman conception of the church, the divine rights and power of the bishops, the seven sacraments, the doctrine of transubstantiation, the worship of the saints, and the fasts Pflug had made no concessions whatsoever. Since the discussions on the *Augsburg Interim* were soon to begin, Duke Elector Moritz of Saxony now ordered his Wittenberg theologians, Melanchthon, Cruciger, Georg Maior, and the Leipzig professor, Pfeffinger, to come to the city of Zwickau, in order that he might have them near by and available in case he needed their advice. At Altenberg, on his way to Zwickau, Melanchthon was informed that the Emperor's ire was very much aroused over him. The Duke Elector Joachim of Brandenburg, incited no doubt by Agricola, had brought some violent charges against Melanchthon, the sum and substance of which was that he was the most stubborn and stiff-necked opponent of any kind of reconciliation and re-union of all of the Protestants. Indeed, when the Emperor next met Duke Moritz, he demanded of him that he would have Melanchthon arrested and handed over to him. Moritz however firmly refused to do this; instead, he valiantly defended Melanchthon as a God-fearing, peace-loving, highly gifted, and thoroughly educated and learned theologian and man. The Emperor thereupon desisted.

Since the Catholics assembled at Augsburg continued to hurl harsh charges and dire threats against Melanchthon, Moritz fearing for his safety permitted him to leave Augsburg and seek safety in the monastery Zelle on the Mulda River, to which place the other Wittenberg theologians soon followed him. Even before Melanchthon had moved to the monastery Zelle, Duke Moritz had already sent him a copy of the *Interim* with the request that he, Melanchthon, give him his opinion concerning this document. Melanchthon wrote his opinion on April 1. Since this document, Melanchthon's opinion, is too long to quote here in its entirety, I shall confine myself to quoting only a few of the more important, introductory remarks of Melanchthon. He wrote: "I have read the whole book through carefully and find that it differs very little from the *Book of Regensburg*, excepting that a number of articles are presented in a sharper form, while a few have been toned down, to a more moderate form. But there are also general statements contained in it, which are dangerous and hostile to the Church of Christ. Thus, for instance, the statement, that whosoever separates himself from the other, the Catholic part of the church, is damned. This is a dangerous threat, since it does not clearly indicate what separation is meant. Here the principle stands that one must obey God more than man." A little further along he

summarizes his position, stating: “I will under no circumstances burden my conscience with this book. For if the rulers insist that we accept it, and carry it out to the letter, there would come from it a great persecution and great sorrow and misery.” Since Moritz was not satisfied with Melanchthon’s opinion, on the advice of Dr. Kummerstadt, in whom Moritz had unlimited confidence in ecclesiastical matters, he sent other theologians to Zelle, who were to confer with the theologians already there and then formulate and bring out a new and common opinion. This meeting took place on April 20. On the 24th they issued their common opinion, which merely carried out further Melanchthon’s former opinions. However, because of the great importance of this matter and because they did not want to bear the responsibility alone, they proposed that the Duke would also call on other capable, dependable, and responsible men for advice. Melanchthon added an explanatory note, which he a little later included in a letter to his friend Camerarius, closing with the significant words: “If I am to express in my own name, and in the face of the danger of arousing the Emperor’s anger, my opinion, I will say that I cannot, and will not, agree with these sophisms.” He is referring, of course, to the *Augsburg Interim*. Again dissatisfied with the opinion of April 24, the Duke decided to make one more attempt to bring Melanchthon around and win him for the *Interim*. So he ordered his most capable and efficient counselor, Christophorus von Karlowitz, to undertake this mission. Von Karlowitz consented.

### **Melanchthon’s Letter to Karlowitz**

Karlowitz on this order of the Duke and apparently with the consent of the Emperor then wrote a letter to Melanchthon, in which he admonished and urged him to support the efforts in behalf of peace which had been made. And even if he could not consent to, nor support, everything stated in the *Interim*, that he at least would not openly oppose the Duke. This is about all we know about the contents of Karlowitz’s letter, since the letter itself has not been preserved. If we still possessed this letter, it would be much easier for us to explain the strange contents of the letter which the apparently intimidated Melanchthon addressed as a reply to Karlowitz on April 28, only three days after he had written that determined letter to his friend Camerarius, from which we quoted a few sentences. This letter of Melanchthon to Karlowitz gave his enemies much necessary material for further charges and accusations and deeply disturbed and shocked many of his friends. We bring it here, at least as to its basic contents. I shall do so by quoting some of the salient statements of Melanchthon as he made them in this most unfortunate letter.

“Concerning your admonishments,” Melanchthon writes, “I assure you that I wish that the Duke Elector would determine what, according to his own judgment, might be most wholesome for himself and for the state. He may order whatsoever he wills; I will not, even though I could not approve some of the things he demands, show myself rebellious, but will either be silent, or leave, or bear whatsoever happens to me. I have aforesaid borne, to say the least, an unseemly servitude, when Luther would fall victim to his temper, in which there was revealed not a little lust for strife. But if thou sayest that I myself approve and recommend the *Interim*, you will as a wise man understand human character and be able to judge human attitudes. I by nature am not contentious but love, if any one does, the peaceful unions of human beings. Furthermore, I have not caused the strife that is now deeply disturbing the church but found it already here and was drawn into it. And though its authors mixed some rather raw material into it, I do not believe that the rest, that is, that which is true and necessary, must be condemned and rejected. And because of this I have from the beginning attempted to remedy and save the situation by either eliminating untenable opinions or moderating them. And because of this some of the leaders who now glorify themselves before the Diet as the authors of this union have caused me to be hated at the court, so that I am now in grave danger. For almost twenty years now some have declared me to be as cold as ice; others have accused me of trying to ingratiate myself with the enemies; and one, I remember, even charged me with seeking the cardinal’s hat. But without being unduly disturbed by these charges, I have, whenever I had occasion to speak on the doctrines and practices of the church, always endeavored to stress as much as possible the essential truths and cut short many futile questions, thus helping the church to avoid the dangerous reefs. Thus I have, indeed, contributed something to the greater unity of the church in many parts of our country”. A little further along in his letter Melanchthon writes: “I have admitted many things voluntarily and gladly about

which others have fought violently. Thus I wish that the constitution of the church remain as it was; and that the bishops and the Pope retain their station of honor and authority, as it is described in the Augsburg Book. Maybe I am by nature inclined to be servile or submissive, but I am fully persuaded that this is a reasonable kind of modesty to all kindly disposed spirits, that the different orders, or states, among the rulers of the church be not removed. Also that I accept the customs, practices and ceremonies which the Book prescribes, since they are a part of the government of the church, and my whole life, I hope, proves that I have been, and am, a friend of law and order. Therefore, I will not only recognize and accept everything I have mentioned, but I shall also endeavor to induce others to accept them. Only the practice of worshiping the saints I will never strengthen through my consent and support. All the other articles I will not now challenge nor fight. But there still remains one problem, namely, how we might induce the clergy to accept and adopt all of this. And if someone should challenge that it is foolish and unseemly stubborn not to accept all of the articles of the Book, and that one by so doing would be abusing the mildness of the Emperor, to such a one I will answer that I myself for the sake of peace have admitted many things or passed them over in silence; but that this also must have its limits." This, briefly, was the letter of Melanchthon to Karlowitz.

If Christopher von Karlowitz had treated this letter as a personal, private, and intimate affair between himself and Melanchthon, as no doubt Melanchthon had intended it to be, he would have spared Melanchthon much sorrow and sharp criticism. But Karlowitz gave the letter to any one that wished to see it. Many copies were made of it. The prelates assembled at Augsburg were jubilant and beside themselves with joy. Flacius records that they carried the letter around in the city like a monstrance, from one to the other. The three ecclesiastical electors sent a copy of the letter together with the *Augsburg Interim* to the Pope to obtain his opinion and judgment. When the letter was read to the Emperor, he is said to have exclaimed: "Him you have; see to it that you hold him!"

While the Catholics were jubilant over this unfortunate missive and already looked upon its author as a renegade, the Protestants quite naturally were shocked, and criticized and condemned Melanchthon most harshly. Even later historians joined in with this criticism, declaring that this letter was an ineradicable blot on Melanchthon's name and reputation. Even the great German historian von Ranke exclaimed: "I wish that he had never written this letter!" He also condemned him by saying that Melanchthon had apparently overlooked the fact completely that, as the head and spokesman of the Protestants, he did not belong to himself but to the Evangelical cause. But Melanchthon was not a politician, who could conceive of himself as the head of a party. He was lacking the qualities necessary for leadership: mistrust, suspicion, ambition, and unbending firmness. Since he himself was always friendly, mild, and trusting, he assumed that these virtues were also found in others, and thus he was most easily misled by fine words and fair promises. We do not know what arguments Karlowitz brought to bear on Melanchthon in his letter. But from the tone of Melanchthon's reply one can gather that the sly politician pictured to Melanchthon the terrible consequences of the Emperor's wrath if aroused against the Lutherans; that it, no doubt, would lead to the complete destruction of the Evangelical church, but that he could prevent all this by making certain concessions. Be that as it may, it certainly is painful to read that Melanchthon in his distress offers to accept and bear those things which he thus far in his negotiations and declarations had rejected as irreconcilable with the Gospel. To be sure, Melanchthon had been willing to make similar concessions during the negotiations at Augsburg in 1530. But we must bear in mind that times and conditions had changed since then. Protestantism was now quite firmly established in Germany together with its new forms and institutions. It was not easy to reverse the order now. Indeed, it is my firm belief that any determined attempt to restore the old order at this time would have resulted in a violent upheaval. What perhaps would have been possible in 1530, eighteen years prior to this time, was now practically out of the question. Melanchthon apparently had not reckoned with this passage of time and the changes that it had brought with it.

But whatever Melanchthon's true motives may have been, here was his letter in which he honestly, and without any political finesse whatsoever, without considering how his words might be interpreted, expressed his thoughts as they moved him at this time. That fear was one of the more powerful factors that moved his pen is the opinion of many historians; not fear for his own personal safety, but fear for the safety of the true church of

Christ. Indeed, soon after this Melanchthon regained hold of himself again. During the discussions that followed, he declared that the only thing that he was willing to concede was to submit to the unavoidable as long as the purity of the doctrines would not be touched, nor the old corrupt and corrupting forms and rituals would be introduced again. We move on now to the *Augsburg Interim*.

### The Augsburg Interim

What was the content of this famous or, rather, infamous document? It consisted of twenty-six articles. Let us name some of the more important ones: The Protestants were again to believe in work righteousness; in the sole power and right of the church of interpreting Scriptures; in the authority of tradition. They were to submit again to the authority of the bishops and the Pope; to restore the seven sacraments and the adoration of the saints. The Lord's Supper was again to be administered *sub utraque forma*. Those priests who were married could remain in that state until the Council had rendered its decision. In the meantime, however, no priest should be allowed to marry. Let us not forget that this was to be a reformation, a reconciliation, and reunion. Certainly, the proponents of this solution thereby displayed a woeful lack of understanding of the human mind in general and of the spirit of Protestantism specifically. After thirty years of war and strife the whole powerful movement was to be crushed with one blow. In the same city in which eighteen years before the adherents of the *Augsburg Confession* had presented their declaration, they were now expected to deny and reject it again. Charles V in making such demands no doubt was relying on his victories over, and the destruction of, the Schmalkaldic League.

Most of the Protestant representatives objected to the *Interim* most emphatically. The Markgraf of Brandenburg, John, when the document was placed before him for his signature, threw down the pen that had been handed him with the words: "Never will I accept this poisonous mixture (*Gemengsel*), nor submit to a church council. The sword rather than the pen; blood, rather than ink!" When on May 15 the *Interim* was placed before the Diet, Duke Moritz declared that he could not accept it without the consent of his provincial delegates. When this request was left unheeded, Moritz declared that he would now bring this matter to the immediate attention of the Emperor. The Duke then called the representatives of his duchy to meet on July 1, and Melanchthon was ordered to journey to Leipzig. Here the Duke requested of him an opinion as to the mode of introducing the *Interim*. Melanchthon wrote it on June 16, presented it to his friends, and then sent it to the Duke, who soon had it put into print and published. This was the first public protest against the imperial order.

"If the acceptance of the *Interim*," so Melanchthon begins his opinion, "is to be a confession to the effect that our church has been teaching false doctrine and has ruthlessly caused a break or schism in the church of Christ, it is incumbent on all sensible and sincere members of our church to defend and support it. But if we, after having recognized the truth of the Gospel, would now punish ourselves and obligate ourselves to persecuting it, that would be blasphemy which could not be forgiven; against which God would graciously guard and protect us. And though we are threatened with war and destruction, we are nevertheless to regard the Word of God as of higher value, namely, that we would not deny the truth of the Gospel that we have recognized. We should also consider that if we again publicly introduce false doctrine and idolatry into our churches, we would thereby cause great offense in our churches. Many pious people would thereby be cast into deep sorrow and would be hindered in their worship of the true God. We do not fight out of an evil heart, or because of false pride or vanity, as some accuse us of doing. But God, who reads the hearts of man, knows that we love peace dearly and greatly desire to have it. We are, however, constrained to confess the true doctrines as they are preached in our churches by the command of God that we should not deny the truths of the Gospel, which we have recognized and accepted, nor persecute them. What is right we do not wish to attack viciously or sophistically but to confess purely and simply; but whatsoever is wrong or false we should under no circumstances tolerate." Melanchthon then enumerated and named the false doctrines in which the *Interim* was opposed to the Gospel and reminded the Christians of the dangers which the reintroduction of these errors would bring to the people and the church.

Thus spoke Melanchthon when he was asked to express his opinion or convictions publicly. Yet when he expressed them privately, as in his letter to Karlowitz, he showed much less courage and firmness. But his moderate, yet forceful, language did not at all please Duke Moritz. But it did one thing—it convinced the Duke that he could not force the *Interim* on his people. For the time being Moritz had apparently refused to introduce the *Interim* but had not as yet finally and fully rejected it.

So the Elector made some more attempts to save the situation. Immediately after his return from Augsburg the Elector assembled his prominent councilors and theologians at Weissen for the purpose of again discussing the Imperial (Augsburg) *Interim*. After a careful and conscientious discussion of the document the theologians flatly rejected the entire *Augsburg Interim*. But since the Emperor now issued the order that the *Interim* be introduced in Saxony, another discussion was planned for October at Torgau. Before this took place, the Elector, at the request of the Emperor and King Ferdinand, invited a number of representative theologians of both sides to meet at Pegau in order to discuss the whole situation before a smaller circle. The invited Protestants were Melanchthon, Georg von Anhalt with his pastor, Förster, and in place of the ill Cruciger, Paul Ebert. The discussion lasted but a short time as both sides soon realized that they could find no common ground. So then the planned meeting of the Landtag, or provincial council, took place at Torgau in October, 1548. And on the 18th of October it passed the final resolution pertaining to the *Augsburg Interim*, after the electoral councilors and some knights had placed before the theologians a number of points which according to their estimation seemed acceptable and might be adopted. Some of these points were: An article on justification; on the authority of the church, with the supplement that everything was to be kept as the fathers had held; furthermore an article on the servants of the church; on confirmation, penance, extreme unction, the ordination, the mass, the vigils, and holidays, processions, and fasts. All articles were presented in a Catholic sense. Melanchthon and some of the other Protestant theologians protested against some of these articles, but to no avail.

Melanchthon left Torgau sick and sad at heart and completely dissatisfied with the outcome of the convention, and, no doubt, also with himself. After all, had he not also, by his silence, agreed to most of the Torgau Articles? In a speech which he delivered in connection with a doctor's promotion, on Luther's birthday, November 10, Melanchthon not only expressed his concern about the future, but also his complaint about the Imperial *Interim*, and his conviction that in these fateful days a leader was absolutely necessary of the giant stature of a Luther. To quote him: "The misfortunes of the changes of the doctrines would not now threaten us if that great leader were still alive. But now when there is nobody here that has his prestige; now, when nobody warns as he warned and many accept errors as truths; now when the churches are being destroyed and the true doctrines that have been handed down to us are being corrupted; now there is doubt, fear, and strife." It is pathetic, aye, tragic, this confession of his utter helplessness at a moment when the heroic virtues of Luther seemed so absolutely necessary to him. If Luther had lived, he certainly would have chided him with powerful words for his false philosophy; but he would also have strengthened him and uplifted him. And though inwardly grumbling and fretting under this censure, as he had done before, he would nevertheless have recognized in the honesty of his heart that the correction was justified and deserved, and no doubt Melanchthon would have regained his former firmness, which he now so sorely lacked. In a mood of depression similar to that which weighed on him when he wrote that unfortunate letter to Karlowitz, he now submitted to a hard, but as he saw it, unavoidable necessity. To turn aside the greater danger of the *Augsburg Interim* he now was willing after a long and bitter struggle to submit to a measure that had just now been formulated for the Duchy of Saxony.

This struggle was so much more painful for Melanchthon because of the fact that there now arose from the other, the Protestant, side a most passionate resistance to each and every measure of peace and reconciliation. It came from one of Melanchthon's own friends and colleagues of Wittenberg, the young Illyrian scholar and professor, Matthias Flacius. He had been one of the most emphatic and outspoken opponents of the *Augsburg Interim* and had supported Melanchthon wholeheartedly in his resistance against the document. However, when now the doubtful and uncertain negotiations started at Torgau, Flacius became mistrustful of his older friend and said to him: "The gentler you are, the more aggressive and unrelenting they become. The more you give in to them, the more they will demand." Melanchthon agreed with this and remarked: "Those

that offer the most violent opposition are responsible for the fact that congregations, forsaken by their pastors because of persecution, fall easy victims to our adversaries.” To this Flacius hotly retorted: “It is your own fault, Mr. Praeceptor. Why do you permit the ungodly court to misuse your prestige and influence to lead their subjects astray?” Quietly Melanchthon answered: “I am old now and heretofore have never been rebellious, and I will not be it now!”

### The Leipzig Interim

Mentally depressed, Melanchthon got ready for his journey to Zelle, where the provincial council called by Duke Moritz was to assemble on November 16. From Flacius he received a written warning: “In these critical times in which an adamant confession must be made by us, no concession can be made by you nor by this school without creating a great offense, which will soon affect the whole world!” For a number of days the theologians assembled at Zelle discussed the Torgau Resolutions without coming to any decision. Melanchthon now pointed to the persecution of the Protestants in certain parts of South Germany as a sign that eventually the Emperor would not be satisfied with even the *Augsburg Interim*. These persecutions were, no doubt, now being used as means of intimidating Melanchthon and his companions, so that they would make a number of concessions, as they eventually did. The electoral councilors now drew up a number of articles which were to be adopted as the “Resolution of Zelle.” It would lead us too far to state the various articles. It must suffice to say that in them quite a number of concessions were made. Under different conditions and at another time Melanchthon no doubt would have rejected them as a “patchwork.” Now he accepted them though not without certain reservations.

Before the “Resolutions of Zelle” were placed before the Saxon *Landtag*, or Diet, Elector Moritz and Joachim of Brandenburg met at Jüterbog on December 16 to discuss how they might conjointly and uniformly deal with the *Interim*, if and when they officially would introduce it. Joachim had failed with his attempt of forcing the *Interim* upon his subjects in the Mark. He as well as his court theologian, Agricola, fully realized that they would be forced to make some very important modifications. Duke Moritz next called to Jüterbog not only Georg of Anhalt, Melanchthon, Pfeffinger, and Camerarius, but also the Catholic, Julius Pflug; Joachim had brought Agricola along. Before his departure from Wittenberg, Flacius again stormed at Melanchthon with the absolute demand not to give way, not to concede one single point. Agricola, however, made the charge before Duke Moritz that with his calumnious correspondence Melanchthon was trying to form an alliance of all the Protestant theologians and preachers against the *Interim*. According to Flacius, Melanchthon was doing too little; according to Agricola, too much. Such contradictory judgments, however, are the common fate of those that strive after moderation.

On December 21, Duke Moritz called the electoral representatives together at Leipzig. To this place he also ordered Melanchthon and other Wittenberg theologians. Moritz then placed before this body the “Resolutions of Zelle” for adoption. In spite of much opposition, especially on the part of the laymen, Moritz’s proposal was adopted by the body and was soon after published as the formal and final resolution of the Saxon *Landtag*. Flacius had from the very beginning violently opposed the Zelle resolutions; now, even before they were officially adopted, he had them put into print at Magdeburg, and there gave them the name by which they have gone down on the pages of history, the *Leipzig Interim*.

The *Leipzig Interim* brought great excitement, yes, consternation, to the whole Protestant world. That right here in Saxony, where the star of the Reformation had risen, it was also, as many feared, to set again, filled the hearts of many with fear, trepidation, and consternation. Many critical pamphlets and pasquils appeared, not only against the *Interim* but also against the Saxon theologians, and especially against Melanchthon. Agricola spread the false charge that the Wittenberg theologians had submitted completely to the imperial *Interim*, and that Melanchthon had declared that he would gladly bear all sorts of servitude as long as the basic doctrine (justification by faith) would not be touched. Brenz, who had preferred banishment and misery to the *Interim*, wrote Melanchthon, January 1549: “You hope to find a way in which you can serve both Christ and the Imperial *Interim*, two contradictory masters, but that is impossible. For it is quite evident that the Emperor is not



willing that any one should interpret his decrees according to his own views, but will insist that they be observed literally and to the smallest detail. The *Interim* is contrary to the Word of God. What unity is there possible?"

Even Calvin criticized Melanchthon. For when he heard how jubilant the Catholics were over the *Interim*, and how violently Flacius attacked it, he wrote a most remarkable letter to Melanchthon, in which he said: "Pardon me, my Philip, if I cannot absolve you from all guilt. Be not surprised that many hold as an error against you the fact that you have given in to the enemies in too many things. Consider, that some of the things which you number among the adiaphora are clearly contrary to the Word of God. You should not have given in to the papists in so many things. You have given up things to which God has bound us by His Word. In others you have given the enemies an occasion to blaspheme the Gospel. You should also remember that your position in the church is a far different one from that of many others. You are the head, the leader of the church, and the uncertainty of the leader, or captain, brings greater disgrace than the flight of the common soldier. By giving in to your enemies in a number of not too important things you have caused more sorrow than a hundred lowly members could cause through an open betrayal and defection." It was self-evident that such charges as these caused Melanchthon much pain, since he could not deny that most of them were well-founded. But what pained him most were the attacks which the strict, or super-conservative, followers of Luther directed against him, at the head of whom stood Melanchthon's former friend, Matthias Flacius. Indeed, it was Flacius who from now on was unrelenting in his opposition to, and in his attacks on, Melanchthon and all of the theologians of Wittenberg who sided with him.

The main object of his attacks at first was Melanchthon's partial acceptance of the *Leipzig Interim*, specifically of the adiaphora of the *Interim*. It cannot be denied that the adiaphora which the *Leipzig Interim* admitted did introduce Catholic ceremonies and forms to an extent that could easily lead the people back to the old superstitions. Trained theologians could easily guard themselves against this danger, for they looked upon most of the adiaphora as mere external and indifferent forms. But the simple laymen could not always make this distinction. To them the essence often disappeared under or in the forms. Melanchthon also had completely overlooked the fact that the forms and ceremonies which one could let stand at the beginning of the Reformation in the hope that with the growing knowledge and understanding of the essence of the Gospel they would fall away of their own accord, could not now that the Reformation was fully established be reintroduced without grave danger. For this was not a case where for the sake of the weak in understanding and faith you permit certain forms and ceremonies to remain a while longer, but rather a case where in order to please and placate the enemies and for political considerations you restore what has long been abolished. "Melanchthon," as one historian puts it, "did not err so much *in re*, in the matter, as in the time." He, by the way, was honest enough to admit that he had erred and gone too far. For in a letter to the pastors at Frankfurt he wrote: "Let us confess that we are but human beings, and that we often say and do things without due consideration that are doubtful or wrong. And if that has happened to me, I will gladly try to correct it." And a little later he wrote to Flacius: "In Homer Ajax in his combat with Hector is satisfied when the latter retreats with the confession that he is defeated. But you know no end with your accusations. What enemy does this that he continues to rain blow upon blow on those that have laid down their arms and surrendered? I do not fight for these forms but wish fervently that there might be peace and unity in the church. I confess I have erred in these matters and pray God to forgive me for not having withdrawn completely from those deceitful discussions."

But the attacks of Flacius and his companions at Magdeburg were directed not only at Melanchthon and the theologians of Wittenberg but also against the Duke Elector Moritz, whom they accused of treason and condemned as a traitor. On the advice of Melanchthon the Elector made no reply to these charges. At Wittenberg nothing was done actually to introduce the *Leipzig Interim* in the Electorate. Moritz remained true to his promise that he would not interfere with the faith of his people in Saxony. Everything that he had done was very evidently done to appease the Emperor. It is just possible that much of what he did was done to deceive the Emperor, and the very resistance which his subjects raised against the *Interim* the Duke could use as a cover for his deception. That this resistance, among both the clergy and the laity, did not die but lived and grew in intensity, was the work of Flacius, who through his fiery articles everywhere produced a tremendous effect.

Although Moritz was irritated and his ire aroused by Flacius' action, he nevertheless out of consideration for the peace in his lands had to drop most of what had been adopted at Leipzig. In a way, Flacius was right when he claimed: "With my writings I have through the grace of God turned aside the *Interim*."

We need not trace the fate of the *Leipzig Interim* any further, for this instrument was soon voided by the terminating treaty of the second phase of the Schmalkaldic War, the Religious Peace of Augsburg of 1555. Duke Moritz had made a second about-face. Completely disillusioned as to the Emperor's schemes and real objectives and thoroughly aroused over the latter's failure to keep his promise as to his father-in-law and as to the city of Magdeburg, possibly also troubled in his conscience for having betrayed his brethren in the faith, Moritz had deftly and secretly formed an alliance with most of the Protestant princes and with King Henry II of France against the Emperor. When everything was ready, the Duke suddenly struck at the Emperor, who lay sick with the gout at Innsbruck. So completely was Charles taken by surprise that only by a precipitate flight across the Alps did he succeed in making his escape. Through his subsequent actions Charles clearly indicated that he was licked. For he empowered his brother, Ferdinand, to negotiate with the victors over a truce or temporary peace. The result of these negotiations was the preliminary Peace of Passau of 1552. Some time later a diet was called at Augsburg, which after lengthy discussions and debates formulated and adopted a more permanent peace, the Religious Peace of Augsburg of 1555.

This Religious Peace Treaty of Augsburg established the principles of *cujus regio, eius religio* and *Reservatum ecclesiasticum*. According to the former principle the ruler had the right to determine the faith of his subjects. The latter principle forbade the secularization of church property. While this treaty did not give complete religious freedom to the Protestants, it did guarantee their continued existence. This Peace Treaty of Augsburg was in spite of its limitations the greatest triumph of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. The Protestants were now completely freed from the preposterous demand of the Emperor that they submit to the church council; and their complete emancipation from the dominating authority and power of the Pope was thereby recognized and guaranteed. Protestantism could, indeed, now grow and expand and mature in peace. But unfortunately the ripening of the fruits of the Reformation which could now be expected was seriously interfered with, hindered, and retarded by numerous fights and strifes that broke out in the ranks of the Protestants. The result was an unfortunate division or schism.

To the historical presentation of these strifes, their causes and resulting divisions, we shall turn next.

The first of these strifes pertained to the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell. A certain Johann Aepinus, superintendent of Hamburg, in an exposition of Psalm 16:10, claimed that the descent of Christ into hell represented the lowest state of humiliation of Christ in that Christ descended into hell for the sole purpose of bearing thus the pain and sufferings of the damned in hell. When the book of Aepinus appeared and the strange doctrine presented therein caused not a little commotion and opposition, Melanchthon wrote to him saying: "I wish that all would be more deeply concerned about preaching on the fundamental doctrines, those of faith, repentance, prayer, and Christian virtues, to which we were reborn. Why philosophize on problems to which even the most learned can give no definite answer, since they are not clearly revealed in Scriptures?" When later on the fight broke out anew, and the opposition to Aepinus became vociferous and rather abusive, the magistrates of Hamburg appealed to Wittenberg for advice. Melanchthon gave it. His advice was that the council should urge both parties to drop the matter and keep silent, since by such abusive and scurrilous preaching the hearts and minds of many would be deeply disturbed. The fight over Aepinus's error died down soon after this, partly because a few of the worst contestants on both sides had been exiled, and partly because another strife had broken out that proved to be of a much more serious nature than that of Aepinus. This was the "Osiandrian Strife."

### **The Osiandrian Strife**

Andreas Osiander was the reformer of Nürnberg. Even there he had already preached peculiar views pertaining to the doctrine of justification. At the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, he had expressed his displeasure to Melanchthon about the fact that his views (his *hohe Wahrheit*) had not been incorporated in the *Augsburg*

*Confession*. At the Convention of Schmalkalden he presented his *hohe Wahrheit* in a public service. Luther, who was present, expressed his misgivings about it. But a fight about it was prevented by Luther's authority and efforts. Now in 1549 it broke out in the open.

Because of the *Augsburg Interim* Osiander had been driven out of Nürnberg. Thereupon he fled to Prussia, where Duke Albrecht of Prussia had appointed him as a professor of theology at the University of Königsberg. Now free from all binding considerations which had checked him at Nürnberg, Osiander in his very first disputation presented and defended his peculiar doctrine. "Christ," so he declared, "has indeed redeemed and saved us through his life and death, but justified we are not through the external imputation of the redemption which Christ has wrought but by being united with him through faith, so that he lives in us and we in him, and we are thus made one with him." Justification, according to this view, was not a judicial act through which the Lord declares the sinner righteous, imputes to him the perfect righteousness which Christ has wrought through His suffering, death, and resurrection, but it is a being made righteous. The visible Christ is the image of the invisible God, and as such He is the essential righteousness of God Himself, of which His human nature is but the carrier. If we now accept Christ in faith, are united with Him, become one with Him, then the essential righteousness of God becomes ours, we become righteous and act righteously.

It follows from this that Christ can be called Mediator only according to His divine nature, while in His human nature He has merely revealed the image of God which is to be realized by every one that wants to be saved. The work that Christ as man has performed has thereby lost much of its meaning. Immediately after his disputation the Königsberg theologians, who were deeply disturbed by Osiander's strange views, began to preach against them most vehemently. Soon Melanchthon was drawn into this new strife, for Osiander himself sent him the theses of his debate. Melanchthon at first apparently did not understand what the real issue of this fight was. He thought it was over the question of whether faith belonged to repentance or not. He urged the Königsberg theologians to desist from further disputings, since all of them, so he thought, held the same views on the matter anyway. When, however, a theologian by the name of Franz Staphylus cleared him up in this affair, namely, that the fight was about the doctrine of justification, he reversed his opinion and position and showed that he realized the seriousness of the situation. To his friend Camerarius he wrote, February 1550: "Daily I expect from the shores of the Baltic Sea the signal of a new fight which will certainly affect my heart much more deeply than the fight over the cassock. If Osiander wants to falsify the fundamental doctrines of our faith, I will answer and oppose him without fearing his blows." Melanchthon indeed did not have to wait long for these blows, for soon Osiander hit back at Melanchthon with the words: "This man is supposed to be the *Praeceptor* and *Magister Veritatis Germaniae* and his *Loci* are to be an *Opus Sacrosanctum*, but I will not rest until I have proven that the disciples of Philip either do not understand him, or that Philip, seduced and blinded by his carnal thoughts and philosophy, has drifted away from Luther's doctrines, and that with the bare, empty, and asinine words: 'Our praeceptor Philip teaches otherwise, I will no more be troubled.' " In a letter to the Nürnberg preacher, Hieronymus Besold, Osiander wrote: "I believe that Philip and all of his followers are nothing but servants of Satan. Of justification he has no understanding whatsoever. Outside of the word, 'we are made righteous by faith,' he has nothing of Christian doctrine. To whomsoever this seems unbelievable I will prove this so clearly that he can grasp it with his hands. Let no one henceforth read any of his books. Since the days of the Apostles there has appeared no more dangerous man in the church."

Duke Albrecht of Prussia, to whose jurisdiction Osiander belonged, quite evidently backed him in his strife. He was now told that it was primarily Melanchthon who incited the opponents and enemies of Osiander against the same and that therefore the latter's violent attacks on Melanchthon were at least understandable. Since the attempts of Albrecht to bring Osiander and Melanchthon together failed, he finally sent copies of Osiander's writings to all the members of the *Augsburg Confession* with the request that they obtain the opinions or judgments of the theologians on the same. Melanchthon then advised that not many but one common opinion be drafted. The Duke Elector adopted this idea and ordered Melanchthon to write the opinion of the Wittenberg theologians. Melanchthon proceeded from the fear that Osiander's doctrine would deprive man of much of the comfort of the Gospel, since one could have this comfort in its entirety if one believed only in the mercy gained and obtained through the obedience of the Redeemer. The whole Christ both as to His

divine as well as to His human nature is Mediator and Redeemer. And if He had suffered only according to His human nature, this suffering would not have been sufficient to redeem man from his sins. To be sure, a renewal or rebirth would have to take place in man, wrought by the Holy Ghost, and God must dwell in men. Osiander, therefore, was in error when he claimed that at Wittenberg they did not preach this. But forgiveness of sins is not the result of this renewal; forgiveness would rather have to be accepted before by faith. If then with this faith one appears before God, one is made righteous, that is, one is accepted by God, but not because of the renewal but because of the imputed righteousness of Christ, which the Redeemer had earned and obtained through redeeming suffering and death. This opinion of Melanchthon was adopted by the Wittenberg theologians, including Bugenhagen and Förtes. The latter added a few extremely critical remarks against Osiander, which greatly displeased Melanchthon. Indeed, of all of the opinions sent to Duke Albrecht, that of Melanchthon was again by far the mildest, for most of the rest condemned Osiander's doctrine in the harshest terms as thoroughly unevangelical. Strangely, none of the opinions sent to Duke Albrecht aroused the ire of Osiander as much as the comparatively mild one of Melanchthon, against whom he hurled the most violent charges in a number of pamphlets, asserting that he had corrupted the Christian doctrine, and that through the introduction of his Doctor's oath at the University of Wittenberg, which bound the candidates to the *Augsburg Confession*, he had enslaved the consciences of the theologians.

To bring this "Königsberg Strife," as it sometimes is called, to a close, Duke Albrecht now commissioned Brenz to compose a number of articles on the basis of which the two parties could be reconciled and brought together again. Brenz did this, but the resultant articles were declared unsatisfactory and rejected by both parties.

Osiander died in October 1552, but the strife continued, for now Osiander's son-in-law, the Prussian court pastor Johann Funk, became the head and leader of the Osiandrian faction. He proved to be much more moderate and conciliatory than Osiander had been; and after numerous attempts had been made by various people in various parts of the country to settle the strife, all proving unsuccessful, Funk and his following denounced the Osiandrian formula, joined the Wittenberg group, adopted the *Augsburg Confession* and Melanchthon's *Loci*, and were speedily condemned as Philippists by Flacius and the Gnesio-Lutherans. There was still some desultory fighting pro and con over the Osiandrian view after this, but eventually the Osiandrian error disappeared from the Protestant church.

## **A New Edition of Melanchthon's Loci**

### **The Strife Over the Freedom of the Will**

Since in the edition of the *Loci* of 1535 Melanchthon had given up the view pertaining to the absolute predestination, he had come more and more to the conclusion that man is not purely passive in the act of conversion but is active and does contribute something to it. In his newly revised edition of his *Loci* of 1541, which did not appear until 1544, however, Melanchthon again took up the doctrine of conversion as he had presented it in the edition of 1535 and carried it to its final conclusion. He now clearly taught that there are three causes for the conversion of man: the Word of God, the Holy Ghost, and man's will which does not oppose the Word of God anymore but accepts it. Melanchthon, then, taught that the human will had retained by nature the *facultas se applicandi ad gratiam*. To be sure, Melanchthon did not ascribe to the action, to the works of man, any meritorious quality: his salvation and his justification has but one cause, the merits of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Man cannot give himself his saving faith, just as he cannot keep the whole law perfectly, but the potentialities to this end are not completely lost, but only disturbed and weakened. He can feel in himself the need and desire for salvation; this salvation is, however, completely the work of God. The Holy Ghost is not active in man as in a block of wood or stone, but it presupposes an act of his, that is, man's will, which not only conditions but also accomplishes the action of the Holy Ghost.

Melanchthon was wrong in assuming that natural man has retained so much freedom of will that he can, and does, determine to be responsive to the Word of God and to the working of the Holy Ghost in and through

the Word, in other words, that the will of natural man is not inert and completely inactive like a block of wood or stone in the act of conversion, but active.

There was no immediate reaction against Melanchthon's view pertaining to the freedom of the will on the part of Flacius and his following. But later on during the general strife between the Gnesio-Lutherans, led by Flacius, and the Wittenberg school, led by Melanchthon, his doctrine of the freedom of the will was most violently attacked and roundly condemned. This strife dragged on and on until it was finally settled for all true Lutherans in the *Formula of Concord* of 1577. In this document the whole second part, which is headed: *De Libero Arbitrio Sive De Viribus Humanis*, deals at length with the doctrine of the freedom of the will. It puts the problem in the form of a question thus: "The main question is simply and solely: what the reason and will of unregenerated man can contribute to his conversion and regeneration by reason of his own potentialities which he has retained after his fall; and if, when the Word of God is preached, and the grace of God is offered to him, he can prepare himself for such grace, consent to the same and accept the same. This is the question about which for sometime now in the church of the Augsburg Confession a strife has been raging among a number of theologians.... Pertaining to this problem the true teachers of the Augsburg Confession have ever taught and contended that man through the fall of our first parents has been so thoroughly corrupted that he in divine affairs, as pertaining to his conversion and his soul's salvation, is by nature blind; and if the Word of God is preached to him, he does not, neither can he, understand the same, but deems it foolishness; as also he cannot of himself approach God but is and remains an enemy of God until he by the power of the Holy Ghost, working through the Word that is preached and heard, purely out of grace and without any contribution on his part, is converted, comes to faith, and is reborn and renewed."

This position the *Formula* then proceeds to prove and establish as divinely inspired truth by adducing numerous Scripture passages in which the various facts are clearly revealed and taught. "If then in St. Paul and other regenerated saints the natural or fleshly free will, even after their rebirth, still opposes the law of God, how much more will he before the regeneration oppose God's law and will and be hostile to it! From this exposition it is quite clear that man cannot with his own natural capacities contribute anything to his conversion, righteousness, and salvation; neither can he follow the Holy Ghost, who offers him through the Gospel the grace of God and salvation; neither can he believe nor give his consent to the truth, but out of an innate evil and obstreperous nature he opposes God and His will, until he be enlightened through the Spirit of God and ruled by Him." Let me add one more quotation from the *Formula of Concord*. It represents Luther's summary view pertaining to the will of natural man and shows to what extent Melanchthon and many of the Wittenberg theologians shifted, or drifted, from the position held by Luther. Quote: "As Luther says in the 90th Psalm: Pertaining to the worldly and external affairs of life, as pertaining to food and bodily necessities, man is shrewd, reasonable, and extremely active; but in spiritual and divine affairs, as pertaining to his soul's salvation, man is like a pillar of salt, like Lot's wife, like a block and a stone, like a dead picture that has neither eyes nor a mouth, neither senses nor a heart."

### **Renewal of the Strife Over the Lord's Supper**

In the general fight that broke out between the two factions of Lutherans it was almost self-evident that the doctrine of the Lord's Supper would also again become an object of strife. Some of the opponents of Melanchthon charged that he denied the real presence of the Lord's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. Though we cannot support this charge, yet it is true that Melanchthon did not allow the material, local presence of body and blood, included in the visible elements of the Lord's Supper. Here he differed decidedly with Luther. Another point of difference should be noted. Melanchthon believed that the whole Christ is received with the bread and wine. But since receiving is only possible to faith, Melanchthon would not allow that the unbelievers received the body and blood of Christ, for the promise of God's grace, which they reject in unbelief, does not apply to them. While Melanchthon had indeed completely broken with the Zwinglians pertaining to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, he apparently during all this time had been, and still was, of the opinion that an agreement could be reached with Calvin pertaining to his doctrine of the Lord's Supper. He apparently

gradually became convinced, not that Luther's view of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper was wrong, but that Calvin's view of the spiritual eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper through faith did not destroy a single essential religious element of the Lord's Supper. And therefore Melanchthon constantly endeavored to minimize or remove the differences in Calvin's doctrine and confession.

The hostilities were renewed by Pastor Joachim Westphal of Hamburg. Westphal did not attack the Wittenberg theologians. He attacked Calvin, but in such a fashion that everybody could recognize that the attack was really directed at Melanchthon and his following. In 1553 Calvin replied to these charges. In this reply he referred to the fact that the *Augsburg Confession*, which was presented to the Diet of Regensburg in 1541, contained nothing that warred against his own views of the Lord's Supper. And if there was anything in it that lacked clearness, Melanchthon as its author would be the proper person to clarify it. Repeatedly Calvin appealed to Melanchthon actively and publicly to enter into the controversy. But Melanchthon remained silent, gave no answer to Calvin's appeals so that the latter finally very emphatically brought charges against him and made one more urgent appeal: "You know that for the last thirty years the eyes of many have been directed to you, who now wish nothing more than that they would be enlightened by you. Are you ignorant of the fact that many are beginning to lose their confidence in you since you too fearfully insist on your uncertain views? If you are lacking the freedom of honestly confessing that which you hold to be correct and profitable, then you should at least endeavor to silence those daring individuals who so untimely rant against you." Even this emphatic charge and appeal did not induce Melanchthon to enter the fray, but he continued to wrap himself in silence. Melanchthon, no doubt, was painfully aware of the unhappiness of his position, but he fully realized that he would not dare to come out in Germany in defense of Calvin. It was no doubt also true that Melanchthon in spite of his friendship for the Geneva theologian was not in complete agreement with the latter's theology. For where in his writing do we find the peculiar Calvinistic formula of the glorified body of Christ and of the effectiveness of the same in the Lord's Supper?

And the silence of Melanchthon did not satisfy Flacius and his followers at Jena either. For them it became the source of new suspicion and charges. On the other hand, it was also true that some of his friends rallied to his defense. Thus an old friend, Johann Stigel, professor at the University of Jena, wrote to him December 1555 that he was deeply concerned about him, for many suspected him of being a disciple of Calvin, and therefore he begged him to disprove these rumors publicly. But Melanchthon heeded this appeal just as little as he had heeded that of Calvin. Did this silence spring from cowardice? It would be difficult to prove this charge. More likely it was the result of his misgivings concerning the effectiveness and of his convictions regarding the fruitlessness of private debates and disputations between individuals.

### **Attempts at Reconciliation Between Melanchthon and Flacius, 1556**

In the face of the growing spirit of mistrust and hostility which took hold of the minds of both parties and their leaders, it became increasingly more evident that there was very little hope left for reconciliation. Nevertheless attempts were made. But they all proved futile. It seems that Flacius made the first move. In 1556 he made a number of proposals of reconciliation. He declared that he was ready to make peace with Melanchthon, provided the latter would submit to his judgment. It was quite evident that attempts based on such a condition would not be acceptable to the opposition. Friends like Kaspar Nidbruck and Hesshusen, who were deeply concerned about the whole unfortunate situation, served as mediators. Flacius and Melanchthon were induced to meet privately and discuss their differences. As a meeting place the little town of Coswig was proposed by Flacius. At the same time he proposed that each bring along two friends, who should serve as witnesses. To prepare for the discussion Flacius sent to Paul Eber a number of articles which according to his opinion should help to establish peace. These articles were of such general nature, however, that Eber did not hand them to Melanchthon at all, fearing that the latter might be offended by being asked to debate on articles on which they did not differ at all. To mention a few: "That the pope is the Anti-christ; that we must stand firmly on the Augsburg Confession; that we must condemn the Council of Trent and the Augsburg Interim; that

we must recognize no one as a brother who has not publicly recanted his errors"; etc. Through a Frenchman, Languet, a friend of Melanchthon's, who was at this time studying at Wittenberg, the articles were finally delivered into the hands of Melanchthon. But Philip flatly refused to enter into a discussion with Flacius on such articles. Thereupon Flacius sent a rather sharp reply to Melanchthon, in which he declared: "Since Melanchthon rejects all friendly overtures to settle their differences in a friendly manner, we shall have to bring the whole affair according to the instructions of our Lord before the church." More negotiations followed. These, however, all proved fruitless because Melanchthon refused to comply with the demands of Flacius that he first of all recant his "so-called errors." "I know," wrote Melanchthon, "that I can err, but I refuse to submit to the judgment of one single individual but only to that of the church." In this sense Melanchthon now appealed his cause to the churches of Hamburg, Braunschweig, and Lüneburg. These churches now named the theologians that were to deal with Melanchthon and Flacius. They were instructed to avoid all lengthy disputations, but rather to try to effect a reconciliation on the basis of a pamphlet titled: "Pertaining to Reunion," recently published by Flacius. Having read this pamphlet, Melanchthon wrote to the mediators: "Since it is customary for mediators to present conditions or propositions on the basis of which the reconciliation is to be effected, I expect to be offered such by the mediators, since I can under no circumstances accept those which Flacius offers to me in his booklet. If I may offer on my part what I deem to be the best means to a reconciliation and peace, I would propose that we first discuss again all of the basic doctrines and avoid all subtle distortions and darkenings of the same. Flacius has so far only attacked single facts; on the rest he is silent." But instead of following Melanchthon's proposal, with which they agreed theoretically, they now offered their own propositions on the basis of which peace might be established. These were eight in number. Melanchthon apparently held that in these eight articles nothing was demanded of Flacius, but of himself, everything. But for the sake of peace Melanchthon accepted some of the articles outright, others only conditionally. Only one did he reject outright by passing over it in silence. On his request that they state the errors of which they accused him, Flacius drew up a list and presented it to him in writing. Melanchthon refused to accept them or acknowledge them as his errors. Indeed, he now recanted everything that he had thus far accepted and admitted.

The mediators now realized that they could gain nothing any more. Besides, their stay in Wittenberg became increasingly more uncomfortable. Pasquils were posted everywhere, yes, were even brought to them in their quarters. Bugenhagen and others attacked them in their sermons, and the university professors refused to associate with them. After having notified Flacius at Coswig of their intentions, they left Wittenberg, after having obtained from Melanchthon the promise that for the next two months he would write nothing against Flacius. In return they would try to get a similar promise from Flacius. This was the final outcome of the Coswig attempts at reconciliation. It was a shocking revelation of the depth of the split or schism in the Lutheran Church. Many well-meaning people all over Germany were deeply concerned about this schism and tried to find ways and means of healing it. And many attempts were made on a smaller scale, by individuals, to effect a reconciliation, but all to no avail. Melanchthon did not continue the strife. Not only during the next two months did he keep his peace, as he had promised, but also during all of the two next years Melanchthon wrote nothing against Flacius, while the latter as early as March 1557 again made a violent attack on Melanchthon, but the city council of Magdeburg forbade the publication of the pamphlet. Flacius regretted the fact that he had made, though only small, concessions at Coswig. To Mörlin he wrote because of these concessions: "I have wounded my conscience and offended my God."

In April 1557 Flacius was made professor of theology at the University of Jena. And indeed since this time the University of Jena, not Wittenberg, was the seat of Gnesio-, or true, Lutheranism.

### **The Colloquy of Worms, 1557**

After the Diet of Augsburg of 1555 King Ferdinand ordered another diet to meet at Regensburg on March 1, 1556. Ferdinand called this diet because the Turks were again threatening Hungary. Ferdinand fully realized that because of this threat it was highly desirable that peace would reign in the *Reich*. Knowing full well that the religious issue would be one of the matters taken up by the diet, Duke Christophoros of

Württemberg and the Duke Elector Frederick of the Palatinate proposed that a convention of theologians should be called who in the presence of the princes should discuss the whole religious situation. Melancthon was opposed to such a convention fearing that it would lead to nothing else but some more dangerous and fruitless disputations. The opening of the Diet of Regensburg was postponed until July 1557. The negotiations or discussions were long-winded and confused. The Protestants demanded that the Ecclesiastical Reservation be cancelled. Some of the Catholic bishops demanded a church council. King Ferdinand was opposed to both, declaring that a colloquy would lead nowhere, and that a church council, because of the difficult situation, was impossible. He proposed instead that a number of counselors and theologians would hold a "consultation" on the religious questions. In a resolution of March 16, 1557, the Religious Peace of Augsburg was reaffirmed. At the same session a resolution ordered the calling of a body of theologians for the "consultation," as desired by Ferdinand. Thereupon all of the Protestant representatives of the diet agreed to stand firmly on the basis of the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Schmalkald Articles*, at the same time condemning all doctrines contrary to them, and resolving not to enter into any fruitless disputations. Thus for a last time an attempt was to be made at the reconciliation of Catholicism and Protestantism, more out of respect for Ferdinand than out of hope for success. The greatest difficulty that a Protestant colloquy was confronted with was the disunity among the Protestant theologians themselves. At the suggestion of Otto Heinrich of the Palatinate and Christophoros of Württemberg it was resolved that the Protestant theologians would meet at Worms on August 1st to discuss the contested doctrines and see whether they could reach some agreement on them.

Evidently the Swiss reformers looked with great expectation and hope to the Colloquy of Worms. Some of them had even expected an invitation to attend the Colloquy and to participate in its discussions. And theft hope rested privately on Melancthon. For one of them, Zanchi, wrote to Bullinger: "Philip, though at times out of fear he does what he does not really approve, will certainly strive with all his might that the truth will be defended." And Bullinger in turn wrote to Melancthon entreating him to oppose valiantly any attempt of condemning the Reformed. And Calvin himself tried to persuade Melancthon that he should try to induce the Protestant princes to arrange a colloquy with the Swiss in some city of Southern Germany, there to iron out their difficulties. "If you can succeed," he wrote, "in having both parties discuss their problems quietly and peacefully, I am not afraid of the outcome." It is significant that the Swiss Reformed addressed all their appeals to Melancthon. This clearly shows how they judged Melancthon. They saw in him not only the leader of the Lutheran Church, following Luther, but also a theologian of much more liberal and conciliatory attitude than Luther had been, through whose aid they hoped to remove the difficulties or differences that separated them from the Lutheran branch of the Protestant church and thus eventually could and would be formally united with them.

The Protestant Colloquy got under way. But the Dukes of Saxony had instructed their Jena representatives that they should not enter into any negotiations with the Catholics until they had first exacted the promise from all of the Protestant representatives that they would stand firmly on the basis of the *Augsburg Confession*, the *Apology*, and the *Article of Schmalkalden*; and that they would clearly and emphatically condemn all the errors of the Anabaptists, the Zwinglians, Calvinists, Sacramentarians, and the Adiaphorists. This demand quite evidently was directed at the Wittenberg theologians, and especially at Melancthon. One recognizes without difficulty the hand of Flacius in this demand. And it was over this demand of the Gnesio-Lutherans that the Protestant Colloquy finally collapsed since the Wittenberg theologians, led by Melancthon, refused to comply with it. The schism between Wittenberg and Jena remained; indeed, one could say that it had been deepened and widened.

On September 11 the "Consultation" or colloquy with the Catholics was finally opened under the chairmanship of Julius Pflug. The colloquy began rather auspiciously with an address by Chairman Pflug. In this address Pflug admonished all of the members to refrain from all heated arguments and senseless talk. At the same time he deplored the fact that the unfortunate strife which was dividing the Empire was doing untold harm to the same. Melancthon answered with a friendly but very emphatic address, in which he rejected the charges that the Protestants were solely responsible and to blame for the turmoil and strife that troubled the *Reich*, since they had merely returned to the eternal, divine truths of God as they had formulated and presented them in the



*Augsburg Confession*. On this confession they would firmly stand and condemn and reject all errors which were contrary to the same, both old and new, especially the Interim and the decrees of the Council of Trent. They would now merely present with moderation their doctrines and demand that the opponents would not fight them with sophisms. The Catholics now handed to Melanchthon a series of 23 articles, which were to form the basis of their discussion. Next came the question according to what norm the doctrines would be judged. The Catholics demanded that it must be the authority of the church. Melanchthon insisted that they must be judged according to the Holy Scriptures. The Catholics now smartly made use of the division already existing among the Protestants to deepen the division still more by demanding that they give the names of the sects which they condemned, and so state what they thought of Zwingli, Calvin, Osiander, and Flacius. This demand caused great excitement among the Protestants, and Melanchthon declared: "You have chosen a very grandiloquent orator, but by such methods we shall never reach our goal." When the Protestants discussed this affair after this session, Brenz and other Protestants demanded that they should condemn Flacius, for he because of his radicalism was primarily held responsible for the division. But Melanchthon prevented this by declaring that the Catholics were only seeking to condemn Luther under the name of Flacius. And while it was true that some of Luther's doctrines required changes, it certainly would be inadvisable to condemn them publicly; that trap which the Catholics had smartly set should by all means be avoided. This treachery of the Papists, however, brought the strife among the Protestants out into the open. For Flacius and his men from Jena believed that now the moment had arrived when they with formal protestation must witness against the errors of the opposition. In vain did some of them point to the serious consequences which such action no doubt would have. But without much delay they handed to the chairman of the colloquy a list of heresies which they condemned, and a few days later the official protestation. In it they officially and emphatically protested against everything that might be discussed and resolved by the colloquy. Great was the rejoicing in the Roman camp. Rightly could they ask now, who are the true adherents of the *Augsburg Confession*? Who are the true representatives of the apparently hopelessly divided Protestantism? Is it necessary, yes, possible, to deal with people that are so hopelessly divided among themselves? So the Papists used this division among the Protestants and this deadlock as a pretext for breaking off all discussions and ending the colloquy. Shortly before this, when a number of Wittenberg theologians demanded the removal of Flacius and his followers, the latter handed another protestation to Chairman Pflug which he, however, refused to accept. Thereupon Flacius and his followers left Worms. This also was used as a welcome pretext by the Romans to end the colloquy.

Melanchthon and the other Wittenberg theologians were, however, in favor of continuing with the colloquy. Some of the latter handed an official protestation to Chairman Pflug, in which they rejected the charges that they, the Protestants, were solely responsible for the breaking off of the colloquy, since their strife with the Flacians was an inner affair of the Protestants, and therefore no concern of the Catholics.

Melanchthon also wrote a memorial which he handed to Chairman Pflug. In this protestation he declared that he and his colleagues were ready to continue with the colloquy; that they had no other doctrines than those of the *Augsburg Confession*, and these alone they wished to defend; that they recognized neither the views of Zwingli nor those of the errorists. Their sole wish was to meet with their adversaries and discuss with them all of their differences, since it was highly imperative in these difficult times that good men should meet and quickly and peacefully discuss how they might prevent the division in the church from becoming greater, and to try to heal the one already obtaining.

But all of these attempts proved futile. The opposition of the Catholics became constantly stronger. These, i.e., the Catholics, also prepared and handed in a declaration in which they stated that the split in the ranks of the Protestants was an insurmountable obstacle in the way of all attempts at reconciliation. All that was left for Chairman Pflug to do was to report this deadlock to King Ferdinand and ask for and await further instructions. When the reply of Ferdinand finally came, it was to the effect that the colloquy was to continue. To this he added the request that the Protestants agree to the recalling of Flacius and the Jena theologians; and that the Catholics should be satisfied with the declaration already made by the Protestants.

The Catholics, who really did not want the colloquy to be continued now, made the reopening of the colloquy dependent on the recalling of Flacius and his theologians. They knew well enough that Flacius would

not return to Wittenberg even if officially invited. Thus they could use the failure of Flacius to return to Worms as a pretext for the sabotaging of the colloquy. They thus could throw the blame for the breaking off of the colloquy on the Protestants. And they did so.

Some of the Protestant princes now placed before the Protestant theologians three points for discussion: 1. To protest against the closing of the colloquy. 2. To compose a number of articles for discussion. 3. To call a general synod. Melanchthon was asked to compose the requested articles. He placed before the body three articles which he had already written some time before this: namely, his declaration on the Lord's Supper, on good works, and on the doctrine of Osiander. But Melanchthon immediately withdrew these articles out of deference for Brenz, whom he did not want to offend (since he held diverging views pertaining to the Osiandrian error). Brenz then begged him to write some other articles. When Melanchthon refused, he entreated him at least to reissue the Concord of Wittenberg of 1536. But Melanchthon again refused. Thereupon another theologian, Matthias Alberus, remarked rather sarcastically: "But Mr. Praeceptor, you have signed this document yourself." Melanchthon replied: "Dear Matthias, I have written many a thing in times past which I now no longer approve. Don't you think that in thirty years I have made some progress?"

But what caused Melanchthon much more grief was the fact that the Swiss Reformed attacked him for having condemned in his protestation of October 21 the doctrines of Zwingli as heresies. Thus Calvin's ire was aroused to such a high pitch that he wrote to Bullinger: "Philip has gone much further than I, in spite of his weakness, had held possible. The unfortunate outcome of the Colloquy of Worms pains me much less than the disquieting cowardice of this man." In a similar vein Blaurer wrote to Calvin: "I had expected something better of him than this. I am astonished that this great man is of so little faith, that every time he is up against a real problem he falls back to his weakness." The question that comes to one's mind here quite naturally is: Why were Calvin and the other Reformed theologians so aroused over Melanchthon's attack on Zwingli? The answer: Because of the view held quite generally by the Swiss Reformed that an attack on Zwingli represented an attack on the Reformed theology in general. Still, this sudden negative reaction of Calvin and Blaurer against Melanchthon's condemnation of Zwingli was strange since Philip had repeatedly condemned Zwingli's false doctrine of the Lord's Supper before this. It seems to me as if Calvin and the other Reformed had through what had recently happened at the Colloquy of Worms gotten the impression that Melanchthon had shifted his position decidedly in their direction, in their favor. And now they were shocked to hear that Melanchthon had again condemned Zwingli's doctrine of the Lord's Supper as heretical.

But to return to the colloquy of Worms, it is quite evident on the basis of the historical facts stated that its achievements were nil. The general turmoil was greater than ever. The spirit of hostility between the theologians of Wittenberg and of Jena, between the Protestants and the Catholics, between the Lutherans and the Reformed had grown deeper. But at least much had become clear—the one positive result—that there was left no hope, no prospect whatsoever, of a reconciliation between Protestantism and Rome.

There is one more item which we want to present. This pertains to the appearance of a delegation of the French Protestants, who appeared at Worms to appeal to the Protestants, assembled there for the colloquy, to come to their aid in their distress. This was the situation. Some 400 French Protestants, who had assembled in Paris secretly because King Henry II was persecuting them, were all arrested and thrown into prison. Their pastor, Caspar Carmel, had fled and escaped to Switzerland, where he appealed to the Protestant cantons to intercede for them with King Henry. On the advice of Calvin, Theodore Beza was sent at the head of a delegation to Worms with an appeal to the Protestant princes to intercede for their persecuted brethren. Beza quite naturally contacted Melanchthon as the recognized head and leader of the German Protestants and presented to him the petition of the persecuted French Protestants. Melanchthon replied: "We deplore wholeheartedly the distress which has hit our honorable and noble brethren in France, and we are willing to aid them in their misery as much as lies in our power. And though we are convinced that you are presenting your petition in behalf of God-fearing and Christian brethren only, some sort of brief confession on your part would nevertheless be necessary, which we could send to our princes so that from it they could clearly recognize and see that we are petitioning for such as are of the same faith as we are. The article on the Lord's Supper should

be no obstacle to your task of composing your brief confession, for we shall write to our princes that in this respect, i.e., pertaining to the Lord's Supper, our churches do not differ from yours."

Beza was somewhat astonished over this result, but nevertheless finally did write one. In this he stated "that the French Protestant church agreed in all points of doctrine with the Augsburg Confession excepting in the article of the Lord's Supper, on which they had always wished to have a free discussion with the Germans in the hope that they could and would eventually come to a peaceful agreement on it." Let us note that Beza candidly admitted that as pertaining to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper the two churches differ, while Melancthon had declared that in this respect, that is, as pertaining to the article of the Lord's Supper, "our churches do not differ from yours."

Nothing came of this whole affair, however, since King Henry bluntly rejected the petition that was sent to him in place of a delegation, as had been at first proposed.

The petition to King Henry, by the way, was written by Melancthon on request. In it he appealed to the royal mildness as pertaining to the prisoners, who were of the same faith as the Germans, with the exception of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, on which an agreement, however, was not impossible.

In conclusion we would like to present a few quotations from a quadricentennial booklet on Melancthon entitled: *Philipp Melancthon, sein Leben und Wirken*, written by a certain William Theodor Jungk, published by the Eden Publishing House of St. Louis, Missouri, in the year 1897.

Pertaining to the Lord's Supper he writes this: "The Swiss Reformer, Calvin, who exceeded Zwingli greatly in depth, erudition, and importance, also had a far better conception of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper than Zwingli. Calvin taught that with the bread the true body of the Lord was partaken of by the communicant by faith. Repeatedly he tried to win over Melancthon, to whom he was bound by close ties of friendship, to his peculiar viewpoint. And indeed, Melancthon's conception of the Lord's Supper approached more and more the doctrinal view of the Reformed" (p. 110).

In the closing paragraphs of his booklet the author answers the questions: "What were the chief aims and objectives of Melancthon as a reformer? And what was his most important achievement?" He answers: "In general, this was the essential significance or importance of Melancthon the reformer, that he was the learned founder of the Evangelical faith. And as its founder so he also was its defender against the scholars of the Catholic Church" (p. 137). Jungk is here referring, as he states in another paragraph, to Melancthon's *Loci Communes*, first published in 1521, and later on repeatedly revised and enlarged. These *Loci Communes*, by the way, have sometimes been called the "First Lutheran Dogmatics."

But Melancthon was, according to our author, not only very active and important in the inner or doctrinal growth and development of the Protestant Church but also in its external, formal, or organic shaping and development. Thus, Melancthon was not in favor of the church being ruled by the princes, or governments, nor according to the democratic ideal by the laity, the people, but by the bishops. Melancthon, then, was in favor of the restoration and extension of the episcopal system in the Lutheran Church.

Finally the author holds that Melancthon, the mature Melancthon, was the carrier of the idea of the organic union of the Lutheran and the Reformed churches. We quote: "We now return to Melancthon and designate him as the binding link, as the mediator, between the two churches. After him there have always been men in the Lutheran Church who have kept alive the really great idea of a union of the two churches. But what Melancthon, the true friend of Calvin, wished, hoped, and prayed for, that a later and more favorable time has brought to fruition: the Union. A noble prince, King Frederick William III of Prussia, has in the year 1817, in connection with the celebration of the Tricentennial of the Reformation, officially introduced the union in his Kingdom of Prussia" (p. 141).