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## Of Faith.

(Continued.)

Translated from Dr. E. Preuss's *Die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung*, Part III.

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But where is it written that Abraham believed Christ? Does not Scripture rather designate the promise of the Seed as the contents of his faith? True, but this Seed was Christ. This is the testimony of the same apostle who sets Abraham's faith before us as an example. Gal. 3, 6. But if Abraham became righteous through faith in the Seed, and if this Seed was Christ, then he became righteous through faith in Christ. Pray do not tell us that we illumine the mind of Abraham with the torch of Paul; that the patriarch understood the seed to be a child and nothing more. Nothing more? May it tickle the contemporaries to crowd their father Abraham under their footstool — he was greater than they. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day," says Christ, "and he saw it and was glad." John 8, 56. It makes no difference whether one takes the "day of Christ" to be the day of His incarnation or the day of His appearing in the Plain of Mamre — it is certain that Abraham saw Christ, either with the eyes of his body in the door of his tent or by faith, when God promised him Seed, or both. See Him he did; this Christ testifies expressly, and so also the Jews understand Him: "Thou art not yet fifty years old and hast seen Abraham?" John 8, 57. How in the name of common sense can there have been a personal acquaintance between you? Very easily, answers Christ; for "I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." John 8, 58. Will you still say that we illumine the eyes of Abraham with the lamp of Paul? Methinks they do not need it. One should not picture the patriarchs to one's eyes as poor simpletons — with eyes turned to the ground, moved by earthly promises, without knowledge of Christ, and without hope of the life to come. Did they not have the Gospel of the "Seed of the woman" who was to bruise the head of the serpent? Gen. 3, 15. And they faithfully pondered it in their

# The Historical Significance of the Formula of Concord.

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## III.

When Schmauck, in his *Lutheran Confessions*, comes to speak about the Smalcald Alliance, he calls the Augsburg Confession its Articles of Confederation. Through the Peace of Augsburg, 1555, the Augustana became a mark of safety. The Religious Peace decreed that the Roman churches and those that subscribed to the Augsburg Confession should both be equally recognized as legitimate. That did not mean religious liberty, neither in principle nor in number of religions included. It still recognized the necessity of state's license and restricted this license to two bodies. In addition, the *reservatum ecclesiasticum* put the one at a decided

disadvantage over against the other and not only checked the expansion of the Lutheran Church, but in a straight line led to the first world war of modern history.

The peace agreement did not name the church-body that was to be legitimated; it described it as "the signers of the Augsburg Confession." John Calvin subscribed at Ratisbon. In a letter to a pastor he wrote (1557): "And truly I do not reject the Augustana, which I signed recently voluntarily and gladly, just as its author himself has explained it." 1) Seventeen years had passed since its presentation to emperor and diet; what need was there to ask Melanchthon about its meaning?

In 1541 another attempt at union between the Lutherans and the Romanists had been made at Worms. At this colloquy Dr. Eck protested against the use of the Augustana copy at hand because it was not an exact copy of the document of 1530. Melanchthon had, already in the thirties, recast parts of the Apology "to improve the passage concerning justification," 2) but had not published this revision. He had also revised — and published — the Augsburg Confession, 1540 and 1542. The changes improved the logical order of some of the articles. They amplified several expressions, rendering them clearer and more definite; and more Scripture-proof had been adduced. But also the emphasis of doctrinal statements had been changed, *e. g.*, in Articles 5, 20, 18, and 10. The changes stressed that repentance and good works are necessary; they spoke of free will in such a manner that a synergistic understanding was made easy. There was no immediate offense given, not even by the changing of Article 10. The import of the change was not seen at once, *e. g.*, of the change from "They teach that the body and the blood of Christ are really present and are distributed to those who partake of the Lord's Supper, and they denounce such as teach otherwise" to "On the Lord's Supper they teach that with the bread and the wine truly the body and the blood are offered to those who partake of," etc. The omission of the denouncement of those who teach contrary to the Word of God not only left the union with the Swiss untouched, but was a safeguard for himself and all others whose position on the Lord's Supper was wobbly. *This* Augsburg Confession could be subscribed by Calvin — and was.

However, during the Interim conflict and the following years it became evident that there was a wide cleavage between Melanchthon and his Wittenberg faculty, on the one hand, and the Gnesio-

1) *Epistolae*, p. 437.

2) *Corp. Ref.*, XXVI, 339.

Lutherans, on the other, a cleavage in several respects so wide that the words which Luther spoke to Zwingli at Marburg might have been repeated. True, when the evangelical princes met at Naumburg, 1561, in order to send a declaration of their stand to Trent, they declared that their signing the reprint of the Augustana of 1530—31 was not to be interpreted as a disavowal of the *Variata*. But there was a deep sentiment of dissatisfaction in those who had denounced the Interims and had denounced Melanchthon.

Wittenberg University had lost the confidence of these men. Nicolaus von Amsdorf had written a little book charging Wittenberg with the suppression of important writings of Luther.<sup>3)</sup> Suspicion was aroused that also the alteration of the first "constitution" of the young Church hid in its pages all sorts of possibilities of unbiblical thought, although not yet clearly discerned. Such conditions bred a feeling of anxiety, fear-of-ambush tactics, and the like. But the condition became acute. Frederick, of the Duchy of Saxony, refused to sign the new document at Naumburg; he would subscribe only to that of 1531 and to the Smalcald Articles. Being in the minority, he withdrew, and after some time the other princes, having revoked their signatures, joined the secessionist. No, not all; the Elector of the Palatinate went one step farther. He openly joined the Calvinists and instructed his clergy to preach and to teach according to the *Heidelberg Catechism*.

At this time Melanchthon was no more: he had died in April, 1560. But his spirit continued to live in another German book, which came to be looked upon as the confession of the Church: the *Corpus Doctrinae Philippicum* (1560, Leipzig).<sup>4)</sup> It was followed by a Latin edition. The two were not identical, the German giving an earlier Augustana (1533), the Latin printing the *Variata* with the addition of the early text, article for article. The Smalcald Articles were removed, likewise Luther's Catechisms. In 1551 he had formulated a confession for Saxony; then he had set up a regulation for the examination of the candidates for ordination (a sort of catechism); then he had published an essay on the doctrinal situation in Bavaria and an answer to Servetus. Since 1521 he had produced a dogmatics (*Loci Communes*). This *Corpus Doctrinae* justly bore the name *Philippi-*

3) *das die zu Witt. im andern Teil der buecher Doctoris Martini im buch, das diese Wort Christi noch fest stehen, mehr denn ein blat 4 ganzer Paragraphos vorsetzlich ausgelassen haben.*

4) *Corp. Ref.*, XXI, 587; XXII, 35. His prefaces, IX, 929, and 1050.

*cum*; for with the exception of the three Ecumenical Symbols it contained only his own statements. The Elector of Saxony, in whose territory Wittenberg was, introduced the *Corpus* largely for instruction in schools, while other princes had the Catechisms and the Smalcald Articles added.

There are two observations to be made in this connection. One is that what had been done in the Saxon Electorate could be done elsewhere and was done, *viz.*, various parts of the church established their own territorial confessional *symbolum*. Pomerania produced its own *Corpus Doctrinae*, combining a revised *Philippicum* with a set of products from Luther's pen. Thuringia, 1570, when efforts at unity already were being made, compiled its *Corpus Doctrinae*, adding to the former confessions a work of Menius, dated 1549, and the Saxon *Refutation of Flacius*, dated 1559. Brandenburg accepted the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, Luther's Small Catechism, and — extracts from Luther's works, including his postils.

One of the purposes of a symbol is thus frustrated. When we visualize the actual working out of these arrangements, considering that this material was also to be used as a basis for instruction, we must get the picture of Brandenburg preachers stressing this, Saxon preachers stressing that; of Pomeranian children being instructed in conceptions of one kind and Thuringia children in those of another. The contemporary Church was being disrupted, and the coming generation was vaccinated with disruptive vaccine.

The second point is that writings of individual theologians had been embodied in symbols which were meant to be the confession of the Church. The fact that the writings of these theologians had emanated from minds — let us rather say hearts — which differed very widely from one another, that the one set came from the heart of a theologian — or let me say Christian — who felt in conscience bound to *confess* the very revelation of God, without consideration as to what the consequence might be, while the other set was the expression of a man who was determined, in order to "protect" the Church, to take the middle of the road, ought to make it evident to us that, because one section followed this, the other section another tendency and sentiment, the state of the Church, which, though she had gained her independence, was being kept from working harmoniously together, was extremely critical; for the Articles of Confederation were no longer able to keep the Church at real work under them. The Critical Period of the sixteenth century!

(To be continued.)