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Programmheft des Neunten Internationalen Kongresses für Lutherforschung mit einem Holzschnitt – 56 x 119 mm –, der zwischen Luthers und Melanchthons Wappen die Geburt Jesu zeigt. Er bildet die Basis einer Titeleinfassung, die 1526 in der Werkstatt von Lucas Cranach d. Ä. (1572-1553) entstand und der von 1521 bis 1547 in Wittenberg tätige Drucker Nickel Schirlentz – siehe Monogramm NS – fast zehn Jahre lang verwendete; CRANACH IM DETAIL: Buchschmuck Lucas Cranachs des Älteren und seiner Werkstatt; Ausstellung in der Lutherhalle Wittenberg vom 29. 3. bis 4. 12. 1994 anlässlich der Lucas-Cranach-Ehrung 1994/ Katalog: Jutta Strehle. Wittenberg 1994, 68. 81 (42 a).

Melanchthon and Luther / Luther and Melanchthon

Von Timothy J. Wengert

I Introduction

In studies of the Reformation and its development, few questions have proved more vexing to scholars than the one intimated by the title for this essay. The problem of the relation between Luther and Melanchthon has exercised historians and theologians since the Leipzig debates of 1519. It has constituted one of the most important recurring themes for theological discussion within the Lutheran church at least since the Smalcald War of 1547. Did Melanchthon help Luther discover the gospel?¹ Was Melanchthon too much a »pussy-footer«, too weak to maintain the gospel after Luther's death?² Was Melanchthon alien or ally?³ Did Luther's irascibility finally repel his sensitive colleague and undermine their »friendship«?⁴ Was Luther's original insight into the inner, transforming righteousness received by faith alone distorted by Melanchthon's legal metaphor of forensic justification?⁵

There have been several pitfalls in the quest to define the relation between these two giants. Some analysts have focused especially on the psychological differences between the two men, in some cases believing without question the

1 Lowell C. GREEN: How Melanchthon helped Luther discover the gospel: the doctrine of justification in the Reformation. Fallbrook, Calif. 1980.

2 See, for example, Bengt HÄGGLUND: Melanchthon versus Luther: the contemporary struggle. CThQ 44 (1980), 123-133.

3 Franz HILDEBRANDT: Melanchthon: alien or ally? Cambridge 1946.

4 For more on the motif of friendship, see below page 59. Among the scholars who have used this metaphor to explain the relationship, see Bernd MOELLER: Philipp Melanchthon. In: Luther kontrovers/ ed. by Hans Jürgen Schultz. S 1983, 198-211; Wilhelm MAURER: Melanchthons Anteil am Streit zwischen Luther und Erasmus. ARG 49 (1958), 89-114; Erwin MÜLHAUPT: Luther und Melanchthon: die Geschichte einer Freundschaft. Lu 33 (1962), 1-17 = in: Erwin Mülhaupt: Luther im 20. Jahrhundert: Aufsätze. GÖ 1982, 121-134.

5 Karl HOLL: Die Rechtfertigungslehre in Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Frage der Heilsgewißheit. In: Karl Holl: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte. Vol. 1: Luther. Tü 1923, 111-154, esp. 124-129.

very psychological sketches produced by the principals themselves for public consumption.⁶ Others have reduced the relation to comparison of theologies. As important as the real and perceived differences may have been, such comparison risks either repristinating later tensions within Lutheranism and reading them into the earlier debates or inventing systematic, often idealized, theological categories that threaten to reduce the key players to their ideas.⁷

The question of the relation between Luther and Melanchthon poses one of the oldest and most intractable historical conundrums of all: how does one explain in historical terms the relation between two people of such power and importance in their own time. Present dissatisfaction with descriptions of this dilemma may simply point to the profound difficulty human observers have in coming to terms with relationships of such complexity.⁸

For all these reasons, the present analysis seeks to shed fresh light on this issue by narrowing the question slightly and broadening the sources used to answer it. Instead of either searching for psychological solutions or relying on theological generalizations, this study will investigate the minutiae of Luther and Melanchthon's everyday interaction in Wittenberg to gain insight into the nature of their relationship. Each encounter, every crisis or confrontation (real or imagined), had its own peculiar qualities that often can be disturbed by hastening too quickly to global hypotheses about their behavior. However, precisely from such observations of details can the historian develop more general descriptions of their interaction.

6 For an important critique of this approach, see Heinz SCHEIBLE: Luther and Melanchthon. LQ 4 (1990), 317-339. Even in his fine essay at the Second International Luther Congress, Wilhelm Pauck made the mistake of characterizing their relationship as a friendship; Wilhelm PAUCK: Luther and Melanchthon. In: Luther and Melanchthon in the history and theology of the Reformation/ ed. by Vilmos Vajta. Phil 1961, 13-31. Scholars are indebted to the initial work of Gustav Mix: Luther und Melanchthon in ihrer gegenseitigen Beurteilung. Theol. Studien und Kritiken (1901), 458-521.

7 As a helpful corrective, see Robert KOLB: Confessing the faith: reformers define the church, 1530-1580. StL 1991, 13-42.

8 One attempt to clarify such relations more generally comes from Max WEBER: The nature of charismatic authority and its routinization. In: Max Weber: On charisma and institution building: selected papers/ ed. by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt. Chicago 1968, 48-65.

II Personal Relations

The question of the relation between Luther and Melanchthon demands careful analysis of their interpersonal interaction. For example, in part because of comments from Luther about »treading lightly« in the »Augsburg Confession«⁹ and because of the psychograms of themselves and each other that both men produced for public consumption, Melanchthon is often characterized as quiet and compromising, almost wishy-washy, and Luther as flamboyant and unyielding.¹⁰ Yet the reformers' behavior did not in fact conform to these stereotypes.

In 1539 Luther marvelled at Melanchthon's harshness in attacking the Roman church (he could later have included the 1540 rewriting of the 1532 commentary on Romans).¹¹ However much Melanchthon's position on justification at the Regensburg Colloquy may have represented a compromise,¹² he departed from Wittenberg for the meetings – originally scheduled to be held in Hagenau – in tears, convinced he would die for the faith.¹³ Once at the colloquy, he refused to give in on the question of ecclesiastical authority and even rebuked a prince and defied the emperor.¹⁴ He also felt little need to defend himself in the face of Luther's rejection of the compromise language on justification, writing to Luther

9 A comment that in itself need not be interpreted as negative in the least, especially given Luther's unstinting praise for the »Confessio Augustana«; Heinz SCHEIBLE: Melanchthon und Luther während des Augsburger Reichstags 1530. In: Heinz SCHEIBLE: Melanchthon und die Reformation: Forschungsbeiträge/ ed. by Gerhard May and Rolf Decot. MZ 1996, 198-220, esp. 212-217. For the term »Leisetreten« see WA 30 II, 334, 24.

10 The title of Clyde MANSCHRECK's biography expressed this view: Melanchthon: the quiet reformer. Nashville 1958. See Luther's comments at table WA TR 1, 1-5 (80); 29-31 (348); 4, 386, 1-7 (4577); 637, 8-16 (5054); 5, 665, 6-8 (6443).

11 WA TR 4, 637, 12-16 (5054), 21 May - 2 June 1540: »At in tractatione scripturae ego [Lutherus] vehementior sum quam Philippus, etsi in libello de ecclesia [De ecclesia et de autoritate verbi Dei, 1539] acrior fuit. Sententia eius libri est vehemens, sed verba videntur mihi non esse similia rebus; sed non intelligo vim Latini sermonis. Ich waldrechte, Philippus hobeltt, sed malo nodo malus quaerendus est cuneus« [HIERONYMUS: Epistolae 69, 5 ≙ Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum 54 (1910), 686, 17]. On the knotty question of the church, Philipp's book was just such a wicked chisel.

12 Even this may not be the case: Rome did not like the compromise, which represented in some ways a reworking of Melanchthon's own concepts found in the Loci of 1535, any better than Luther.

13 WA TR 4, 639, 7. 27 f (5058. 5062), 11 June 1540. He was also apprehensive preceding the 1530 Diet of Augsburg.

14 Timothy J. WENGERT: The day Philip Melanchthon got mad. LQ 5 (1991), 419-433.

that he was convinced this language was merely a starting point which the evangelical princes could emend later in an evangelical fashion. He even dislike the use of the term »efficax« in defining faith.¹⁵

As far as Melanchthon's gentle spirit is concerned, this topos was early on constructed in part by Luther himself in an attempt to demonstrate their united disavowal of Erasmus' »De libero arbitrio« and »Hyperaspistes«. Whereas Luther had attacked with biting irony and sarcasm, trying – like any good preacher – to drive Erasmus (1466/69-1536) to Christ, Melanchthon in his »Scholia in Epistolam Pauli ad Colossenses« of 1528 had used logic and subtlety – like any good teacher – to show the limits of reason in this debate.¹⁶ When Justus Jonas (1493-1555) produced a German translation of the Scholia in 1529, Luther added a preface, in which he opined:

»I was born for this purpose: to fight with the rebels and the devils and to lead the charge. Therefore my books are very stormy and warlike. I have to uproot trunks and stumps, hack at thorns and hedges, and fill in the potholes. So I am the crude woodsman, who has to clear and make the path. But Master Philipp comes after me meticulously and quietly, builds and plants, sows and waters happily, according to the talents God has richly given him.«¹⁷

In fact, Melanchthon could be much more irascible and short-tempered – especially with his students – than Luther, so much so that in the winter of 1542/43 Luther noted the difference at table.¹⁸ Even Joachim Camerarius (1500-1574) in the first and by far most influential biography of his friend and hero had to explain away this flaw in his otherwise Stoic description of Melanchthon's personality.¹⁹ Melanchthon's hypersensitivity was even described by Luther as a virtue.²⁰

15 MBW 3, 172 (2699.1) ≅ WA Br 9, 414, 4-10 (3619), 19 May [1541].

16 Timothy J. WENGERT: Human freedom and Christian righteousness: Philip Melanchthon's exegetical dispute with Erasmus of Rotterdam. NY, Oxford 1998.

17 WA 30 II, 68, 12 - 69, 1. Luther stated much the same thing in 1540; WA TR 4, 637, 9-16 (5054), 21 May - 11 June 1540. For a similar assessment, see Heinz SCHEIBLE: Melanchthon zwischen Luther und Erasmus. In: Renaissance Reformation: Gegensätze und Gemeinsamkeiten/ ed. by August Buck. Wolfenbüttel 1984, 172-175.

18 WA TR 5, 26-28 (5511), Winter 1542/43: »Philippus ist enger gespannt denn ich, pugnat et docet; ich bin ein wescher [Schwätzer], bin magis rhetoricus.« WA TR 4, 104, 35-38 (4056), 11/13 October 1538: »Ideo ego [Lutherus] adolescentibus laudo argumenta quamvis incomposita, et displicet mihi Philippi Melanchthonis exacta ratio, das er die armen gesellen so bald vberumpelt; ...« Cf. WA TR 4, 191, 31 - 192, 1 (4193), 17 December 1538; 583, 14-21 (4928), 16-21 May 1540. Of course, Luther also realized that all good teachers had problems with poor students: even Vergil made bad poets; WA TR 4, 595, 29 f (4971), 21 May - 11 June 1540.

to Luther, on the other hand, was not always as volatile as he is depicted. In several cases, he provided compromise language or allowed for more theological flexibility than modern stereotypes permit him.²¹ He also could be equally sensitive to events around him. That »rugged Saxon peasant« may not have suffered a physical collapse – as Melanchthon did – under the lies Philipp von Hessen (1504, 1518-1567) told the reformers to get them to sanction his second marriage, but Luther was also – despite his protestations in the Table Talk – subject to *Anfechtungen* about the larger issues of the Reformation.²² He was able to restrain his own upset at Philipp von Hessen's bigamy only with the greatest effort.²³

In examining the contours of their relationship, it is important not to characterize it as a friendship.²⁴ However, the fact that that relation was more collegial than anything else does not gainsay its complexity and richness. The Table Talk itself witnesses to the number of times they ate together. In his later years, especially during the 1530s, Luther spoke with nothing less than the highest respect for his colleague: praising his work on Romans and Colossians; lauding his second edition of the *Loci theologici*;²⁵ extolling his use of dialectics and

19 See Timothy J. WENGERT: »With friends like this ...«: the biography of Philipp Melanchthon by Joachim Camerarius. In: *The rhetorics of life-writing in early modern Europe: forms of biography from Cassandra Fedele to Louis XIV/ ed. by Thomas F. Mayer and D. R. Woolf.* AnA 1995, 115-131.

20 WA TR 5, 230, 16-19 (5550), Winter 1542/43, where Luther connected Philipp's »gutt conscientia« to Christ's exercise of believers by allowing them to experience the bite of the Serpent in their heel.

21 For example in the 1527 dispute between Melanchthon and Johann Agricola. See Timothy J. WENGERT: *Law and gospel: Philip Melanchthon's debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over »Poenitentia«.* Grand Rapids 1997; Joachim ROGGE: *Johann Agricolas Lutherverständnis: unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Antinomismus.* B 1960; Gustav KAWERAU: *Johann Agricola von Eisleben: ein Beitrag zur Reformationsgeschichte.* B 1881. In 1536 Luther interviewed Bucer and his compatriots before agreeing himself to the »Wittenberg Concord«. See Mark U. EDWARDS: *Luther and the false brethren.* Stanford 1975, 127-155.

22 Especially regarding the question »Willst Du allein weise sein?« see Heiko OBERMAN: *Luther: Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel.* B 1982, 185-190. 210-212 = Heiko Oberman: *Luther: man between God and the devil.* New Haven 1990, 175-179. 200.

23 WA TR 4, 655, 5 - 660, 17 (5096), 11-19 June 1540. Note the change in Luther's own demeanor from »serenissimo vultu« to »laetissimo vultu« and his effort at commending the entire affair to God (656, 1; 658, 14).

24 Scheible: *Luther and Melanchthon*, 318-321.

25 WA TR 4, 610, 17-20 (5007), 21 May - 11 June 1540, where they are called godly books; cf. WA TR 5, 661, 28 f (6439). For proof that Luther read these commentaries, see Ulrich BUBENHEIMER: *Unbekannte Luthertexte.* LuJ 57 (1990), 220-241.

sylogisms – even imitating him in trying to teach his own son the basics of logic.²⁶ Melanchthon returned the compliment, as, for example, when in 1533 he praised Luther's »Summarien über die Psalmen und Ursachen des Dolmetschens«.²⁷

There was also a genuine sense of companionship and enjoyment that the older man received from the younger. According to Anton Lauterbach (1502-1569), Luther and Melanchthon among others shared the same carriage on 15 May 1539 and rode to Leipzig in triumph to introduce the Reformation into the duchy of Saxony and the University of Leipzig. Now, twenty years after the Leipzig debates during which the young prodigy had handed notes to his older teacher, they rode along lustily singing songs »secundum alphabetum«. Scarcely a year later, the older man would be praying over his – presumably – dying colleague's body, »welchem ... schon die augen gebrochen waren«.²⁸ Two years later the younger Philipp tried to comfort Luther at the death of his beloved Magdalena (1529-1541).²⁹ In the midst of Melanchthon's anxieties over his own daughter Anna's (1522-1547) marriage to Georg Sabinus (1508-1560), Luther was among those who tried to console the »tristis et afflictus« father.³⁰ When Luther's faithful supporter, Nikolaus Hausmann (1478/79-1538) collapsed and died while preaching his inaugural sermon in Freiberg, the other professors at Wittenberg, including Melanchthon, conspired to keep this shocking death from Luther, telling him instead that Hausmann died later – after confessing Christ –, and they remained with him while he grieved.³¹

26 WA TR 4, 647, 7-11; 648, 11-23 (5082 b), June 1540, where Luther used the example of faith to discuss the four *causae*, *collatio*, and *definitio*. According to this entry of Johannes Mathesius (1504-1565), Luther defined the »voluntas« as the material cause of faith (648, 15 f.). See also WA TR 2, 127, 23-26 (1545), 20 May 1532; 411, 23 f (2300), 18 August - 26 December 1531. In one case Luther praised both Melanchthon and von Amsdorf for their brevity and clarity; WA TR 2, 163, 14 f (1649), 12 June - 12 July 1532; 3, 210, 1 f (3173 a), June 1532.

27 MBW 2, 88 (1301.3) ≅ CR 2, 627 (1090), 5 January 1533.

28 WA TR 5, 129, 32 f (5407), 11 April - 14 June 1542.

29 WA TR 5, 193, 3-6 (5497), September 1542.

30 WA TR 3, 592, 16 (3754), 18. February 1538. Melanchthon preferred solitude to conversation with others, behavior Luther believed contradicted Christian principles. »Christus non frustra suam ecclesiam congregat verbo et sacramentis, wil sie nicht in die winckel stecken« (ebd 3, 593, 4-6). See also 4, 569, 15-18 (4886), 6-16 May 1540.

31 WA TR 4, 124, 36 - 125, 6 (4084), 6 November 1538. Other examples of their close relationship: Melanchthon was Paul Luther's (1533-1593) godfather (3, 111, 25-27 [2946 b], 29 January 1533); Luther had urged Melanchthon to marry (3, 383, 15-19 [3538], January 1537; 4, 133, 36-38 [4095], 11 November 1538); Luther had Melanchthon stay with him two nights when his daughter was rumored to have slept with Sabinus before their wedding (4, 569, 15-

Luther could also tease Melanchthon.³² In one letter written in 1539 the older man delivered the following description of the manuscript of »De ecclesiae autoritate et de veterum scriptis libellus«.

»I – poor fellow – am not accustomed to nor have I been able to read so much now for a long time. But it happened that several times you filled one page with three words – the letters in between having been crossed out. Otherwise, if it were mine or another's hand, it would have taken me several weeks to examine such a manuscript – and then with great difficulty. I am reminded of philosophy's four causes. First, the final cause pleased me greatly, because Pomeranus [John Bugenhagen] also explained this eruditely and copiously in [his commentary on the] fourth chapter of 1 Corinthians. The efficient also does not displease me. I have compassion for the material cause, because so much paper has been consumed by you. But the formal cause delighted me, because you have grasped such a topic with so many erasures, but with such temperate words. Therefore I thank you that by your kindness I could read so many pages in scarcely one-quarter hour. But seriously, this thing pleases me.«³³

This letter reveals four things about their relationship. First, as late as 1538 it could bear the kind of kidding that demonstrated a mutual knowledge and respect of one another. Second, Luther was still reading Melanchthon's writings at this date, and Melanchthon was submitting them to him for comment. Third, Luther could use Aristotle (384-322) with the best of them and accommodated his joke to poke gentle fun at Melanchthon's beloved dialectics.³⁴

Fourth, on the question of the church the two treatises published in 1539 by these two men were part of a mutual, systematic response to the issue of the

18 [4886], 6-16 May 1540], they married 6 November 1536; Melanchthon interceded with Luther on Hans Luther's (1526-1575) behalf when his father refused to speak to his son (5, 489, 810 [6102]); Melanchthon witnessed Luther's will (MBW 3, 251 [2871], 6 January 1542).

32 For other examples, see WA TR 2, 7, 21 f (1245), before 14 December 1531, Melanchthon's stature: »ein armes, dirs menlein«; 266, 30-32 (1938), from the 1530s, his eating habits: »Philipus ... ist klueger dann alle doctores, aber der geringste keller vnd jeger knechte zu hofe fressen vnd sauffen besser, dann er isst vnd trinckt«; 4, 576, 8 f (4907), 16 May 1540, his overworking: »Philippus non servat sabbathum, sed est famulus communis et servus servorum«; and 673, 8-14 [5124], 7 August 1540; 2, 127, 127 f (1545), 20 May 1532, his small house: »Er mus in einem armen haus wonen.«

33 WA Br 8, 344, 1-14 (3285) ≅ MBW 2, 406 (2132.1), 28 December 1538.

34 In another example from the Table Talk (WA TR 4, 673, 8-14 [5124], 7 August 1540), Luther tried to curb Melanchthon's overworking – for which he was famous in Wittenberg – by using syllogisms. Luther forced Melanchthon to admit that he preferred to obey God rather than mortals (Act 5, 29) and that he preferred God to speak through the mediation of human beings than directly. Luther, speaking for God, then commanded Melanchthon not to work so hard and break the sabbath. See also 4, 576, 8 f (4907), 16 May 1540.

church brought into focus by the convoking of a council by Pope Paul III (1468, 1534-1549).³⁵ In Luther's eyes, at least, the two agreed. As they had eleven years earlier in the dispute with Erasmus over the human will, both men produced their own separate but compatible statements on the question of the church's nature and authority. It was thus hardly an accident that, when a competing ecclesiology was proposed at the Regensburg Colloquy two years later, Melanchthon became angry and recalcitrant.³⁶

III Biblical Interpretation

There were, of course, attempts by others in Wittenberg's inner circle to drive the two apart. In fact, one reason for the unclarity in their relationship arose from strains between Melanchthon and other followers of Luther. One of the earliest attempts at such division also helps clarify the exegetical interaction between these two men. In 1527 differences between Melanchthon and John Agricola's (1492/94-1566) understanding of penance and the role of the law began to surface.³⁷ In response to the »Visitation articles« of 1527 Agricola complained to the court and forced an official meeting with Melanchthon, Luther and Bugenhagen at the Torgau castle near the end of November.

Among his formal charges Agricola included the fact that Melanchthon had diverged from Luther's interpretation of the Scripture. Specifically, the two exegetes interpreted G 3, 19. 24 differently. In the second edition of his commentary on Galatians, Luther had applied these texts to what would later be designated the second use of the law: the law, like a pedagogue, drives to Christ. Melanchthon, in both the »Visitation articles« and the 1527 edition of the »Scholia in Epistolam Pauli ad Colossenses«, connected the text to 1 T 1, 9 and related it to what later was called the first use of the law: the law restrains the sinner outside Christ.³⁸

35 This at least was the conclusion of the study group at last Luther Congress; see Heinz SCHEIBLE: Melanchthons Verhältnis zu Luther. LuJ 62 (1995), 212 f.

36 Wengert: The day Melanchthon got mad, 425.

37 Wengert: Law and gospel, 94-138.

38 What neither Agricola nor Melanchthon seemed to realize was that in notes on G 3 published in the Christmas Postil (WA 10 I 1, 450-466, esp. 454, 8-12; 455, 5 f), Luther also applied this text to the first use of the law. Later, in the revision of the »Scholia in Epistolam Pauli ad Colossenses« published in 1534 and in other documents from that time Melanchthon also employed G 3, 24 as a demonstration of the second use of the law. However, see the third edition of the Loci theologici (MStA 2 I, 256, 11; 356, 1 f), where Melanchthon again associated this text with the first use of the law.



UNTERRICHT DER VISITATOREN AN DIE PFARHERN IM KURFÜRSTENTHUM ZU SACHSEN/
 rev. by Martin Luther. Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1538. (Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek:
 Kirchg. 1083^k) – Josef BENZING: Lutherbibliographie: Verzeichnis der gedruckten Schriften
 Martin Luthers bis zu dessen Tod/ bearb. in Verbindung mit der Weimarer Ausgabe
 unter Mitarb. von Helmut Claus. Baden-Baden 1966, 291 (2496); Bd. 2. Baden-Baden
 1994, 191 (2496); VERZEICHNIS DER IM DEUTSCHEN SPRACHBEREICH ERSCHEINENEN DRUCKE
 DES XVI. JAHRHUNDERTS: VD 16. Bd. 13. S 1988, 302 (M 2603).

The frontispiece is showing the coats-of-arms – clockwise – of the Wittenberg reformers Martin Luther (ML), Philipp Melancthon (PM), Johannes Bugenhagen (IB), Caspar Cruciger, Sr. (CC), and Justus Jonas (II).

Agricola looked upon this divergence as proof of Melanchthon's unfaithfulness to evangelical – one could almost say »Lutheran« – principles of biblical interpretation and as grounds for making a formal complaint to the Saxon court. Melanchthon insisted that such exegetical differences in no way undermined the overall unity among evangelical theologians. Thus, he wrote to Agricola:

»For there is no doubt that Paul teaches the law has been proposed for two reasons: first, to coerce the flesh with carnal righteousness; then to terrify the conscience. I have adapted the interpretation of this Pauline text to the former effect of the law; Luther adapts it to the latter.«³⁹

Commenting on this controversy to Caspar Aquila (1488-1560), Melanchthon wrote first that his biblical interpretation followed the church fathers – he mentioned Jerome – and contained nothing absurd. Second, he emphasized that his agreement with Luther in points of dogma made it inconsequential whether he differed from him in his exposition of these verses in Paul.⁴⁰

Here Melanchthon expressed a view of unity that kept the authority of Scripture separate from and superior to the authority of its interpreters. Melanchthon applied consistently to Luther what Luther himself had expressed in his 1529 Holy Week sermons about Augustine's dictum »I would not have believed the gospel if the authority of the church had not moved me«.

»Further they object: 'The church has accepted the four gospels, others they have not accepted, thus the church is master over them. ...' That sounds just as if we had the gospels from the church and not from God. ... 'I accept the teaching of Paul, therefore I am over his teaching.' Oh, that they would make the distinction between confessing and having authority!«⁴¹

Not only Melanchthon but also later Lutheran theologians refused to turn Luther's exegesis into a measuring stick for evangelical orthodoxy.⁴² In no case

39 CR I, 905 f (478) = MBW I, 276 (615.5), the end of October 1527: »Non enim dubium est, quin Paulus doceat, legem propter has causas latam esse, primum ad coercendam carnem iustitia carnali, deinde ad terrendam conscientiam. Ego interpretationem Paulini loci ad effectum priore legi accomodavi, *Lutherus* accomodat ad posteriorem.«

40 CR 4, 958 (480 b) = MBW I, 279 (623.2), 12 November 1527.

41 See THE 1529 HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERMONS OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER (Predigten D. Martin Luthers auf Grund von Nachschriften Georg Rörers und Anton Lauterbachs (engl.))/ trans. by Irving Sandberg; ed. by Timothy J. Wengert. StL 1999, 283 = WA 29, 154, 9-18. See below page 66 for an example of Melanchthon's later application of this principle to Luther.

42 Among the several studies on this issue by Kolb, see Robert KOLB: The influence of Luther's Galatians commentary of 1535 on later sixteenth-century Lutheran commentaries on Galatians. ARG 84 (1993), 156-183.

did Luther speak *ex cathedra* in such matters. The fluidity of interpretive options for Wittenberg's theologians warns against too quickly invoking later standards of conformity upon the age of the Reformation.

Against the backdrop of such diversity in biblical interpretation, the praise each theologian offered for the other's biblical work stands out even more sharply. From recent discoveries in the library of Wittenberg's Predigerseminar, researchers have demonstrated that Luther read and critically annotated, among other things, Melanchthon's »Commentarii in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos« from 1532 and his »Scholia in Epistolam Pauli ad Colossenses« of 1534. At the same time and later, the Table Talk is filled with his praise for the commentary on Romans:

»If Augustine lived today, he would have rejoiced to read this book, although it often reproaches him. But Jerome, were he alive, would probably write against it like any other Franciscan monk.«⁴³

Such comments ought not be read as blanket endorsements of Melanchthon's theology, but rather as Luther's own admission that Melanchthon's interpretation of Romans had an honored place at Wittenberg's theological table.⁴⁴

This is not to say Luther did not have some questions about that book. He particularly criticized Melanchthon's decision to dedicate the book to Albrecht of Mainz (1490-1545).⁴⁵ Luther thought that such figures needed rebuke, not re-education. This distinction, also present in their approaches to Erasmus, marks an important divide between the two.

Praise of exegesis, however, was hardly one-sided. In the late 1530s and 1540s Melanchthon oversaw the publication and translation of many of Luther's ex-

43 WA TR 1, 139, 2-4 (316), September / October 1532: »Augustinus si iam viveret, gauderet hunc librum legere, quanquam saepe eum perstrinxerit, sed S. Hieronymus, wenn er lebt, solt er wol dawider schreyben wie ein ander parfusser munch.« See also WA TR 2, 235, 19-22 (1842), 20 September - 21 October 1532; 4, 610, 18 f (5007), 21 May - 11 June 1540.

44 For another example, compare Luther's comment that, due to Melanchthon's constant desire to improve a text, Luther had to force him to publish the Apology; WA TR 2, 541, 8-10 (2606 b), Spring 1532, with Luther's refusal to harmonize James and Paul 3, 253, 25-29 (3292 a), Spring 1533 - despite Melanchthon's attempts to do so in the Apology; BSLK, 207, 35 - 210, 15 (Art. 4, 244-253).

45 WA TR 4, 437, 24 f (4699), 10 July 1539; 592, 19-21 (4957), 21 May - 11 June 1540; 640, 25 f (5067), 11-19 June 1540; 653, 9 f (5091), 11-19 June 1540; 5, 690, 20-25 (6486). Melanchthon received a gift from Albrecht, something Catherine Luther did not fail to note. Luther also criticized Melanchthon's dedication of books to Henry VIII and Philipp von Hessen. Given Melanchthon's bad experience with these three, Luther vowed no longer to write epistles dedicatory.

egetical works.⁴⁶ When Veit Dietrich (1506-1549), one of the editors of Luther's works, tried to write his own theology into Luther's exegesis, Melanchthon chastised him for it in no uncertain terms.⁴⁷ The danger of tampering with genuine Luther texts was first perceived not by Gnesio- [genuine] Lutherans and the Jena edition of Luther's Opera but by Melanchthon himself!

Several years later Melanchthon wrote to Dietrich to urge the publication of Luther's later exegesis. Citing Plutarch's (circa 46 - circa 120) praise of Carneades' (214/13-129/28) later work as being simpler and more useful, Melanchthon wondered whether such a development might not be the case for all talented people, including Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), Sophocles (497/96-406/5) and Cicero (106-43).

»Some such thing may also surely be said of Luther's explanations [of Scripture]: that the more recent are both simpler and more accommodated to life. For this reason I again have urged you to edit the commentary on Genesis, chiefly because the remaining part is more pleasant and agreeable than the previous material. I know that many prudent people everywhere prefer reading of such interpretations or exegesis to hateful disputations.«⁴⁸

⁴⁶ He had also provided prefaces for several important early works: Luther's »Operationes in psalmos« and the 1519 and 1523 editions of his commentary on Galatians. For prefaces of individual works, see MBW T 1, 110-113 (47), [ca. 27] March 1519: Psalms; 148 f (65), [August] 1519: Galatians; 2, 75 f (283), [before August 1523]: Galatians; CR 5, 258-268 (2823) ≡ MBW 3, 462 f (3411), 25 December 1543: Genesis; CR 7, 918-927 (5035) ≡ MBW 6, 254 (6316), 25 January 1552: Genesis; CR 7, 581-585 (4707) ≡ MBW 6, 47 f (5787), 1 May 1550: De novissimis verbis Davidis; CR 4, 887-892 (2572) ≡ MBW 3, 326 (3070), 22 October 1542: Micah; CR 5, 760-767 (3194) ≡ MBW 4, 224 f (3908), 1 June 1545: Hosea; CR 6, 87-92 (3423) ≡ MBW 4, 349 f (4205), 25 March 1546: Enarratio psalmi secundi. Enarratio cap. noni Esaiae.

Melanchthon wrote prefaces for several volumes of the Wittenberg edition of Luther's »Opera omnia«; see MBW 4, 377-379 (4277), 1 June 1546; 5, 462 f (5515), 1 May 1549; 6, 65 (5833), 24 June 1550; 117 (5964), 20 December 1550; 352 (6575), 29 September [1552]; 7, 19 (6697), 1 January 1553; 150 (7058), 1 January 1554; 401 (7739), 10 March 1556; 494 (7978), 1 October 1556; 8, 107 (8312), 16 August 1557; 371 (9017), 1 August 1559. See also his praise for Luther's exegetical work in WA TR 2, 400, 7-9. 27 f (2272), 18 August - 26 June 1531; cf. MBW 1, 363 (854.3.6f), 1529/30.

⁴⁷ In connection with the Cordatus controversy of 1536 and subsequent antinomian controversy, Dietrich had put into Luther's mouth the comment (on Ps 51; WA 40 II, 358,35 - 359, 18) that good works are a causa sine qua non of salvation. In a letter dated 6 October 1538, Melanchthon upbraided Dietrich: »Quid dicent nostri Critici, seu potius Sycophantae? Te in meam gratiam depravasse Lutheri enarrationem« (CR 3, 593 [1735] ≡ MBW 2, 395 [2101.2]). He went on to say that Luther may have used such phrases but not in their technical sense.

⁴⁸ CR 5, 523 (3070) ≡ MBW 4, 146 (3730), 11 November 1544: »Tale quiddam certe et de Lutheri explicationibus dici potest, recentiores esse et simpliciores, et ad vitam accommodatiores. Quare prorsus tibi hortator sum, ut ὑπομνήματα in primum *Librum Moysi* pertexas, praesertim cum restet pars multo iucundior ac dulcior superiore. Scio, multos prudentes ubique magis

In his preface to the third volume of the lectures on Genesis, Melanchthon lavished this praise on Luther.

»When God again purged the church through the ministry of Luther, to which end he furnished him with excellent gifts, the matter itself shows that his explanations far excel the writings of other interpreters. Indeed it is useful to publish and transmit them to posterity, not only so that the prophetic and apostolic books may be illumined but also so that the testimonies and confessions of such a man (whose heart was ruled by the Holy Spirit) concerning all articles of faith may be known. By these testimonies and confessions the godly may later on be made certain in doctrinal struggles.«⁴⁹

Melanchthon even sought Luther's exegetical advice.⁵⁰ But Luther was also influenced in his exegesis by Melanchthon, nowhere more than in the translation of the Bible into German, a project urged upon Luther by Melanchthon himself.⁵¹ Melanchthon also corrected the text itself and, in his annotations on Romans and his *Loci communes theologici*, provided Luther with many of the sights for his famous preface to Romans.

»delectari lectione talium enarrationum, seu ἐξηγήσεων, quam exosarum disputationum.«
The humanist phrase, »accomodated to life«, ought not be given humanist content as Pauck: Luther and Melanchthon ..., 17, does. It was rather Melanchthon's Ciceronian shorthand for referring to the teaching of justification by faith alone.

- 49 In 1543 Melanchthon had ghostwritten the preface to the first volume of Dietrich's labors that also praised Luther; CR 5, 266 (2823) ≡ MBW 3, 462 (3411.5.2), 25 December 1543 (cf. MBW 3, 461 [3409], 25 December 1543). On 25 January 1552 he wrote the preface to the third volume under his own name: »Cum autem *Lutheri* ministerio Deus Ecclesiam repurgaverit, ad quod eum excellentibus donis instruxit, res ipsa ostendit, ipsius enarrationes longe antecellere aliorum interpretum scriptis, quas quidem extare et ad posteros transmitti utile est, non solum ut illustrentur libri Prophetici et Apostolici, sed etiam ut de omnibus articulis nota sint viri tanti, cuius pectus Spiritu sancto regebatur, testimonia et confessiones, quibus deinceps pii certaminibus dogmatum confirmentur« (CR 7, 919 f [5035] ≡ MBW 6, 254 [6316.3]).
- 50 At least that was the recollection of Hieronymus Weller (1499-1572), who wrote to Caspar Peucer (1525-1602) in 1568 recounting a time when Melanchthon was discussing prayer in a lecture. He suddenly broke off his comments and announced that he wanted to confer with Luther. »So it was always the custom of Philipp to communicate his views on the chief topics of Christian doctrine with the man of God, Dr. Luther«; Otto Clemen: Briefe sächsischer Staats- und Schulmänner an Melanchthon. Neues Archiv für Sächsische Geschichte 63 (1942), 169 ≡ in: Otto Clemen: Kleine Schriften zur Reformationsgeschichte (1897-1944)/ hrsg. von Ernst Koch. Bd. 6: 1933-1944. L 1985, 555.
- 51 Cf. WA TR 1, 486, 22 f (961).

IV Justification by Faith Alone

Luther's praise of Melanchthon's commentaries on Romans touches upon the knotty problem of their understanding of justification.⁵² Already early in this century Karl Holl (1866-1926) was eager to drive a wedge between the two reformers, practically blaming Melanchthon's understanding of forensic justification for ruining Luther's reformation insight into the sanative power of Christ's righteousness.⁵³

Blaming Melanchthon for ruining the Reformation is nothing new. In 1536 Conrad Cordatus (1476-1546) attacked Melanchthon for teaching that good works are a *causa sine qua non* for salvation.⁵⁴ In a copy of his version of Luther's Table Talk, Cordatus included an excerpt from a letter written by Melanchthon to Johannes Brenz (1499-1570) on the question of forensic justification. Unaware that Luther had added a postscript to that letter defending the same position, in a marginal notation Cordatus reproached Melanchthon – actually Luther! – for introducing new doctrine into the church.⁵⁵

Luther and Melanchthon's commitment to a single-minded, forensic understanding of justification was expressed in that 12 May 1531 letter to Brenz copied by Cordatus.⁵⁶ Melanchthon criticized Brenz for placing justification in the Holy Spirit's work to effect renewal in the human being, urging him instead to

»cast your eyes back to the promise and Christ and away from this renewal and from the law completely. ... Thus we are righteous by faith alone, not because (as you write) it is

52 Two of the most successful treatments of this problem are Martin GRESCHAT: *Melanchthon neben Luther: Studien zur Gestalt der Rechtfertigungslehre zwischen 1528 und 1537*. Witten 1965; Rolf SCHÄFER: *Christologie und Sittlichkeit in Melanchthons frühen Loci*. Tü 1961; see also Pauck: *Luther and Melanchthon ...*, 21 f, and Robert STUPPERICH: *Die Rechtfertigungslehre bei Luther und Melanchthon: 1530-1536*. In: *Luther and Melanchthon ...*/ ed. by Vilmos Vajta, 73-88.

53 Suspicion of Melanchthon's position arose during the Osianderian controversy and, as shall be shown, the smaller Cordatus controversy. For the context of Holl's understanding of justification, see Gerhard FORDE: *The law-gospel debate*. MP 1969, 128-130.

54 See Timothy J. WENGERT: *Caspar Cruciger (1504-1548): the case of the disappearing reformer*. SCJ 20 (1989), 417-441.

55 WA TR 3, 181, 8 f (3131). But see WA Br 6, 101, n. 13 (1818), [May 1531], which argues the copyist misplaced Cordatus' comment, which was originally aimed only at the mention of the necessity of renewal by the Holy Spirit. The preceding marginal comment of Cordatus, however, would seem to dispute this more generous reading. Cordatus seemed unaware that the postscript was Luther's and that his hero, Luther, had read Melanchthon's »offensive« comments.

56 WA Br 6, 98-101 (1818) ≙ CR 2, 501-503 ≙ MBW 2, 31 (1151); WA TR 3, 197, 29 - 181, 8 (3131).

the root [of human righteousness] but because it apprehends Christ, on account of whom we are accepted whatever kind of renewal is there. Although [this renewal] ought necessarily to follow, it does not give the conscience peace.«⁵⁷

Luther's postscript makes much the same point but with his own characteristic twist:

»And I am accustomed, my Brenz, for the sake of understanding it better, to think of it in these terms: as if there is no quality in my heart that might be called ›faith‹ or ›love‹, but in that place I put Jesus Christ and say, ›This is my righteousness; he is the quality and (as they say) formal righteousness‹, so that I may in this way set myself free and disentangle myself from considering the law and works – even from considering that objective Christ, who is understood as teacher or giver. But I want him to be gift and teaching in himself, so that I may have all things in him.«⁵⁸

Here, side by side in the very same letter, one discovers both the commonalities and differences of the two theologians on this topic. Melanchthon, as was his wont, emphasized the promise – what he would later exclusively describe as the – forensic – declaration of forgiveness granted propter Christum. Luther, as in the »Smalcald articles«, concentrated on Christ himself and faith in him not simply as giver but as gift.⁵⁹ This immediacy replaced trust in qualities infused into the soul. As he remarked to Brenz in the same letter:

»Thus Christ says, ›I am the way, the truth, and the life‹; he does not say I give you the way, truth, and life, as if Christ stood outside of me and worked such things in me.«⁶⁰

Whatever the consequences of these differences may have been for later theology, it was clear that both represented acceptable approaches to the issue and united the reformers against those who would turn Christians inward – in a search for qualities worked by the Holy Spirit – or outward – to the law or Christ's extrinsic work.⁶¹ Instead, Christ and the promise of righteousness in him provide the

57 WA Br 6, 99, 10 - 100, 17 (1818). He pointed out that Brenz's position corresponded to Augustine's and that »propter adversariorum calumnias« he had not been as clear in the Apology as he would have liked.

58 WA Br 6, 100, 49 - 101, 55 (1818).

59 Marc LIENHARD: Luther: witness to Jesus Christ; stages and themes of the reformer's (Luther: témoin de Jésus-Christ (engl.))/ transl. by Edwin H. Robertson. MP 1982, 269-274. Pauck's use of the term »Christ mysticism« in Luther and Melanchthon ..., 22, to describe Luther's theology is not helpful.

60 WA Br 6, 101, 56 f (1818). Luther concluded: »He ought to be, dwell, live, speak in me, not through me or into me [here reading with WA Br 13, 195] etc. 2 Cor. 6 [16], so that we would be the righteousness of God in him, not in love or the gifts that follow.«

61 The first time Melanchthon clearly stated a consistently forensic understanding of justifica-

true object for faith. More importantly this letter, like the series of questions and answers on the topic of justification from 1536,⁶² clearly demonstrates that in Wittenberg theology was not constructed by fiat but through conversation. Likewise, the public disputations, reinserted by Melanchthon into the course of theological education in the 1530s, served to further this conversation in a more public way. Brenz genuinely sought and cherished Melanchthon and Luther's opinions in 1531. In 1536 Melanchthon genuinely asked for Luther's views and managed in the questions themselves to reveal his own concerns as well.⁶³

V The Lord's Supper: 1543-1545

Finally, perhaps the most intractable issue arises over Luther and Melanchthon's understanding of the Lord's Supper.⁶⁴ The »Articuli de quibus egerunt per visitatores in regione Saxoniae«, written by Melanchthon and published in Octo-

tion was in the 1532 commentary on Romans, a commentary often praised by Luther. Luther mentioned that Paul had given four proofs for justification and that in his Romans commentary Melanchthon had clearly mastered one aspect: de dubitatione, that is, humankind's uncertainty and eagerness to doubt its own wretchedness. Luther had argued immediately prior to this comment that the whole Psalter was nothing else than a syllogism on the first commandment (God regards the wretched; I am wretched; therefore God regards me) and that human beings doubt the minor. He then concluded: »Apud Paulum in Romanos sunt quatuor argumenta, quod iustitia sit ex fide; unum ex istis tractat Philippus per totum suum commentarium, scilicet argumentum de dubitatione. Das bleset er allein auff, aber die andern wurden auch so sein, si agitentur. Die schweinblösen hat er wol auff blösen vnd gar voll arbeys gestopfft«; WA TR 1, 160, 9-14 (369), Fall 1532. In another context Luther praised Melanchthon's understanding of the uses of the law; 3, 405, 7 f (3554), 21 March 1537.

62 In 1536, most likely in connection with the Cordatus controversy, Melanchthon and the other professors of theology gathered at Bugenhagen's house, during which time Melanchthon posed written questions to Luther that he in turn answered in writing. (The connection to the English and French embassies to Wittenberg made in the 1569 version is not accepted in WA Br 12, 189-196 [4259 a]; cf. WA TR 6, 148, 29-153, 15 [6727].) Stupperich: Die Rechtfertigungslehre, 84-87, discusses this material without benefit of WA Br 12; see Greschat: Melanchthon neben Luther, 230-242, where he opposes the earlier interpretation of this piece by Otto Ritschl (1860-1944) and Otto Clemen (1871-1946).

63 The state of the original when it was presented in 1569 at the Altenburg Colloquy demonstrates its value for and use by Wittenberg's theologians. It was a »scheda seu charta lacera et emplastris, sed male, sanata«; Otto CLEMEN: Disputatio Philippi Melanchthonis cum Doctore Martino Luthero (1536 oder 1537). Theol. Studien und Kritiken 108 (1937), 168 = Otto Clemen: Kleine Schriften 6, 186. Melanchthon's questions did not so reflect his own positions as the positions he was concerned to have Luther refute.

64 The equally difficult problems of Luther and Melanchthon's relation during the Diet of

ber 1527, contained a clear statement of Christ's presence in the Supper while avoiding the polemic that so marked other responses from Wittenberg at that time.⁶⁵ The correspondence from this period with his former university comrade, Johannes Oekolampad (1482-1531), also did not indicate any waffling on Melanchthon's part.⁶⁶ Already at this time, however, he described the presence of Christ using 1 K 10, 16 and the Greek term *κοινωνία*, something he favored his entire life.⁶⁷

His participation at the Marburg Colloquy and publication of patristic sources the following year – a sophisticated refutation of the Swiss position –, as well as the German and Latin versions of the »Augsburg Confession«, also made clear Melanchthon's convictions.⁶⁸ The »Apology of the Augsburg Confession« con-

Augsburg and of Melanchthon's notorious letter to Christoph von Carlowitz (1507-1574), written after Luther's death (MBW 5, 281 f [5139], [25] 28 April 1548), have been dealt with in Heinz SCHEIBLE: Melanchthon und Luther während des Augsburger Reichstages. In: Scheible: Melanchthon und die Reformation, 198-221; and Heinz SCHEIBLE: Melanchthons Brief an Carlowitz. Ibid, 304-332.

65 CR 26, 19: »Primum sic doceant, iuxta verbum Christi esse cum pane verum corpus Christi, cum calice verum sanguinem, quia Dominus ita vocavit. Et Paulus ait, discernendum esse corpus Domini. Item, Christus ait: Hic est calix, novum Testamentum, Testamentum sanguine conditum, non signo sanguinis. Item: Panis, quem frangimus, est communicatio corporis Christi, non ait: est communicatio spiritus Christi. Huc faciunt veterum scriptorum sententiae.« For this final reference Melanchthon assembled passages from the Fathers that supported Wittenberg positions and had them published in 1530 under the title »Sententiae veterum aliquot scriptorum, de Coena Domini, bona fide recitatae«. See Peter FRAENKEL: Ten questions concerning Melanchthon, the Fathers and the Eucharist. In: Luther and Melanchthon .../ ed. Vilmos Vajta, 146-164, who argues that Melanchthon's understanding of Christ's presence may already be discerned in these early comments. For Melanchthon's earlier views see Wilhelm NEUSER: Die Abendmahlslehre Melanchthons in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung (1519-1530). NK 1968, and Ralph QUERE: Melanchthon's »Christum cognoscere«: Christ's efficacious presence in the theology of Melanchthon. Nieuwkoop 1977.

66 See especially from Oekolampad MBW T 2, 360-362 (429), 15 November 1525; MBW 1, 301 (686), 21 May [1528] – both unanswered –, 331 (766), 31 March 1529; 349 (812), July / August 1529 – given to Melanchthon at Marburg – and from Melanchthon 335 (775), [before 25 April 1529], referred to by Melanchthon in 354 (826), [4./5. October 1529]. Neuser: Die Abendmahlslehre Melanchthons ..., 299, already refuted Walther Köhler's (1870-1941) interpretation of Melanchthon's position in this letter as searching for a basis for unity. Quite the contrary, Melanchthon called Zwingli's position on the sessio ad dextram »indigna Christianis opinio« (MStA 7 II, 72, 61 [130] = MBW 1, 335 [775.4]). The letter's publication upset Oekolampad greatly.

67 See, from 1 November 1559, the »Iudicium de controversia de coena Domini«, MStA 6, 484, 20-25 = MBW 8, 408 (9119.2f).

68 See Fraenkel: Ten questions ... In a letter dated March 1530 and quoted later by Bullinger,

tained some of the strongest language in this regard, but also focused on the term »κοινωνία«.

»For because Paul says that the bread is a participation of the body of the Lord, etc., it would follow that, if the body of the Lord were not truly present, the bread would not be a participation of the body but only the spirit of Christ.«⁶⁹

The »Wittenberg Concord« of 1536 is sometimes pointed to as the moment at which Melanchthon's own eucharistic theology emerged out of the shadow of Luther's and as the beginning point for the inexorable slide toward the Philippist/Gnesio-Lutheran debates thirty years later. The Concord itself was the work of Melanchthon and Martin Bucer (1491-1551), whom Luther had called a rascal at Marburg for having imported Zwingli's (1484-1531) theology into the Latin translation of Luther's »Kirchenpostille«.⁷⁰ However, it must not be forgotten or ignored that Luther, too, signed the agreement, and then only after subjecting Bucer and the clergy from the South to a grueling interrogation regarding two points: that the dispute had not just been a war of words and that the unworthy received Christ's body. There is no indication that later in life Luther backed down from his support of that Concord.

However, the very last controversy over the Lord's Supper in Luther's lifetime, which began in 1543 and continued until his death, provides a helpful window for viewing the relation between the two reformers in Wittenberg. To begin with, although the Marburg Colloquy had not reached its primary goal of establishing peace between the two sides, it had at least given them opportunity to craft a cease-fire: neither side would write against the other and would instead commend their opponents in prayer. Luther's surprisingly positive tract of 1530, »Vermahnung zum Sakrament des Leibes und Blutes unseres Herrn«, and Melanchthon's mild rejection of the alternatives in CA 10 seem to have arisen from this agreement.⁷¹ Although Zwingli's last major writing, »De providentia«, threatened the truce by introducing the peculiar notion of the salvation of pagans apart from Christ, for the most part – with the exception of references to the Sacramentarians in Luther's sermons – things remained quiet, allowing for the

Melanchthon stated he would rather die than accept Zwingli's position; CR 2, 24 f (670) ≡ MBW I, 376 (887).

69 BSLK, 248, 6-11 (Art. 10, 1).

70 See Martin BRECHT: Martin Luther: shaping and defining the Reformation, 1521-1532/ trans. by James L. Schaaf. MP 1990, 327 f; Edwards: Luther and the false brethren, 86-93.

71 WA 30 II, 595-626.

»Wittenberg Concord« and its subsequent acceptance by many South German cities, including Augsburg and Ulm.

In a letter to evangelicals in Italy, dated 13 June 1543, Luther noted this development, saying that – although some of the »old leaven« [of Zwingli] was still present among the people – in Basel, Strasbourg and Ulm »nevertheless the teaching of the ministers seemed to be pure and wholesome«. He went on to mention that Bucer and Melanchthon were now in Cologne where Philipp would not suffer anything impure. However, Luther also warned the Italians against the contagion of the Zurich preachers, stressing that in the sacrament not just bread and wine but Christ's body and blood are administered to believers, the unworthy, and the ungodly. Although rejecting transubstantiation as »an unuseful and sophisticated dispute«, Luther refused to break with those who held that opinion.

Luther also referred to the dispute with Bucer and others that preceded the »Wittenberg Concord«. They had believed that the mouth receives only bread and wine while the spirit or heart feed on Christ's body and blood.

»But we eluded this subterfuge and fraud, forcing them to concede that the mouth of the ungodly would receive the body and blood when it received the bread and wine. For why is the sacrament needed for that spiritual reception, when in that mode it is received in Baptism – indeed in every word administered – without mention of the Body and Blood?«⁷²

On 31 August 1543, however, the sexagenarian Luther received from Christopher Froschauer (1490-1564) a present of the latest version of Zurich's Latin Bible. Luther, while thanking Froschauer, stressed that neither he nor the churches of God had any relations with Zurich's pastors – who were headed for Hell – and that he would pray and teach against them with his last breath. Furthermore, he asked that no further books be sent. When this letter became public, both Bucer and Melanchthon urged restraint upon Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) – something quite unacceptable to the Zurich preacher, given Luther's withering condemnation.⁷³ In fact, Zurich retaliated initially by publishing Zwingli's »Opera omnia«.⁷⁴

Melanchthon responded in several ways to this situation. On the one hand, he insisted in a letter to Bucer – dated 4 November 1543 – that he had been kept in

⁷² WA Br 10, 331, 92-97 (3885). Melanchthon's reaction will be dealt with below page 74 f.

⁷³ Philipp MELANCHTHON: *Epistolae, iudicia, consilia, tetimonia aliorumque ad eum epistolae quae in Corpore Reformatorum desiderantur*/ ed. by Heinrich Ernst Bindseil. Halis Saxonum 1874, 207 f (273) ≙ MBW 4, 153 (3748.1-4), Bullinger to Melanchthon, 3 December 1544.

⁷⁴ Cf. WA Br 10, 650 (4028).

the dark about the letter to Froschauer but that he suspected Markus Crodel (1487-1549), an acquaintance of Konrad Pellikan (1478-1556), was somehow behind the affair.⁷⁵ He also criticized Luther who, like Homer's Achilles, was not above accusing the guiltless. Given Luther's many similar impulses, Melanchthon had learned to »make more progress« with dissembling than with harsh reaction. He described his response this way.

»Therefore let us use our philosophy – practiced now by the two of us for a long time – and let us conceal these our wounds. Let us also exhort others, so that they may hide [theirs]. I have been and will be concerned that between us there may not only be an armistice but also true, mutual benevolence, and I think my mind to be fully known to many.«⁷⁶

At first glance this might be taken as yet another example of Melanchthon's – flawed – moderate character. However, that would misconstrue Melanchthon's message. He called his approach a *philosophia*, a word often used by sixteenth-century humanists to denote moral principles or framework. *Moderatio* was not a character flaw, it was a politically shrewd pattern of response. Nor did this comment reflect a capitulation to Zurich's position. Rather, Melanchthon expressed confidence that the parties could move from armistice – established at Marburg – to mutual good will.⁷⁷

One week earlier, in a letter to Dietrich dated 25 October, Melanchthon also criticized Luther's letter to the Italians:

»I knew Luther was going to write more horridly than he intended. For what was the need to condone even transubstantiation? Is it not the font of uncommon idol-mania? However, a presence of the sacrament can be retained in the instituted use, corresponding to reason, although absolutely taking away those delusions concerning the disposal of the

75 CR 5, 218-221 (2790) ≙ MBW 3, 443 (3364.1). The reference is to HOMER: *Iliad* 2, 654. Except for the word »Tigurum«, the comments would also have applied to Luther's letter to the Italians.

76 CR 5, 218 f (2790) ≙ MBW 3, 443 (3364.1).

77 The First Helvetic Confession and the subscription by the south-German cities to the »Wittenberg Concord« gave him some hope in this regard. See especially article 21: »Haec rerum arcanarum symbola non nudis signis, sed signis simul et rebus constant. ... In eucharistia panis et vinum signa sunt, res autem communicatio corporis Domini, parta salus, et peccatorum remissio.« Even article 23 also reflected some slight change in Zurich's language. »Sed quod panis et vinum ex institutione Domini symbola sint, quibus ab ipso Domino per ecclesiae ministerium vera corporis et sanguinis ejus communicatio, non in perituum ventris cibum sed in aeternae vitae alimoniam exhibeatur.« Of course, these words could also be read in a much less charitable light; see Melanchthon: *Epistolae*, ..., 196-198 (261) ≙ MBW 4, 90 f (3596.3f), Bullinger to Melanchthon 22 June 1544.

bread, concerning the perpetual inclusion of the body in the accidents – as if wood were being thrown in the fire. I shudder whenever I reflect on these things, and I mention them unwillingly. I am amazed that throughout the ages so many learned men have not considered the distinction between the one who performs a free act and the thing animated. Christ as the one who performs a free act is present in the instituted action. After the action he does not want to be included in the bread; he does not want to be tied there.⁷⁸

This points to a very important divisions in Luther's and Melanchthon's thought. While Luther had always been very tolerant of transubstantiation – already in the »De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium«, Melanchthon was not. It was the »fons idolomaniarum non vulgare«. It led to all kinds of problems that shifted one's focus from the »agens liberum«, Christ, to delusions.⁷⁹

However, Melanchthon was not done. After sharing his conviction that the letter's broad distribution throughout Switzerland would lead to new dissensions and after affirming their mutual support for concord, he then offered Dietrich an explanation for such disputes.

»This age is infected with the dire poison of the conjunction of Saturn and Mars, and a conjunction follows in Scorpio, which ignites these very evil things.« He continued: »Let us therefore understand the dangers, and let us moderate the impulses [of the stars] with the diligence worthy of the godly and erudite.«⁸⁰

At this juncture modern trips to the Moon or pictures from Mars ought not confuse the issue. Melanchthon believed that in creation the stars influenced human affairs. (Much like Luther thought demons in peoples' breath caused disease.) Although Luther disagreed – and that long-standing disagreement and how the two prosecuted it also provides insight into their interaction⁸¹ –, Melanchthon's position was – from his point of view – not superstitious. He was convinced that⁸² the created order itself was conspiring against the peaceful resolution of this controversy. Much as Luther blamed the devil – see below –, Melanchthon blamed the stars. This lays bare a central difference in cosmology between them.

78 CR 5, 208 (2785) ≙ MBW 3, 440 (3356.2,1).

79 Such arguments were perhaps particularly welcome to Dietrich who, as Melanchthon reported elsewhere, had to put up with the outrageous comment of the Nuremberg preacher, Andreas Osiander (1498-1552), that the bread was God.

80 CR 5, 208 f (2785) ≙ MBW 3, 440 (3356.2,2).

81 See the *Excursus* below page 76.

82 Not unlike how modern myths – e.g., about bad air causing sickness or positive thinking curing cancer – lead to mistaken arguments about the cause of evil.

Excursus

In the face of our enlightened, Newtonian view of the universe, Melanchthon's love for astrology is almost always reproached for its superstition.⁸³ This was not, however, the grounds for Luther's criticism of his younger colleague's position. In part, Luther argued – scientifically! – that astrologers' predictions were too vague or inaccurate.⁸⁴ Moreover, two children born at the same time or under the same stars could lead widely different lives. Who would have predicted the course of his life?⁸⁵ Thus, it was more an art than a science.⁸⁶ Theologically, he worried that such interest undermined a person's trust in God's providence, putting it instead in one's ability to predict the stars' motions.⁸⁷ Melanchthon, on the contrary, viewed the stars and their powers as simply a part of God's created order and thus as worthy of study as language or medicine. (In fact, he often connected the proper study of medicine to the stars themselves.) As his comment to Dietrich revealed, knowing the stars affected human behavior drove Melanchthon away from fatalism and toward trust in God.

Turning again to Melanchthon's letter to Dietrich, it must be noted that Melanchthon did more than simply connect the stars to the debate over the Lord's Supper. Moderation was a Christian's response to this disorder fostered by the stars, the conscious decision of the »godly and erudite« to behave in a particular way. Thus, moderatio was a reasoned ethical response to a cosmological crisis, not merely a character flaw in a »quiet reformer«. Moreover, Melanchthon did not believe that such moderation was in his power to perform! Thus, he con-

83 See, for example, Pauck: *Luther and Melanchthon ...*, 28. For a penetrating analysis of this issue, see Sachiko KUSUKAWA: *The transformation of natural philosophy: the case of Philip Melanchthon*. Cambridge 1996, 134-144; Charlotte METHUEN: *The role of the heavens in the thought of Philip Melanchthon*. *Journal of the history of ideas* 57 (NY 1996), 385-403; Günter FRANK: *Die theologische Philosophie Philip Melanchthons (1497-1560)*. Erfurt 1995, 301-316. See also Ingetraut LUDOLPHY: *Luther und die Astrologie*. In: »Astrologi hallucinati«: stars and the end of the world in Luther's time/ ed. by Paola Zambelli. B 1986, 101-107; Robin BARNES: *Prophecy and gnosis: apocalypticism in the wake of the Lutheran Reformation*. Stanford 1988, 141-181.

84 See esp. WA TR 5, 334, 28 - 335, 2 (5734), perhaps from 1538. Luther argued on the grounds of Aristotelian physics that the teaching about astrology was uncertain because, first, the materia was unformed and, second, the general predictions could not be applied to specific cases.

85 WA TR 5, 558, 1-22 (6250). For Luther it was like predicting the roll of the dice and focusing only on the few times the predicted number actually came up; 5, 558, 24-31 (6251).

86 In WA TR 5, 558, 6-11 (6250), Luther stated, »Das es scientia sey, wirdt Philippus noch niemandt mich bereden. ... Illa tota res est contra philosophiam.« This last comment indicates that Luther's criticisms were in part philosophical and scientific in nature.

87 One could argue today that knowing the causes of illness could have the same effect: less trust in God and a misplaced trust in doctors.

cluded his discussion with a prayer to God for the Holy Spirit, who – quoting Mt 10, 20 – would give him the right things to say. »By the Holy Spirit our souls are turned toward salvation. And you know that my counsel [regarding moderation] has often been proven.«⁸⁸ Melanchthon's moderation – this measured response to the perceived breakdown in the created order – was itself the work of the Holy Spirit.

Nearly simultaneously, Melanchthon was involved in the ill-fated reformation of Cologne by its archbishop, Hermann von Wied (1477, 1515-1546, 1552). Bucer had been in Cologne from December 1542 to assist the beleaguered bishop. Melanchthon, with Luther's blessing, arrived in May 1543 and remained until the end of July. During that time Hermann's proposal for reform was attacked by the Cathedral Chapter and defended by Bucer, and, when Bucer was attacked, vindicated by Melanchthon, who in turn was attacked by Johannes Cochlaeus (1479-1552).⁸⁹

The so-called »Kölner Reformation«, a work primarily written by Bucer but revised by Melanchthon, was published in September 1543. Melanchthon's contribution included an attack on private masses and processions with the Host, in keeping with his comments on transubstantiation to Dietrich. At the 1544 Diet of Speyer a copy was shown by the archbishop to the elector Johann Friedrich (1503, 1532-1547, 1554), who turned it over to the bishop of Naumburg, Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483, 1542-1546, 1565), for his opinion.

Von Amsdorf was incensed by what he read. He objected not only to the section on the free will – written for the most part by Melanchthon – but also to the statements on the Lord's Supper.⁹⁰ In June 1544, shortly after the Diet had ad-

88 CR 5, 208 f (2785) ≅ MBW 3, 440 (3356.2.1).

89 See MStA 6, 381-421, which contains Melanchthon's 1543 contribution, the »Responsio Philippi Melanthonis ad scriptum quorundam delectorum a clero secundario Coloniae Agrippinae«. Luther provided the preface; WA 54, (5) 9-11. Cochlaeus' piece was entitled »Contra Philippi Melanchthonis Responsonem pro Bucero in Colonienses« and was published in 1544.

90 The pertinent passages read (using the Marburg edition of 1544) CXXXVII^{r-v}: »... das es ist wie der Hey. Apostell Paulus schreybett, die gemeinschafft des leibs vnnd bluts unnseres Herrenn Jesu Christi, bei welcher gemeinschafft wir sein gedechtnus halten sollen.« CXLI^v f: »[The preachers should encourage the people] Zum anderen das sie nit zweyflen der Herr selb gebe jnen dar seinen leib vnd bluot, das sie ihm ewiglich bleiben vnd leben sollen, vnnd er in inen. Vnd dieweil diese vbergebung vnnd entpfahung des leibs vnd bluots Christi vnseres Herren ein himlisch werck vnd handel des glaubens ist, sollen die leuth alle fleischliche gedancken in dieser geheimnus anß[auß]schlagen / vnd aber mit hertzlichen begirden vnd aller danckbar-

journed, von Amsdorf asked Luther if he had read it. Luther's response – written 23 June 1544 – reveals an important aspect of the relation between himself and Melanchthon. He admitted he had not read it but that he had asked Melanchthon for his opinion, and the younger man had told him that it was such that »legitimate and knowledgeable practice may be taught in all churches by removing all superstitions.«⁹¹ This did not please von Amsdorf, whose own opinion of the document reached Luther by August and forced him to read the »Kölner Reformation« himself.

Luther was indeed irritated by the document. Its style showed all the signs of that »blabbermouth« Bucer, whom Luther compared to Kaspar von Schwenckfeld (1489-1561).⁹² According to a letter from Hieronymus Besold (circa 1500-1560) to Dietrich, Luther also voiced his displeasure first to Melanchthon, who left the 5 August meeting disturbed, and then to Caspar Cruciger (1504-1548), who, it may be inferred, warned Luther about causing dissension.⁹³ What was Luther concerned about? Besold reported that Luther now believed Bucer and others had signed the »Wittenberg Concord« disingenuously.⁹⁴

keit diese ware himlische speyse vnd selige gemeinschaft vnsers ewigen Heylands vnd Herren entpfahen vnd niessen.« CXLIX^v: »[You should teach] das vns der Herr dasselbig sein heilig machendes fleisch vnd bluot im H. Abendmal mit den sichtbaren zeichen, brot vnnnd wein, durch den dienst der kirchenn warlich darreicht vnd vbergibt, nicht zur speise des naturlichen und zeitlichen, sonder zur speise des geistlichen vnnnd ewigen lebens, wie seine H. wort lauten: »Nemet vnd esset, das ist mein leib. Drincket darauß alle, das ist mein bluot, etc.« Welche wort des Herren wir mit einfeltigem glauben auffnemen vnnnd nicht zweiffeln sollen, er, der Herr selbst, sey mitten vnder vns vnd gebe sich vns durch denn dienst der kirchen, den er selbst darzu verordenet hat, wie er vns in diesen seinen Worten anzeigt. Das also auch vns das brot das wir brechenn warlich seie die gemeinschaft seines leibs vnd der kelch be dem wir dancken die gemeinschaft seines bluts.« See Ernst BIZER: Studien zur Geschichte des Abendmahlsstreits im 16. Jahrhundert. Reprint. DA 1962, 229-242.

91 WA Br 10, 600, 3-7 (4007). Note that Melanchthon's opinion concentrated on the removal of superstitions.

92 WA Br 10, 617, 8-618, 24 (4014), Luther to Gregor Brück [beginning of August 1544]. Cf. also the report of Conrad Besold to Veit Dietrich [8 August 1544]; O[tto] ALBRECHT; P[aul] FLEMMING: Das sogenannte Manuscriptum Thomasianum: V. ARG 13 (1916), 164.

93 Ibidem, 165, Besold to Dietrich. Melanchthon was already sick and tired of Luther's earlier controversy with the law faculty at Wittenberg and had written 22 January 1544 to Camerarius that he would have preferred to stay in Speyer than to face Luther's rage against Bucer – for a letter Bucer had written to Philipp von Hessen –, MBW 4, 20 (3435.2).

94 Note that it is not the »Wittenberg Concord« itself but its use by hypocrites that upset him.

A letter by Luther to Gregor Brück (1485-1557), however, suggests a more nuanced argument. There Luther argued that the »Kölner Reformation« was too verbose – hence his reference to Bucer as blabbermouth – and that, while going on at length about the use of the sacrament, it only mumbled about its substance,

»so that one cannot figure out what position it holds in the matter. In every way this is just like what the enthusiasts do. And, *as the bishop* [von Amsdorf] *demonstrates*, it does not say one word against the enthusiasts. ... Nowhere is it expressly stated whether the true body and blood are orally received.«⁹⁵

Thus the document, by not attacking the enthusiasts became a comfort to them.

During this time Luther decided to write on the Lord's Supper. From his comment to Besold, it would seem that contacts with the Italians may have suggested such a writing. Wilhelm Neuser points out that it was not simply Luther's reaction to the »Kölner Reformation« that stimulated this interest.⁹⁶ However, the »Kölner Reformation«, far from being the »straw that broke the camel's back« because of what it said, gave Luther an excuse to write on the topic because of what it did not say about the issue. By 10 August, clearly warming to the topic, Luther attacked the Swiss in a sermon on 1 K 10, 6-13.⁹⁷

Caspar Cruciger, Sr., in a letter to Dietrich on 7 September 1544 named Kaspar von Schwenckfeld's letters to some South German clergy as the cause of Luther's writing. Regarding the »Kölner Reformation«, Cruciger also reported that Melanchthon had not written the material on the eucharist but also did not find anything in it worth criticizing. It was rather von Amsdorf's rigidity that inflamed Luther, since the »Kölner Reformation« did not refer to synecdoche in explaining the words of the Supper.⁹⁸

Luther's strong reaction against the »Kölner Reformation« and Bucer was matched by Melanchthon's equally strong reaction against Luther's response. He feared above all else a renewed public controversy over the Lord's Supper with the Swiss. Furthermore, he became convinced that Luther was going to write directly

95 WA Br 10, 618, 9-16 (4014) – emphasis added.

96 See Wilhelm NEUSER: Luther und Melanchthon: Einheit im Gegensatz. M 1961, 27.

97 WA 49, 543, 30 - 546, 20. The clear opponent was the »reasonable« explanations of the Swiss. There is no hint of an attack on Bucer's position. Neuser's assumption, in Luther und Melanchthon ..., 29, that Melanchthon understood it as a direct attack on Bucer or himself is incorrect. Melanchthon saw this as a signal for a renewed attack on the Swiss, in consequence of which he imagined that others, including himself, would also become involved.

98 CR 5, 476 f (3025). Cruciger also thought Luther was writing a new set of articles on the Lord's Supper. This threat was never carried out and may also have been simply a rumor.

against Bucer – thereby destroying the »Wittenberg Concord« – and against Melanchthon himself. When, later in August, Luther went to visit von Amsdorf in person, Melanchthon's – and Caspar Cruciger's – fears were heightened, since they viewed the bishop as the cause of all the trouble.⁹⁹

Melanchthon's reaction, however, must not be exaggerated. For one thing, in a letter to Dietrich on 8 August he stated that von Amsdorf attacked the »Kölner Reformation's« interpretation of the Lord's Supper for not having been explicit enough. What he viewed as an acerbic censure and a call to a new dispute, Luther, Melanchthon went on, characterized as mild.¹⁰⁰

Melanchthon also made this threat. »Were our Pericles [Luther] to begin to speak abusively about this thing [»Kölner Reformation«], I would depart.« This last threat, reiterated in letter after letter from this time, must also be understood for what it was.¹⁰¹ It did not represent a desperate man in retreat. Instead, it reflected, first, Melanchthon's genuine disgust with Luther's outbursts. It was also his accurate assessment of the impossibility of both men coexisting in the face of such division. Far from collapsing, Melanchthon realized he would not back down and thus would have to leave. And it was, finally, a politically shrewd response, designed to force the court and their mutual friends to take this matter seriously. (In several of the letters he puts the suggestion almost exclusively in his brother's mouth.)¹⁰² However, and this must also be emphasized, the threat to leave was also based on a misreading of Luther's intentions; an attack on the »Kölner Reformation« or Bucer or, least of all, Melanchthon never materialized, and there is little indication that Luther had ever seriously intended to publicize his discontent with Bucer and the »Kölner Reformation« in the »Kurzes Bekenntnis vom heiligen Sakrament«.

99 More study is needed of the role von Amsdorff played in these tensions and in the Cordatus controversy. He also was among Melanchthon's chief attackers in the dispute over the Interim; Robert KOLB: Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483-1565): popular polemics in the preservation of Luther's legacy. Nieuwkoop 1978.

100 Von Amsdorff's criticism of free will was never taken up by Luther.

101 See MBW 4, 121 (3668), [28 August 1544]; 130 (3691.4), 27 September [1544]; 132 (3695.3), 30 September [1544]; 134 (3700.2), 5 October [1544]; 134 (3701.1), 5 October [1544]. This was not said simply to friends, as Neuser (Luther und Melanchthon ..., 29) assumes, but for the court.

102 MBW 4, 130. 132 (3691.4; 3695.3). This allowed him a certain distance from the actual threat. In fact, the threat was always contingent on Luther going public or on the suggestion of Melanchthon's brother. It was never a matter of Melanchthon actually threatening to leave as a result of something Luther had already said.

Melanchthon also explained the situation to Bucer in a letter dated 28 August. He mentioned that he and Cruciger had been summoned to a meeting with Luther the next day, but there is no record of what took place there or whether that meeting occurred. Bucer responded by writing a letter to Luther professing again his adherence to the »Wittenberg Concord« but sending it unsealed to Melanchthon for his approval. At the end of September, when this letter arrived, Melanchthon did not think it wise to show it to Luther directly (since it would look like he had solicited the letter – which he had!), so he sent it through the chancellor, Brück, to the elector, who had it translated for himself and then sent back through Brück to Luther – along with some »Wildbrett« –, as if it had been misdirected through the elector himself!¹⁰³

At the same time Brück received Bucer's letter from Melanchthon's hands, he also learned about Melanchthon's threat that if Luther attacked him in the – not yet published – »Kurzes Bekenntnis ...«, he, Melanchthon, would leave. In his report to the elector, Brück expressed his scepticism. The elector's response of 25 September included a separate note to Brück, misdated in the CR,¹⁰⁴ in which the Elector worried that Luther might indeed attack Melanchthon. He advised Brück to pass on to Luther the Elector's approval for writing the book – it came out at the very end of the month –, to mention that rumors about tension between them were being spread, and to suggest that, unless Melanchthon had gone over to the Swiss (in which case he should be attacked), the two were to meet face-to-face to iron out their differences.

In fact, Brück's attempts at intervention into this affair came a bit late. In a letter to Philipp von Hessen, dated 2 November 1544, Brück emphasized that the Elector had directed him to restrain Luther's attacks against the »Kölner Reformation«, but that when he had arrived the tract was already at the printer's. A quick reading of copies obtained from the printer convinced him and the Elector that Luther only attacked von Schwenckfeld by name. When Brück brought up the matter with Luther through his wife, Katharina, Luther himself responded, »Dear Doctor Brück, I understand you think there is a misunderstanding between Philipp and me. I know nothing about it.«¹⁰⁵

103 WA Br 10, 653 f (4028) contains the letter of Brück to the elector and 654 f (4028), 25 September 1544, the elector's response. WA Br 10, 651-653 (4028), 9 September 1544, gives Bucer's letter. In it Bucer distanced himself from Zurich's pastors and reiterated his allegiance to the »Wittenberg Concord«, affirming the presence of Christ's body and blood in the Supper.

104 CR 5, 746 f (3180); see Neuser: Luther und Melanchthon ..., 30, n. 56.

105 ANALECTA HASSIACA/ ed. by Johann Philipp Kuchenbecker. Collectio X. Marburg 1736, 428-

As soon as Luther's tract, which attacked Zwingli for both his understanding of the Lord's Supper and his belief in the salvation of pagans outside of Christ, appeared, Melanchthon's threats of leaving subsided. Instead, he directed his energies toward trying to prevent the Swiss from responding.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the private meeting with Luther – suggested by the elector – apparently took place after the tract's publication. To Friedrich Myconius (1490–1546) Melanchthon wrote on 10 October what may be a brief account of the meeting with Luther.

»I told Luther that I have always defended synecdoche. When bread and wine are consumed Christ is truly present and makes us members to himself. Nor do any rites of the sacrament have any basis outside of use. I reckon to have satisfied him.«¹⁰⁷

There is nothing to indicate that Luther was not satisfied.¹⁰⁸ Although Melanchthon's statements here and elsewhere did not use Luther's language and in fact represented a different understanding of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper,¹⁰⁹ Luther's attitude was one of toleration.¹¹⁰

431. Brück also recounted a report from Franz Burkhardt (1503–1560), who had recently been to dinner with Luther and Melanchthon. (The author is indebted to Prof. Michael Aune of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary for obtaining a copy of this letter from the University of California, Berkeley.)

106 As late as 3 December 1544 (MBW 4, 153 [3748.1]) Bullinger reported not having seen Luther's writing. The tract also attacked views of the Lord's Supper held by Oekolampad, Andreas Bodenstein aus Karlstadt (1486–1541), von Schwenckfeld and others.

107 CR 5, 498 f (3049) = MBW 4, 135 (3705.2), 10 October [1544]. Only if it did not, Melanchthon added, would he be forced to leave Wittenberg. See also the *Reformatio* itself, quoted above note 90.

108 Neuser: Luther und Melanchthon ..., 31–34, agrees.

109 Different also from Bucer's, who in his letter to Luther had described the »true presence of the body and blood of Christ present in the Supper« as opposed to Melanchthon's »when bread and wine are consumed Christ is truly present«.

110 See Heinz SCHEIBLE: Luther and Melanchthon ..., 336–338. Here Neuser's analysis (Luther und Melanchthon ..., 32) needs some slight correction. Melanchthon did not say anything specifically about the presence of Christ's body and blood in the bread and wine, nor did he »avoid« every »dingliche Aussage« concerning the sacrament. In both cases Neuser is making assumptions based upon Melanchthon's silence. Luther could well have read his own position into Melanchthon's comments. Moreover, the position Luther rejected in the letter to the Venetians was not the same as Melanchthon's. As far as Melanchthon's report to Myconius goes, there is no indication that in his comments to Luther Melanchthon defended a mere spiritual presence of Christ, nor did he expressly deny that the unworthy received Christ's body.

Luther expressed this toleration in a second letter to the Italian evangelicals, dated 12 November 1544, in which he also managed, in a backhanded way, to mention his acceptance of Bucer.

»Therefore, I beseech you in the Lord, do not let the Zurichers, Bullinger, Pelikan, or Bucer himself (who is said in the beginning of the tragedy to have written many things in Latin, which I have not seen, but now a short while ago I persuaded him to come to his senses for me) deceive you. But if perhaps you were to hear that Mr. Philipp or Luther had agreed to their ravings, for God's sake do not believe it.«¹¹¹

Luther depicted Bucer as having come to his senses (a sign that the misdirected letter must have relieved Luther's suspicions regarding the »Wittenberg Concord« to some degree – after all his complaint about the »Kölner Reformation« had to do with its silence), and he dismissed any rumors about himself or Melanchthon's capitulation to the Swiss – an indication of the success of Brück's conversation with Luther and the subsequent private meeting with Melanchthon.

Neuser's useful description of these events ends here. However, that was not the end of the story. For one thing, in January 1545 Melanchthon produced the so-called »Wittenbergische Reformation«, signed by all members of the faculty, including Luther, which contained some very explicit comments about the Lord's Supper. »[The Priest] distributes the body and blood of the Lord to those who eat – to himself and others.« »Here the body and blood of Christ are consumed.« It rejected »the Anabaptists and others, who ... say that only bread and wine are offered and that the sacraments are only signs of our profession before human beings.«¹¹² Melanchthon predicted to Camerarius that von Amsdorf would judge this document to be too lenient, although Luther had already approved it.¹¹³

On the other side, the Swiss responded to Luther's tract by producing the Zurich Confession. It included a section defending Zwingli's notion of blessed pagans and their understanding of the Lord's Supper, including a summary of the First Helvetic Confession, which had been sent to Luther in 1536 for his approval.¹¹⁴ When Philipp von Hessen declared that he could not see any substantive difference between the positions of Luther and Zurich, Brück reported to the Elector a

111 WA 10, 681, 48-53 (4041).

112 CR 5, 617. 618. 621 (3115), citing Melanchthon's Latin translation. The version of Christoph Pezel (1539-1604), one of Wittenberg's so-called crypto-Calvinists, read that the priest »distributed the eucharist or sacrament of the body and blood«.

113 CR 5, 656 (3119) = MBW 4, 177 (3796.1), 18 January [1545].

114 See DIE BEKENNTNISSCHRIFTEN DER REFORMIERTEN KIRCHE/ ed. by Ernst Friedrich Karl Müller. L 1903, 153-159.

discussion with Melanchthon in which the latter stated Philipp von Hesse should be reminded that he was conceding more to the Zurichers than a signer of the »Augsburg Confession« ought and that Zurich had never signed the »Wittenberg Concord«. Moreover, given the stupid things said about the heathen in the document, Melanchthon advised that it should not be sold in any part of Saxony – otherwise Luther would become enraged (»ein wunderlicher Mann«). (By implication, Philipp von Hessen was being encouraged to do the same in his own lands in order to prevent a renewed open conflict with Zurich.) When told by Brück that Philipp von Hessen was glad that the word »spitzbübisch« was dropped from the Latin translation of the »Wittenbergische Reformation« and replaced by »calumniose«, Melanchthon laughed aloud, stating that the Latin was only a little milder and that the German needed no emendation.¹¹⁵

In a confidential note attached to the letter, Brück noted how upset Melanchthon became over the possibility that Luther might actually draft articles on the Lord's Supper that would overturn the »Wittenberg Concord« and bring the South German cities into the fray. Melanchthon wanted unity and the appearance of unity. »Philipp was at a loss for words, and his eyes filled with tears«, behavior witnessed by his colleagues, Caspar Cruciger and Georg Major (1502-1574).¹¹⁶ Once again Philipp's dramatic behavior demonstrated the seriousness with which he took the »Wittenberg Concord« and also the fear he harbored that Luther's outbursts might lead to its collapse. The effect, of course, was also that both Brück and the Elector became aware how serious the matter was and how stubborn Melanchthon was regarding the signing of the »Wittenberg Concord«.¹¹⁷

VI Conclusions

What can be deduced from these vignettes about the relation between Melanchthon and Luther? For one thing, Luther was the preacher; Melanchthon the preceptor. The differences in the way in which they argued against Erasmus, for example, derived to a considerable extent from the methods they employed and their goals. Luther intended to preach Erasmus into agreement with the gospel, using in a polemical tract the rhetorical tools of irony and sarcasm even in the midst of very

115 CR 5, 731-734 (3175), Philipp von Hessen to Johann Friedrich, 16 April 1545; 739-744 (3178), Gregor Brück to Johann Friedrich, 24 April 1545.

116 CR 5, 743 (3178); cf. Melanchthon's written response in MBW 4, 217 (3890), [24 April] 1545.

117 Again, Luther's occasional attacks in print that followed focused only on the Swiss.

subtle exegetical arguments. Melanchthon employed the much »cooler« medium of commentary to refute the Dutch humanist's defense of *philosophia* and *ratio* and used syllogisms and *loci communes* to prosecute his argument.

Second, each viewed the other's contributions to the Reformation differently. Already while Luther was alive and certainly after his death, Melanchthon depicted Luther's contribution to the church in terms that echoed his assessment of patristic sources. Luther was the witness whose *testimonia* provided future generations with insights into the promises of God.¹¹⁸ At the same time, Luther – for example, during Melanchthon's illness in Weimar – called the younger colleague his *organon*, the instrument for gathering knowledge. It is these more astute insights into the other's role in the evangelical cause that sounded even in the comparisons constructed for public consumption. The contrast of the »lumber-jack« to the »happy farmer« simply heightened these differences. Only when distorted into psychological stereotypes does this contrast no longer elucidate the two men's outlook and behavior.

At this point the comparison must be interrupted to reiterate a fundamental convergence in their approaches to doctrinal agreement. In the midst of the shrill battles that marked the Reformation, they both engaged in what might be called theology through conversation.¹¹⁹ Although both were convinced that the gospel rested upon clear assertions of God's unshakeable promise in Christ, they both tried in their own way to avoid theology by fiat. Because of later disagreements in Lutheranism over some of these same doctrines, this delicate web of conversations is often overlooked in the rush to discover differences. However, disagreements with Agricola and Cordatus over the law and works, discussions with Brenz on justification, and even the last Lord's Supper controversy during Luther's lifetime demonstrate a commitment by both reformers to convergence and agreement and warn modern theologians from using either man as a court of last resort in theological debate. To be sure, each drew the line between conversation and confession at a different place. Nevertheless, both understood the importance of such dialogue in the service of the church and its proclamation.

Third, these two thinkers diverged most fundamentally over their world views – a divergence they themselves recognized but did not view as damaging to their

118 Peter FRAENKEL: *Testimonia patrum: the function of the patristic argument in the theology of Philip Melanchthon*. Geneva 1967.

119 This differed from Erasmus who made the presumed uncertainty of the diatribe the center of his theological program.

unity in the gospel. Nevertheless, at the heart of the tension between Luther and Melanchthon lay a fundamentally different fix on what might be called cosmology. Melanchthon's conviction that the created order, especially the stars and planets, contributed to human evil led him to choose – or at least to pray for – a course of moderation as his way of resisting those very natural tendencies in a fallen world. Luther's conviction that the devil had a hand in theological contentions led to precisely the opposite response. Whatever his personality may have contributed, Luther's anger was a controlled, theological response to the devil's attacks on the gospel.¹²⁰ The only thing the devil understood, the only thing that could hem in his evil mischief, was the Word. However, just as Melanchthon could not imagine moderation apart from the Holy Spirit, Luther could not confront the devil without God and God's Word.

Melanchthon's *ἐπιείκεια*, as Luther called it,¹²¹ was no character flaw, it was a specific theological orientation, one that Luther himself tolerated – itself a form of *ἐπιείκεια*! – and even praised. To be sure, these different *modi operandi* – exorcism versus *ἐπιείκεια* – on occasion stretched the limits of their cooperation, especially regarding the Lord's Supper controversy and Wittenberg's relation to the Swiss. However, far from being simply a personality difference, this divergent approach to theological differences defined several important aspects of their theologies.

For Melanchthon the proper first response to the disordering effect of nature was the order of the law (*primus usus*). For Luther, the devil's work, which could somewhat be restrained by the law, finally required the Word that killed the old (*secundus usus*) and raised up the new in faith (gospel). At the same time, this difference in cosmologies also resulted in different views of the Reformation itself. Luther assumed that the rediscovery of the gospel increased the attacks of

120 Oberman: Luther, 175–206. Even Luther expressed the difference between Melanchthon and himself in these terms. WA TR 5, 231, 11–19 (5551), 1542/43: »Aber Philippus is noch nicht recht zornich wider den babst; est moderatus, ideo omnia agit moderate, wiewol es mag noch zu etwas dienen, wie er denn selbs hofft. Aber mein impetus stößt dem faß den boden aus; wenn ich kom, so schlag ich dem faß den boden aus vnd schlag mit keulen drein. Philippus, ei, der war in principio sehr moderatus. Er hat in 20 jaren viel zugenumen. Aber Diabolus non vult vinci nisi per contemptum. Infirmitas satis est scriptum et dictum; induratis hilffts nicht. Noch ist er imer moderatus. Ich springe mit fussen drein, sed contra Diabolum.«

121 WA TR 4, 576, 12–14 (4909), 16 May 1540. Luther's point was to note how Melanchthon had concluded that with the papists such an approach had not worked and had attacked them more pointedly in »De ecclesia et de autoritate Dei« and »De officio principum, quod mandatum Dei praecipiat eis tollere abusus Ecclesiasticos«; MStA 1, (323) 324–386. (387) 388–410.

Satan against it. Thus, for him the Reformation unfolded as a series of attacks and counterattacks on, or true testimonies to, the gospel. For Melanchthon the history of the church was unfolding in the progression of teachers and learners – a process interrupted not only by the devil but also by the natural forces causing dissension and yet fostered by the practice of moderation.¹²²

This difference also affected their view of justification by faith alone. Even when the two agreed on the forensic nature of justification, their approach betrayed disparate intentions. For Luther God's decree destroyed evil and comforted the weak. For Melanchthon God educated, made certain and comforted the simple.

Moreover, these programmatic responses ought not obscure the opposite behavior both men sometimes practiced. Luther could sometimes be tolerant – for example, about transubstantiation – where Melanchthon was not – for example, about overriding the »Wittenberg Concord«. Luther could propose or approve compromises – in the 1527 controversy with Agricola and the 1536 dispute with Cordatus; Melanchthon could get angry and threaten to leave – from the colloquy at Regensburg in 1541 and from the University of Wittenberg in 1544.

The danger inherent in both men's theologies involved being transformed from a theologian of the cross, who proclaimed the power of the gospel to tell the truth and make alive sub contrario specie, into a theologian of glory who exalted language or reason over justification by faith alone. This may point finally to the heritage of the Reformation most easily lost: being a theologian of the cross. The cross's foolishness and weakness finally test the limits of all theologians: even and especially Luther and Melanchthon. Luther's rage against the false brethren could, in Melanchthon's view, result in such a glorification of the Reformer's own views that the true unity of the gospel would be shaken. Melanchthon's equivocation could finally reintroduce the criterion of a theological argument's »reasonableness« into the gospel itself, blurring the distinction between law and gospel and between the two realms of God's governance. It could also become, as Luther suspected, a form of unbelief in which the theologian ended up »trying to steer the world«.¹²³

122 Melanchthon's concern for the stars by no means eliminated the devil's role in disrupting the church. In fact, from the time of Abel the faithful had been under attack by the devil and his allies (Cain, the prophets of Baal, the Pharisees of Jesus' day, and Platonists like Origen and his successors); Fraenkel: *Testimonia patrum*, 61-109, and Frank: *Die theologische Philosophie ...*, 307. His concern also did not mean he lacked Luther's apocalyptic expectation; Barnes: *Prophecy and gnosis ...*, 87-91.

123 Pauck: *Luther and Melanchthon ...*, 30, citing WA Br 5, 417.

However, when either theologian criticized the other along these lines, their statements must not themselves be glorified by later historians. When, for example, Luther warned Brück in 1536 that Melanchthon's »reason occasionally caused him trouble; he would have to be on his guard lest he end up at the same point where Erasmus came out«, ¹²⁴ this comment should be construed neither as a rejection of humanism, nor as an equation of Melanchthon's and Erasmus' theologies, nor as a blanket rejection of Melanchthon's work. Instead, Luther was expressing precisely the problem that plagues all evangelical theologians – himself included: the way one's learning can distort the very gospel one learns. Just as Luther did not subject to critical analysis his own apocalyptic association of the devil with disagreements in the gospel, so Melanchthon never fully appreciated the hermeneutical circle created by his use of humanist methods and Aristotelian philosophy in interpreting the gospel. ¹²⁵

In the end, what sustained the relationship between these two men was their common commitment to the gospel and to conversation over its clear proclamation. Just as the perception of irreconcilable differences would have destroyed their mutual respect and cooperation, so, too, their shared conviction that each bore witness in his own way to that gospel provided the common bond that allowed their fruitful teamwork and conversation for twenty-eight years. Their effort at maintaining that concord provided a model for theologians in the sixteenth century and perhaps provides one for the present as well.

¹²⁴ WA Br 7, 412 (3022); see Pauck: Luther and Melanchthon ..., 14.

¹²⁵ Concerning the effect this had on Luther's attitude toward the Jews, see Oberman: Luther, 292-97; concerning Melanchthon and humanism, see Pauck: Luther and Melanchthon ..., 15, and, most recently, Heinz SCHEIBLE: Aristoteles und die Wittenberger Universitätsreform. In: Humanismus und Wittenberger Reformation: Festgabe anlässlich des 500. Geburtstages des Praeceptor Germaniae Philipp Melanchthon am 16. Februar 1997/ ed. by Michael Beyer and Günther Wartenberg. L 1996, 123-144.