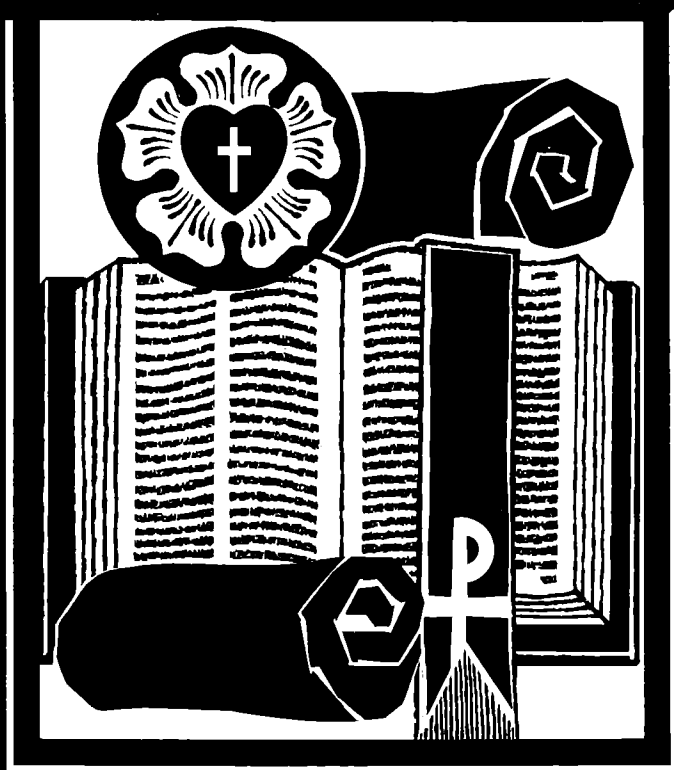


THEOLOGIAN'S CONVOCATION



ESSAYS

PREFACE

The 1975 convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, recognizing that "there is a hunger and longing for peace and unity" among all members of the Synod, requested the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to continue to carry out its responsibilities of "fostering and providing for ongoing theological education through institutes, seminars, and other means" and to "coordinate the preparation of a series of Bible Class Studies" in order to further "true and lasting peace and concord" in the Synod. (1975 Resolution 3-01 "To Seek Unity")

In response the CTCR, convinced that this assignment demanded a comprehensive and long range program, formulated initial plans which were shared with representatives from the synodical boards, commissions, and auxiliaries. As a result of these discussions, the "That We May Grow" program emerged and five major objectives were formulated. "That We May Grow" was adopted as the theme for the Planned Parish Program for 1977-78 and 1978-79, as well as for the 1977 Synodical Convention, and "That We May Grow" calendars and Parish Planning Kits which outlined the major facets of the program and provided suggestions for congregational planning were sent to all congregations in the Synod.

At the heart of the "That We May Grow" program is a comprehensive study of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Under the direction of the Board for Parish Education a series of eight studies on the Scriptures and four on the Lutheran Confessions has been developed for lay study classes. The second phase of the "That We May Grow" study program was the Theologians' Convocation held on the campus of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis November 7-9. This three day convocation brought together approximately 175 Missouri Synod theologians to hear and discuss a series of papers and responses on the theme "Formula for Concord." District/Regional pastors and principals conferences to be held in 1978 comprise the third stage of the "That We May Grow" study program.

It is in preparation for these "Formula for Concord" conferences that the CTCR is herewith sharing the three major essays presented at the Theologians' Convocation with all pastors and teachers of The

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Included in this resource booklet is also Dr. Karl Barth's keynote address, which relates the purpose of the convocation (and thus also of the upcoming conferences) to the five basic objectives of the "That We May Grow" program. Some study questions have been appended to the essays to assist in focusing on the basic issues.

It is the prayer of the members of the CTCR that these essays will prove helpful as you prepare for the regional conferences, the final phase of the "That We May Grow" study program. May God bless our study of His Word and of the Lutheran Confessions so that "speaking the truth in love, we (may) in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:15-16)

Samuel H. Nafzger
Executive Secretary
Commission on Theology and
Church Relations
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THE WAY TO CONCORD

by Martim C. Warth

The attempt to find a "Formula for Concord" in view of "the serious questions facing us with respect to the nature and basis for fellowship", according to the program set for this convocation, is natural for a confessing church. This essay will try to help in this search through an analysis of the "way to concord". The intention is to examine the "way to concord", starting from the concept of the unity of the Church, and comparing it with the process of Christian decision making. Some aspects of the historical ways to concord will be used to illustrate the process. May the Lord of concord guide our efforts and use them graciously to stimulate further fruitful reflection on our way to concord.

1. There is a distinction between spiritual unity of the Church and external unity or concord. Both are gifts of God. But unity comes with justification, while concord belongs to the realm of sanctification.

When Holy Scripture speaks about the unity of the Church it always speaks in terms which relate this unity to the faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself promises to create "one flock with one shepherd" through the hearing of Jesus' voice (John 10:16). He prays "for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one" (John 17:20-21). Paul knows very well that there is such a spiritual unity by faith in Christ, when he says that "we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). In this unity the racial and social distinction are not being considered, since he says to the Galatians: "You who were baptized into Christ . . . you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27-28). The Ephesians are being called on "to preserve the unity of the Spirit", since there is only "one body and one Spirit, . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4:3-6).

This unity exists only "in Christ". It is "the unity of the Spirit", given to those "who believe in Me". This faith through which "by grace you have been saved" is "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). It is the faith of which Paul asserts that "a man is justified by faith" (Rom. 3:28). The unity of the Church is, therefore,

a direct result of the justification by grace through faith. The unity of the Church is that precious gift of the Holy Spirit, by which He establishes men by faith in Christ to become the body of Christ.

Justification, the act of declaring a sinner just in view of his establishment by faith in Christ, because of Christ's faithfulness to the covenant and His substitutional suffering and death *pro nobis*, as identified and promised in the Gospel, is only the beginning of a new existence *coram Dei*.¹ With the creation of this spiritual unity a new relationship starts between the justified sinner and his gracious God. God's gifts continue to be invested in the sinning saint to produce a reaction of faith. A new life emerges, which wants to live according to the gifts and identifications received from the gracious God. This sanctification of life is the result of faith, the faith by which the unity of the Church is established. While justification is perfect and absolute, in view of Christ's work *pro nobis*, the sanctification of life is a constant struggle of the Christian, which lasts until the sinner dies to resurrect in perfect holiness.

One may distinguish three fundamental areas of the sanctified life of a Christian. First one may speak of the identification of and the confidence in the gracious God who justified man. Then one may speak of his life in repentance and love. Finally one may speak of his eschatological hope.

The first area is relevant to our theme, since it speaks of the identification of the gracious God and, therefore, of the way to concord. Faith, which in relation to justification is only being considered as the receptive means by which God imparts His grace, is in reality a powerful agent within the Christian throughout his sanctification. This faith has an object which has to be identified correctly: Jesus Christ and His work *pro nobis*. It continues to be saving faith as long as there is a correct identification of and confidence in the source, basis, and object of faith. For this reason the Christian needs a correct instruction about the object of faith, and consequently there is need for a correct confession of this faith. It cannot be any faith in any concept of Jesus Christ, but it has to be the faith which is a gift of

¹John R. Loesch, *Wrestling with Luther* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1976), p. 19. Loesch affirms that Luther "constantly says that man is, becomes, and always remains *coram deo* ('in the presence of, before, God') — a phrase which not only can be an alternate expression for *regnum dei* ('kingdom of God') but also is a good definition of man's conscience".

God, given by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace which identify Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Saviour. In view of this identification Paul can say to the Romans: "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Rom. 10:9-10).

Confession is, therefore, a direct consequence of the unity of the Church. For this reason it cannot be any confession, but has to be the confession of the Church. Concord in confession is not a free choice of the Christian, but a result of the ecumenicity and unity of the Church. The basis of the concord in confession has to be the means which created and which sustain the saving faith through the means of God's Word and the Sacraments, then these have to be the source and basis of all ecumenical concord.

Since Jesus Himself prayed the Father: "I do not ask in behalf of these (disciples) alone, but for those who believe in Me through their (the disciples') word; that they may all be one" (John 17:20), it seems to be clear that the unity of the Church as well as the concord in confession have to come "through their word," which is no other than "the word which Thou gavest Me" and which "I have given them" (John 17:8). Jesus indicates also the process by which God's Word was passed on to the disciples. He says: "I have given them Thy word" (John 17:14). At the same time Jesus promised them the Holy Spirit, "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name" and said: "He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 14:26). This Word of God, which is the Word of Jesus, which is the Word of the Holy Spirit, which is the Word of the Apostles, these apostles wrote down and transmitted to us, so that Jesus' prayer could be fulfilled for us, when He prayed "for those who believe in Me through their word" (John 17:20). Holy Scripture, *sola Scriptura*, is therefore the basis for the unity of the Church, as well as for the concord in confession of the Church. Both unity and concord are the gifts of God, since both proceed from the faith given by the Spirit through the means of God's Word.

The formulas of concord which the Church produced were always in line with the question of identification. Since Scripture itself requires the confession of the faith in Jesus Christ, this confession of

the Church has to be in concord with the Word of God which identifies and creates the unity of the Church. The Apostolic Creed is no more than the faithful repetition of the Scriptural affirmations about the gracious work of the Holy Trinity. Since the main object and foundation of faith, Jesus Christ, started to be misinterpreted, it was necessary for the Church to formulate the gracious Trinitarian dogma in new ecumenical creeds, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan and the *Quicunque* or Athanasian Creeds. The main question behind these formulations was the correct identification of the faith in Jesus Christ and the unity of the Church.

2. Concord in confession is not only a question of identification of the saving faith, but has a dynamic aspect: it aims at the preservation of the unity of the Church by the confession of its sources.

Holy Scripture is no static description of the object of faith. Holy Scripture has a dynamic nature: as means of the Holy Spirit it is always judgment and grace of God upon man. Man cannot read Holy Scripture and then decide whether he will or not accept its judgment and grace. Judgment and grace are God's prerogatives. It is not man that takes Holy Scripture to handle and manage it, but Holy Scripture takes man and decides upon him. Since Holy Scripture is the Word of God it is God's means to deal with man in Law and Gospel. Where the Holy Spirit touches man through the proclamation of the Gospel and changes his life by faith, there the unity of the Church is again established.

Since the confession of the Church, if it identifies correctly the source and object of the saving faith, is of necessity in harmony with Scripture, it aims at the same goal: the establishment and the preservation of the unity of the Church. In this sense the confession of the Church is part of the *viva vox evangelii*, the continuous proclamation of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. The creedal statements aim at the center of all Christian confession for the sake of the purity of the Gospel. The purity of the Gospel aims at the establishment and preservation of the unity of the Church.

Luther's reformation cannot be viewed as a dissenting movement. His concern was the unity of the Church. He sensed that he had to find a way to concord for the sake of the preservation of the unity. What was at stake was not a question of prestige, of church politics or

sophistry. At stake was the very ecumenicity and unity of the Church. He had to learn the hard way that his own participation in the unity of the Church was seriously threatened, due to the confessional discord which was prevailing at the time. What he and others were being taught through the confession of some in the church was not in harmony with Scripture, the Word of God and basis of all unity. Human sophistry, church politics and a tradition based on false identifications of a subjectively supposed object of faith were a constant menace to the unity of the Church and the justification of the sinner before God.

The way to concord began with Luther's personal experience of the wrath and grace of God in his own life. It was no academic question: it was the question of his own salvation, as well as that of his fellow men. It was the question of the unity of the Church, the unity with Christ. Luther's *Urerlebnis* (primal experience), as Werner Elert calls it, was his understanding that he was before a God "who hardens the heart of Pharaoh and hates Esau before Esau was born, the potter who forms vessels that fill one with loathing — and, in spite of all this, thunders at these luckless creatures in a brutally despotic manner: 'Your fault!' (*Tau culpa!*)".² Elert understands that this was the turning point: "Here morals and *ratio* come to an end. And one must accompany Luther up to this point in order to estimate what revelation, grace, and faith mean to him." Luther himself told Erasmus: "More than once it hurled me down into the deepest abyss of despair and made me wish I had never been born — until I learned how salutary this despair is and how close it is to grace."³ It was the reason why he had to fight the dissenting Pelagianism in the church. His statements on man's impossibility to contribute to his salvation were so hard that even Melanchthon had a hard time to get along with it. Luther found his way back to Scripture and the consolation that exists "in the Pauline concept of justification." Elert knows that "it is in this concept that the final opposition to the medieval church is developed".⁴ Luther had to oppose the medieval church he found in his times because it threatened and destroyed the unity of the Church.

²Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, Vol. 1, translated by Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis and London: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), p. 22.

³*Ibid.*, p. 22. Translation from WA 18,719. Cf. WA 18,729, 14ff. and WA 1,354, 15.

⁴Elert, p. 73.

Luther looked for a way to concord by offering help through a series of theses he was willing to discuss with the dissenting church.⁵ He was ready to go to disputations and diets, even under the threat against his personal welfare.⁶ When there was no room left for public debates, he used his pen to reach the necessary concord. It was necessary not only to affirm the basis of the unity of the Church, but also to point to the disunity and discord created by the false promises which replaced the truth.⁷

Although Luther did not succeed in his effort on the way to concord in the church at large, this did not discourage him. On the contrary, he continued to offer the instruction which the people of God needed to confess in concord. Through the two Catechisms he offered the basic proclamation of the Word of God. They were both such precious tools on the way to concord that they deserved the meaningful title of "the layman's bible".⁸ Luther was so sure that one could confess the "same simple, unchanging, constant truth"⁹ in definite statements, that he could suggest in the preface to the Small Catechism even the adoption of a lasting formulation: "Choose the form that pleases you, therefore, and adhere to it henceforth."¹⁰ Luther could be so sure of the formulations, because he knew that it was not only his own confession of faith, but the Church's confession of the faith which establishes and sustains the unity of the Church. The unity of the Church was no longer threatened where these confessions were upheld in concord.

But Luther still endeavoured to try a way to concord in the church at large. With men who confessed already with him in concord Luther helped to prepare the Augsburg Confession, finally drafted

⁵Franz Lau, *Luther*, translated by Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 68. Lau says that "in the year 1517 Luther formulated, quite sharply and solidly, some *Theses Against Scholastic Theology* and directed a student, Francis Günther, to defend them". Luther himself published and defended, besides others, the 95 Theses against the indulgences.

⁶Lau, pp. 76ff. Especially relevant are the Leipzig Disputation (June and July 1519) with Eck, and the Diet at Worms, 1521.

⁷From this time are his Reformation articles, as the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 1520. Even the title aims at the freedom from the misleading and destructive powers which threatened the unity of the Church. His treatise on *The Freedom of a Christian Man*, 1520, is one of the most outstanding documents of concord in the Church. 1525 came the *Bondage of the Will* against Erasmus, which is kind of a final testament on the legacy he left for the concord of confession in the Church.

⁸FC, Ep, Preface, 15.

⁹FC, SD, Preface, 20.

¹⁰SC, Preface, 8.

by Philip Melanchthon. Luther wrote in 1529 the Marburg Articles, and with Melanchthon, Jonas, Brenz and Agricola the Schwabach Articles. The Torgau Articles were prepared 1530 by Luther, Melanchthon, Bugenhagen, and possibly Jonas. The three articles served as the basis for the final confession at Augsburg, 1530. The confessors were willing to negotiate a concord: "We on our part shall not omit doing anything, in so far as God and conscience allow, that may serve the cause of Christian unity."¹¹ But they were also sure that concord could only be negotiated on the basis of their present confession, which for them was the expression of the "same simple, unchanging, constant truth": "To these we declare our continuing adherence, and we shall not be turned aside from our position by these or any following negotiations . . . as we herewith publicly witness and assert."¹² The unity of the Church was at stake. For this reason only one concord was possible: the concord on the basis of the Word of God, which is the basis of the unity of the Church. The official church did not accept the concord on that basis. The presuppositions of the ruling officials continued to be a menace to the unity of the Church.

Luther was concerned about the way to concord. He was willing to check again his own formulations at the council planned to be held at Mantua in 1537, which later convened at Trent, 1545-1563. Luther said in the preface to the Smalcald Articles that he had prepared them "to indicate, on the one hand, what and in how far we were willing and able to yield to the papists and, on the other hand, what we intended to hold fast to and persevere in".¹³ At the same time he knew that "these are the articles on which I must stand and on which I will stand, God willing, until my death. I do not know how I can change or concede anything in them. If anybody wishes to make some concessions, let him do so at the peril of his own conscience".¹⁴ For Luther there was only one way to concord: the conscience bound to the basis of the unity of the Church.

When there was a need to reaffirm the concord in confession Luther was ready to do so. He chose two ways to concord. On the one hand he could appeal to the already existing formulas of concord,

¹¹ AC, Preface, 13.

¹² AC, Preface, 23.

¹³ SA, Preface, 1.

¹⁴ SA, III, XV, 3.

as he did, together with Justus Jonas and Bugenhagen in 1532, in the regulations set up for those who wanted to assume the office of teaching and wanted to be ordained. They should give the assurance of concord with "the unadulterated doctrine of the Gospel and understand it in the same sense in which it is understood in the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Symbols, and in which it is presented in the Confession which our churches read before Emperor Charles at the Diet of Augsburg in the year 1530",¹⁵ On the other hand, Luther knew that in face of new controversies or new situations also new formulas of the same concord had to be affirmed. In the "regulations" of 1532 he adds: "Furthermore, if new controversies should arise, they are to consult with older, experienced men of our church and of those churches affiliated with us."¹⁶ Luther himself wrote a new formula for concord when he drafted, five years later, the Smalcald Articles in view of a new situation which challenged the unity of the Church.

This was also the procedure followed by the second generation of confessors who drafted the Formula of Concord. They appealed, first of all, to the existing formulas of concord and remained in harmony with them. As new controversies arose, they consulted "with older, experienced men of our church and of those churches affiliated with us" to reaffirm the concord on the basis of the unity of the Church. Their concern was not only the identification of the saving faith, but also the preservation of the unity of the Church by the confession of its sources.

One may speak of four different aspects of this way to concord: the invariable factor, the historical setting, the necessary humility, and the courage to confess.

3. The way to concord presupposes an invariable factor: the Word of God in Law and Gospel.

All true confession has to follow as good works from faith. Confession is the verbal concretion and expression of one's faith. But saving faith (*fides qua*) cannot be expressed, except by the description of the object of faith (*fides quae*), which is revealed in God's

¹⁵C.F.W. Walther, "Why Should Our Pastors, Teachers and Professors Subscribe Unconditionally to the Symbolical Writings of Our Church", *CTM* XVIII, April 1947, p. 250. *CR* XII, 6,7.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

Word, as objectively stated in Holy Scripture. To confess one's faith depends necessarily on a correct exegesis of Holy Scripture. The way to concord, for this reason, cannot be followed without Biblical principles of interpretation.

Luther was well aware of this need. Otto Hof calls attention to this fact: "It was clear to Martin Luther that what was at issue in his discussion with his opponents, with Rome on the one hand and with the enthusiasts on the other, was not so much the question of principle regarding the importance and relevance of the Bible . . . as rather the question concerning the correct interpretation of the Holy Scripture."¹⁷ All parties appealed to Scripture. How could Luther know that his interpretation of Scripture and his identification of faith was correct over against his mighty opponents? He abandoned the criterion of the church's *magisterium* and *consensus patrum*, and searched for the principles in Scripture itself. He was able to recognize some fundamental exegetical rules,¹⁸ one of which was definitely central: the principle of the *analogia fidei*, since it was directly related to the unity of the Church.

The expression is used by Paul in Rom. 12:6: "if prophecy, according to the analogy of faith". Luther understood "prophecy" not only as proclamation of future events, but especially as proclamation of the Word in general, as happens in the interpretation of Scripture.¹⁹ It follows that the interpretation of Scripture has to be according to the analogy of faith. On the one hand this means for Luther

¹⁷Otto Hof, "Luther's Exegetical Principle of the Analogy of Faith", translated by Richard Jungkuntz, *CTM* XXXVIII, April 1967, p. 242.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 242. Hof says that the "formal criteria of correct Scripture understanding (for Luther) are for instance the propositions: the Holy Scripture interprets itself; it is itself subject as well as object of exegesis, and an interpretation of the Scripture is correct only in that measure in which it obediently follows the Scripture's self-interpretation; every individual passage must be understood from the *tota scriptura*, from the entirety of Scripture, and dare not contradict this and dare not be played off against it; the dark passages must be explained by means of the clear ones and thus Scripture be interpreted by means of Scripture". Prof. Dr. Ralph A. Bohlmann finds in the Confessions the following principles of Biblical interpretation: Principles of Grammatical Exegesis, Let Scripture Interpret Itself, and The Hermeneutical Function of Law-Gospel and Justification. Ralph A. Bohlmann, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis and London: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), pp. 81ff. Prof. Dr. Robert D. Preus finds these principles also applied by the Lutheran Dogmaticians: "The clear passages of Scripture must shed light on the obscure passages dealing with the same subject matter. This is done by applying the so-called analogy of faith. The analogy of faith, according to all the old Lutheran theologians, was simply the articles of faith that could be summarized under the categories of Law and Gospel". Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, I (St. Louis and London: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), p. 330.

¹⁹Hoff, pp. 243f. Luther says in WA 17 II, 39, 26: "The interpreting of Scripture, that is the noblest, highest, and greatest gift of prophecy". And in WA 34 I, 104, 16: "Propheying does not mean (to speak) as the prophets once did of future things but to interpret the Prophets, the Psalms, as we have done here in Wittenberg; we are prophets".

that the interpreter himself must have the saving faith to be able to interpret Scripture. But this can be very subjective, since all false interpreters claim the same too. There must be an objective norm and rule for the interpreter. This rule Luther found, on the other hand, in the same expression of Paul. He understands that Paul speaks of the identification of the faith, as expressed in the revelation of the Word of God itself: faith as it has to be confessed by the Church to provide the unity of the Church. "It is the Gospel, it is the message of justification with the *solus Christus* and the *sola fide*, which here stands in the center and is the criterion of correct Scriptural interpretation."²⁰

Luther understood that the "faith-passages must always and everywhere be urged in opposition to trust in works".²¹ And "when one encounters *loci de operibus* in the Scripture, they are to be set in relation to the *loci de fide* and to be understood in the light of the latter".²² This means that the confession and proclamation of the Church must be in concord with the faith-creating Word of God, through which the Holy Spirit creates and sustains the unity of the Church. This is no fiction, as the tradition of the *magisterium* of the church or the principles set up arbitrarily by the enthusiasts. The *analogia fidei* principle belongs to the foundation of the Church, as laid down by Jesus Christ Himself.

Luther applies this directly in his Smalcald Articles. He says that the article on Christ and faith is "the first and chief article". "Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised" and "on this article rests all that we teach and practice". "Therefore we must be quite certain and have no doubts about it",²³ since it is the foundation of the Church and "its holiness" which creates the unity of the Church. For this reason he says that "its holiness . . . consists of the

²⁰Hof, p. 248. Bohlmann, p. 124: "In this way the doctrine of justification by grace and the distinction between Law and Gospel are vital presuppositions for the proper interpretation of Scripture". Bohlmann, p. 138: "Thus the confessions see and maintain an indissoluble connection between the *sola scriptura* and *solus Christus* principles". — Herbert J. A. Bouman, "The Ecumenical Character of Lutheran Synodical Conference (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), p. 24: ". . . the Confessions should be accepted *because* they are Scriptural. This means that the confessional *sola Scriptura*, the doctrine of God, of man, of the church, of the means of grace, etc., are eternally true and valid because of the confessional *solus Christus*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide* are true to God's revelation of Himself".

²¹WA 38, 488, 18.

²²Hof, p. 252.

²³SA, II, I, 1, 5.

Word of God and true faith”.²⁴ Luther was quite clear that “the Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel”,²⁵ and that no concord in confession could be affirmed that would be “in conflict with the first, fundamental article concerning redemption in Jesus Christ”.²⁶ His constant accusation against the doctrines of the Roman curia was that “there was neither faith nor Christ”,²⁷ and that such teaching “undermines knowledge of Christ”.²⁸ Luther analyzes the doctrines in controversy and shows how all the doctrines confessed in concord with the Church have to be related to the basis and source of the unity of the Church: Christ and faith.

For Luther the way to concord was not only a question of principle, by which he would aim at a unified confession as such, but it was a question of salvation, since by her confession the Church would also preach, and thus remain or fall. There is a missionary trend in the confession of the Church: it is also proclamation of the Word of God through which the Holy Spirit may continue to choose people to belong to the unity of the Church and be saved. Confession in concord was for Luther an ecumenical, as well as an eschatological question.²⁹

The Apology had already affirmed the same principle of the *analogia fidei*. Justus Jonas, in the German translation, affirms that the analogy of faith is central to the understanding of Scripture. After saying that “nobody is reconciled to God, nobody receives forgiveness of sins, except only through faith in Christ”, he adds that this article is important for the “clear and correct understanding of the entire Holy Scripture” and that “it alone opens the door to the whole Bible”.³⁰ When Melancthon adds that “all Scripture should be

²⁴SA, III, XII, 3.

²⁵SA, II, II, 15.

²⁶SA, II, III, 2.

²⁷SA, III, III, 14, 18, 19, 23. SA, II, IV, 14.

²⁸SA, II, II, 25.

²⁹Eugene F. Klug and Otto F. Stahlke, *Getting into The Formula of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), p. 23. Klug affirms that the Formula of Concord is in the same sense as ecumenical document of faith. — Bouman, p. 26: “We may, then, string out the following equations: ecumenical = catholic = universal = apostolic = evangelical = Scriptural = permanent”. Bouman, p. 27: “Nevertheless, the claim is made: Lutheran doctrine is ecumenical in character”.

³⁰Ap, IV, 3 (German text): “. . . also dass an diesem Artikel ganz viel gelegen ist, welcher auch zu klarem richtigen Verstande der ganzen heiligen Schrift fürnehmlich dienet, . . . auch in die ganze Bibel allein die Tür aufthut . . .”.

divided into these two doctrines, the law and the promises",³¹ he does not establish new criteria, but confirms the rule of the analogy of faith. He says that "the law always accuses and terrifies consciences",³² and "on this account the law cannot free us from sin or justify us, but the promise of the forgiveness of sins and justification was given because of Christ".³³ This means that the law has to be interpreted also according to the analogy of faith: it cannot take the place of faith, but has to serve faith. Since law and gospel are the key to Scripture it follows that all of Scripture has to be interpreted to serve the unity of the Church. There can be no confession in concord which in any way conflicts with the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus and the unity He created by His work for us.

This is the invariable factor in the way to concord. The second generation confessors who prepared the Formula of Concord 400 years ago respected and honored this principle of the *analogia fidei*. The controversies were all considered and dealt with on the basis of this invariable factor. There could be no compromise with personalities, even if they were as highly esteemed as Luther or Melancthon. Sure, the confessors used Luther's and Melancthon's writings, but only as far as they agreed with the invariable factor of correct Scriptural interpretation. They accepted Luther's Small and Large Catechisms, his Smalcald Articles and even some personal writings, as "the sermon that he held in the castle at Torgau in the year 1533".³⁴ They accepted Melancthon's Augsburg Confession, his Apology, and the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope.³⁵ But they felt free to express a *damnamus* on the opinion that man has "the faculty, aptitude, skill or ability to initiate and effect something in spiritual matters or to cooperate therein",³⁶ as Melancthon was inclined to sustain in his writings.³⁷

Since for these confessors "the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm", all

³¹Ap, IV, 5.

³²Ap, IV, 38.

³³Ap, IV, 40.

³⁴FC, Ep, IX, 1. There is also a reference to Luther in FC, SD, II, 89.

³⁵Melancthon's view on the righteousness of faith is honored in FC, SD, III 4, 9, 19.

³⁶FC, SD, I, 23. Cf. also FC, SD, II, 3, 86, 90.

³⁷CR XXI, 658, 659. See the later editions (1535 and 1543) of Melancthon's *Loci*, and article XVIII of the 1540 *variata* edition of the Augsburg Confession.

“other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture”.³⁸ Although “Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule, and norm”³⁹ they understand that Holy Scripture can only be properly confessed in concord when it is confessed as the basis of the unity of the Church. For this reason their concern was “the unanimous consensus and exposition of our Christian faith”, “the unanimous declaration of our faith”, and the “witnesses and expositions of the faith”.⁴⁰

This was not a question of historical opinions of their subjective faith (*fides qua*), but the question of the analogy of faith (*fides quae*) which is timeless, ecumenical and eschatological. It was not a question about what they personally believed, although it was that too, but it was the question about the one faith that establishes and sustains the unity of the Church. It was the question of the invariable factor: God’s Holy Word in Law and Gospel.

4. The way to concord happens in a definite historical setting, which influences and determines the way.

As happens to all our good works, the way to concord, as a fruit of faith, is influenced and determined by circumstantial factors in history. One does not simply do good works in abstraction, but always according to the orders, estates and relationships in which one lives. The same happens to the way to concord. The confession of the Church is always directed towards persons or situations which challenge the Church’s unity. In this sense the confessions are historically conditioned. In view of the invariable factor the confessions are timeless and always meaningful, although one may be able to criticize some aspects of the way the concord was reached. Although the confessors, as Christians, tried to follow Paul’s advice “to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:12), there are, certainly, some political, social and personal notes in the history of the way to concord which belong more to the *peccator* side of the confessor’s *simul iustus et peccator*.

The issues, extension and form of the confessions were always determined by the historical controversy which called for a way to

³⁸FC, Ep, Preface, I,2.

³⁹FC, Ep, Preface, 7.

⁴⁰FC, Ep, Preface, 4,6,8.

concord. The confessors had to read the signs of the times, the causes and the implications of the issues at stake. They were not able to fight all the heresies and give all the answers. But they went the way to concord as far as it was necessary at the time for the sake of the unity of the Church. That so many confessions appeared is a sign that a confessor cannot in his lifetime cover all the issues which require a stance and confession of the Church. But as far as they go the confessions were and are valid confessions of the Church.

The history of the ecumenical Creeds is not free from pressures which are strange to the invariable content of the Creeds. The Council of Nicaea was called by emperor Constantine, who "was more or less forced to consider calling a great Council", and "whether he acted by persuasion or intimidation, the emperor Constantine certainly helped to bring the debates to a successful and speedy conclusion". The basis for the Nicene Creed was adopted, and those who could not agree "were sent into exile".⁴¹ This procedure is not altogether strange to other historical settings on the way to concord.

Luther himself was, on the one hand, protected by political powers, and, on the other hand, was pressured by opposing politicians. The Augsburg Confession resulted from great political pressure, as well as the Apology. Luther wrote the Smalcald Articles after having been "instructed (by Elector John Frederick of Saxe) to draft and assemble articles of our faith".⁴² Political pressures played an important role on the way to concord also when the Formula of Concord was drafted and signed. These political pressures both helped and disturbed the way to concord, but in one way or another they were important tools in God's hands to lead the Church again to the concord in confession.

Although the political pressures interfered on the way to concord, they could not determine the content of the confessions. They determined only some of the procedures of the way to concord. The signatures of the princes which gave a legal aspect to the Augsburg Confession did not at all determine the content. When John Frederick instructed Luther to write the Smalcald Articles, he did not determine the affirmations of faith.

⁴¹Jean Daniélou and Henri Marrou, *The Christian Centuries*, vol. I: The First Six Hundred Years (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), pp. 251 and 253.

⁴²SA, Preface, 1.

Political pressure disturbed the concord of the Church when Emperor Charles V and Maurice of Saxe tried to force a concord through the two Interims. The Interims of Augsburg and Leipzig only created distrust and discord. The Truce of Passau in 1552 and the Religious Peace of Augsburg in 1555 cancelled the Interims. "The Interims were dead",⁴³ but the affair determined also the end of Melancthon as leader of the Lutheran theologians. New leadership arose with Matthias Flacius, but new pressures cancelled him as a leader too. Emperor Ferdinand arranged the Colloquy of Worms in 1557 to press for concord between the Roman and the Lutheran parties. Since the Lutherans had no common front, due to the opposing leadership of Melancthon and Flacius, the princes tried hurriedly to find a way to concord by themselves at the Frankfurt meeting in 1557 with no success. For this reason the Colloquy of Worms was a failure. The next year the theologians were summoned to Frankfurt, but the Frankfurt Recess only showed the existing rift again. Duke John Frederick the Middler of Saxe called for a synod at Magdeburg, but the plan collapsed. He ordered then the theologians to draw up the *Book of Confutation*, 1559, which created only greater disunity, since it was followed by the Weimar Disputation, at which Flacius overstated his position on anthropology and lost his position as a Lutheran leader.⁴⁴ The princes tried again a way to concord at a meeting at Naumburg in 1561 by signing the Augsburg Confession, but by the walkout of two princes there was no settlement. The followers of Melancthon and Flacius met again at the Colloquy of Altenburg in 1568, but the way to concord seemed impossible to find.

When Jakob Andreae entered the scene in 1568, he immediately tried, under the political pressure of his Duke Christoph, to find a way to concord. In 1569 he introduced a new approach to the way to concord, presenting a document which treated the five major issues in dispute. It was submitted to princes and theologians for subscription.⁴⁵ The followers of Melancthon in Wittenberg and the Gnesio-Lutherans, followers of Flacius in Jena, did not accept Andreae's "Confession". Although a good approach on the way to concord, the document was too soft on the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper

⁴³Robert Kolb, *Andreae and the Formula of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), p. 25.

⁴⁴Kolb, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁵Kolb, p. 43. The document was entitled "Confession and Brief Explanation of Certain Disputed Articles, Through Which Christian Unity May Be Reached in the Churches Subscribing to the Augsburg Confession, and Scandalous, Wearisome Division May Be Set Aside".

for the Gnesio-Lutherans, and too strong on the ubiquity of the human nature of Christ for the Wittenbergers. Andreae changed the document to please the parties, but he earned only slander.

He persuaded the princes to call for a meeting in Zerbst in 1570, at which he tried to settle the issues. This was a remarkable meeting, since the parties, three by now, discussed the "confessional standards for Lutherans".⁴⁶ They agreed that "the Scriptures are interpreted by the ecumenical creeds, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, Luther's catechisms, and other writings of Luther".⁴⁷ The inclusion of "other writings of Luther" moved the Wittenbergers to press for the adoption also of Melanchthon's writings, as available in the *Corpus doctrinae Misnicum*. To please the Flacians and not to offend the Wittenbergers Andreae made one major mistake on the way to concord. "He suggested that Melanchthon's works, along with those of Brenz, be recognized as helpful interpretations of the other confessional documents."⁴⁸

This was a typical theological deal, but no concord. The parties left kind of happy, since all three parties were able to interpret the outcome as it pleased them. The Flacians would never use the *Corpus doctrinae Misnicum*, since it was only a "helpful interpretation" for those who wanted it. The Wittenbergers did not like that Melanchthon and Brenz were put on a par, since Brenz was the opposed "ubiquitist", but they settled for peace, since they would anyway continue to interpret as they wanted. And Andreae was not enough prepared to see his mistake. He published an optimistic Report of the meeting at Zerbst. When the Wittenbergers started attacking Andreae's Report, he finally came to the conclusion that for the Wittenbergers the Flacianists were "too Lutheran and not papistic or Calvinistic enough".⁴⁹

Andreae came to the conclusion that there was no way in trying a compromise concord with the Wittenbergers, since they missed part of the invariable factor of the way to concord. They were too

⁴⁶Kolb, p. 44.

⁴⁷Kolb, p. 45.

⁴⁸*Ibid.* — Theodore R. Jungkuntz, *Formulators of the Formula of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), p. 36.

⁴⁹Kolb, p. 48.

much inclined towards peace with Rome and Geneva, without the concord which comes from the unity of the Church. From there on Andreae broke with the Wittenberger's love for peace, as well as with the often suspicious aggressivity of the Flacians, and settled for Luther's way to concord.

In his pursuit of concord Luther followed his convictions on the basis of the *analogia fidei*. When the issue of "the same simple, unchanging, constant truth" was at stake, he had no great respect for personalities, nor did he look for outward peace. This brought him the later critique of Melanchthon, who declared in a letter of April 28, 1548 to the diplomat Christoph von Carlowitz: "In previous days I bore an almost unseemly servitude to Luther when he acted according to his pugnacious nature rather than in accord with his dignity and the public welfare".⁵⁰ Luther was ready to apply censorship and pronounce a *damnamus*⁵¹ even in relation to his own co-workers of the Reformation. His concern for concord was above any personality cult.

Melanchthon, on the other hand, had different convictions. He was more of a humanist than Luther. In the same letter to Carlowitz he states: "I am not controversial by nature and I love peace among men as much as anyone".⁵² As a humanist he was convinced that a man, when honest to himself, had to remain open for the truth and, therefore, continue always in search of the truth.⁵³ Melanchthon

⁵⁰Clyde Leonard Manschreck, *Melanchthon The Quiet Reformer* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 282. — Heinz Scheible, "Melanchthons Brief an Carlowitz", in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, edited by Gerhard Ritter et al. (Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn), 57, 1966, Heft 1/2, p. 116: "Ich ertrug auch vordem eine fast entehrende Knechtschaft, da Luther oft mehr seinem Temperament folgte, in welchem eine nicht gering *philoneikia* lag, als auf sein Ansehen und auf das Gemeinwohl achtete". — F. Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 106: "Tuli etiam antea servitutem paene deformem, cum saepe Lutherus magis suae naturae, in qua *philoneikia* erat non exigua, quam vel personae suae vel utilitati communi serviret".

⁵¹Hans-Werner Gensichen, *We Condemn*, translated by Herbert J. A. Bouman (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 62: "Luther generally attached much value to brotherly admonition of the erring and practically placed it beside the ministerial office. Judgment on doctrine must indeed be incisive enough: 'You must sharpen your teeth and bite whatever is contrary to sound doctrine'. At the same time, 'You must correct, not castigate'." And p. 67: "The Word, the Gospel, was for Luther the criterion according to which he drew the line between pure and false teaching, between true and false church. From the Word he drew for himself and for all Christians the obligation to ward off false teaching by means of the condemnatory verdict".

⁵²Harold H. Lentz, *Reformation Crossroads* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1958), p. 59: "Lacking the heroic faith and stability of Luther, he (Melanchthon) was willing to conclude peace at any price".

⁵³Menschreck, p. 18: "The key to the mystery of Melanchthon is his recognition that human beings are finite, that no human being has final truth, that no human action is final, and that the gospel cannot be absolutely translated into human thought and action, that man stands in a faith relationship to God which breaks through all forms of human finiteness so that man does not contain but is contained". — Robert D. Preus, "Melanchthon the Theologian",

never was ready with this search. He respected personalities, as the great Erasmus, who finally influenced Melanchthon's position on the causes of conversion. He respected the Church Fathers, in whom he found a more figurative interpretation of the words of the Lord's Supper,⁵⁴ similar to Calvin, whose personality he appreciated too. Under Luther he suffered, as he confessed to Carlowitz. But, interestingly enough, while under Luther's "almost unseemly servitude" Melanchthon produced the most outstanding documents of concord: the Augsburg Confession, the Apology and the *Tractatus*. Even his practical writings, as the Visitation Articles and the first *Loci* were fine documents of faith. But when he tried to escape the "servitude" under Luther and appealed to his humanism, Melanchthon started compromising the truth.

The history of the Majoristic Controversy includes some of the scenes that illustrate the difference between Luther and Melanchthon. Caspar Cruciger Sr. was dictating at the Wittenberg Academy lessons which he had learned from Melanchthon. It was on the relation of good works to the saving faith, a most central issue that touched the unity of the Church. Cordatus and Amsdorf had an occasion to examine the formulations and found them wanting, according to the concord in confession. When Luther heard of it he agreed that the unity of the Church was being attacked. His verdict was: "This is the very theology of Erasmus, nor can anything be more opposed to our doctrine." Luther then acted as a sharp censor: "What he has publicly dictated, Cruciger shall publicly retract".⁵⁵ Melanchthon was fair enough to assume the responsibility for the formulations, since they had appeared already in his 1535 edition of the *Loci*. But when the attacks became heavy Melanchthon threatened to leave the Academy,⁵⁶ but he did not. In a public disputation on June 1, 1537

CTM XXXI, August 1960, p. 475: "It is one of the great tragedies of history that his (Melanchthon's) vacillation and his later synergism undermined this article". — Erwin L. Leuker, "Luther and Melanchthon", *CTM* XXXI, August 1960, p. 477: "With some justification it has been said that in Luther and Melanchthon theology and philosophy struggle with each other". — Carl S. Meyer, "Melanchthon as Educator and Humanist", *CTM* XXXI, September 1960, p. 540: "Whatever his failings may have been as a theologian, or as a teacher (his lack of a sense of humor, for instance), or as a humanist, Melanchthon deserves our tribute . . . as the pre-eminent humanist and educator of the 16th century".

⁵⁴Carl Meusel, *Kirchliches Handlexikon*, Vol. IV (Leipzig: Justus Naumann, 1894), p. 533.

⁵⁵Bente, p. 113.

⁵⁶*Ibid.* — Later "Melanchthon seriously contemplated taking himself and his family into exile", when the discussion with Luther about the Lords Supper started. Manschreck, p. 245. Manschreck affirms that Luther himself, in 1544, "in disgust and despair . . . left Wittenberg with no intention of returning", and that "Melanchthon journeyed to Merseburg, found Luther, and brought him back". Manschreck, p. 247.

Luther “exploded and condemned” the theses defended by Melanchthon and Cruciger. Although not totally convinced Melanchthon promised to “employ some art” in “maintaining the unity”. For the sake of peace he stated: “I will therefore modify whatever I can”.⁵⁷ He did it both ways. On the one hand Melanchthon avoided the terminology in his publications, although Luther had to correct him again on a new formula of the same issue tried at the meeting at Regensburg in 1541. On the other hand Melanchthon continued to “modify whatever” he could, even in opposition to the concord of the Church, as he did in the *variata* edition of the Augsburg Confession a year before.

One can understand Flacius’ bitterness in his attacks on Melanchthon. Flacius wanted the concord on the basis of Luther’s *analogia fidei*, but Melanchthon insisted on concord on the basis of peace. They were both professors at Wittenberg, but after Melanchthon’s compromise with the Interims Flacius left for Magdeburg and then for Jena. Wittenberg received now the compromising stamp of Melanchthon’s peace-seeking nature. He was a fine teacher, the great humanist, recognized as the *praeceptor Germaniae*. With Luther’s death he was now free from the “unseemly servitude” and could now cultivate “his dignity and the public welfare”. A kind of personality cult developed, which lasted until after his death in 1560, since the Wittenbergers wanted the *Corpus doctrinae Misnicum* to be honored alongside the Confessions at the meeting at Zerbst in 1570. The thorn in Melanchthon’s flesh was Flacius and his insistence on penitence in view of Melanchthon’s compromise at the time of the Interims. Melanchthon wanted peace. So he wrote Flacius a private letter on September 5, 1556, pleading for peace: “You never come to an end with your accusations. . . . Win! I yield. I do not contend concerning those rites, and I most earnestly wish that the churches would enjoy sweet concord. I also admit that I have sinned in this matter, and ask forgiveness of God. . . .”⁵⁸ But when Flacius insisted on a kind of public penance through the Coswig articles of 1557,⁵⁹ as Luther required in the case of Cruciger, Melanchthon and his followers refused to submit to it.⁶⁰ The estrangement between the Lutherans was complete at this time. But the love for peace of the Wittenbergers approached

⁵⁷Bente, p. 114.

⁵⁸Bente, p. 112. CRF 8, 839.

⁵⁹Manschreck, p. 291.

⁶⁰Kolb, p. 26.

them more and more to the area of Calvin. The Religious Peace of Augsburg, 1555, had excluded the Calvinists from rightful existence. They were subject to persecution. For this reason, some say, the Wittenbergers "hesitated to invite such a cruel consequence for their Reformed brothers (and) felt themselves forced either to compromise their theological convictions or to make the 'discovery' that there were no substantive theological differences between themselves and the Reformed".⁶¹ Such and similar pressures for peace disturbed the Church on the way to concord.

The way to concord was finally cleared when the roads which led to the acknowledgement of great names and scholars, and which led to unionistic efforts were abandoned. Jakob Andreae had started on both roads, but soon discovered that they only fostered the discord. He started again, this time without compromising tendencies. He used Luther's method of the *analogia fidei*, which implies the use of the *damnamus*. He wrote the theses and antitheses in the form of *Six Sermons*, which he dedicated February 17, 1573 to Duke Julius, for whom he had worked for some time. "He reviewed briefly the history of the dispute and set down the basic arguments of each side, with the Scriptural support they claimed. Then, through the use of the catechism, he showed the laymen how to decide which party was teaching correctly".⁶² But "he did not appeal to the catechism as the deposit of the wisdom of the church; his is in no way an argument from tradition. He appealed instead to . . . the analogy of faith".⁶³

Theologians, including Martin Chemnitz, reviewed the *Six Sermons*. On the basis of their suggestions Andreae produced at the end of the year his *Swabian Concord*. The sermonic form was abandoned and the theses and antitheses appeared in proper form. A year later the Lower Saxons had reviewed it again. It was returned to Andreae as the *Swabian-Saxon Concord*. Another committee of Wuerttemberg formulated the same issues in the *Maulbronn Formula*. Both were joined in the *Torgic Book*, which was revised to become the *Bergic Book* in 1577. The Bergic Book became the *Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord*. From the Torgic Book Andreae made a short summary extract, which was the basis for the *Epitome*, also

⁶¹Jungkuntz, pp. 15f.

⁶²Kolb, p. 54.

⁶³Kolb, p. 55.

finally approved in the library of Bergen Abbey on May 28, 1577, and presented May 29, 1577 with the final report to the elector August of Saxe. It was signed by the six leading theologians who worked last on it: Jakob Andreae, Nikolaus Selnecker, Andreas Musculus, Christoph Koerner, David Chytraeus and Martin Chemnitz.

The concord was reached again. During the next three years signatures were solicited of those who were able to identify with the concord. In 1580, fifty years after the Augsburg Confession was presented, the Formula of Concord appeared in print with 8,188 names appended.

One may find faults and human errors all along the process which led to this concord in confession. The way to concord happens in a definite historical setting, which influences and determines the way. Even the first six men who prepared and signed the concord had their own personal quarrels and misgivings, because of their human frailties. But when it came to confess in concord, they were convinced that they had found the way in Scripture and that they were able to confess "the same simple, unchanging, constant truth" which alone identifies the unity of the Church. As in the time of Luther this concord did not solve all the problems: those who were not able to agree continued to endanger in some way the unity of the Church.

5. The way to concord has to be sought in prayer, by which one acknowledges God as the Lord of concord.

The first confession on which the Church needs concord is the confession about the Lord of concord. Luther says in the Large Catechism that "it is of the utmost importance for a man to have the right head. For where the head is right, the whole life must be right, and vice versa. Learn from these words, then, how angry God is with those who rely on anything but Himself, and again, how kind and gracious He is to those who trust and believe Him alone with their whole heart".⁶⁴ The right head is God, in whom one is asked to trust and believe. Where the head is right, and this means the right trust and right faith, there the whole life is right. Life starts with faith and evidences itself with the response to God. The expression of this response appears in prayer, by which the Christian expects his whole exis-

⁶⁴LC I, 31-32.

tence from God and ascribes it to God. Prayer is at the beginning of all good works, of which confession in concord is an important and necessary aspect. Confession in concord is, therefore, a gift of God which has to be sought in prayer.

This makes the confessor humble. He is not to be credited when he is able to confess in concord. The Lord of concord, who provided through faith the unity of the Church in Christ, is the one who alone can provide a confession in concord. This He does through the means He provided: His revealed Word as the means of grace, the work of the Holy Spirit, and His gift of faith.

The confessors of the Augsburg Confession knew well that the Holy Spirit cannot be managed. They confessed that through the Gospel and the Sacraments, "as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this".⁶⁵ The "when and where he pleases" is valid not only when faith is started, but as long as faith exists and transforms our lives. Even the good works and the confession in concord belong to the area of the "when and where he pleases". Paul says that "it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). The Lord wants to be recognized also on the way to concord.

Luther knew the art of prayer. He had the right head. And one cannot say that all along the line of the way to concord at the time of the second generation the confessors there was not much prayer too.⁶⁶ But God's time for the concord came when and where it pleased Him. He had to prepare the confessors for the concord. He had to prepare the time and the occasion. When Jakob Andreae started the way to concord a second time, now on the basis of the *Six Sermons*, he wrote Duke Julius that the German Evangelicals "must now wait for God's good time (Eccl. 3:1) to restore the unity they sought. They

⁶⁵AC, V, 2-3.

⁶⁶Karl von Helmolt, *Tileman Hesshus und seine sieben Exilia* (Leipzig: Doerffling und Franke, 1859), p. 97: "Darauf werden die Fuerstenthumer, Grafschaften und Staedte Niedersachsens aufgezaecht, in welchen dieser Entwurf (die Saechsisch-Schwaebische Formel) all-gemeine Billigung und Zustimmung erfahren, und wird der bruenstigen Gebete gedacht, die oeffentlich und im Kaemmerlein zu dem Mittler Jesus Christus, dem Haupte der Kirche Aufsteigen, damit noch mehr Kirchen dieser Einigung herzugethan werden . . . Ehrlich und ordentlich ist es bei der Sache zugegangen".

could only plant and water; God would have to give the increase (1 Cor. 3:6)".⁶⁷ The Lord of concord answered the prayers of the confessors for the sake of the unity of the Church.

6. The way to concord requires men of decision who, once they have received the right head, strive for concord.

The Lord of concord leads men step by step. But step by step one has to live by decisions. The procedure to live with God a life of sanctification includes first of all the invariable factor, by which one consults and knows the will of God as expressed in His Holy Word. Then follows the acknowledgement and evaluation of the circumstances in which one lives, and in which one has to affirm the new life in Christ. The third factor is prayer, by which one asks the Lord to lead and guide and give courage for the decision to act. The last step is one's decision and action in the fear of God.

The way to concord, as a part of the Christian life, requires the courage to decide. Once one received the right head one cannot just sit and wait: there is a need to strive for concord. The confessors did not choose to be confessors. God made them confessors by His grace: they had to strive for concord.

Neither Luther, nor Melanchthon, nor Andreae decided to be confessors by themselves. God took them in His hands and prepared them to become the men of courage to confess. God overruled their weaknesses, their sinfulness, pride and failures, to make them His tools for the concord in confession. The best example of this change one can find in Melanchthon. He was a peace-maker and became a confessor.⁶⁸ His Augsburg Confession was still soft and polite. The Apology was already an attack on the Confutation. But the *Tractatus* takes almost an aggressive stance over against the errors of the Pope. When his confessing period was over Melanchthon relapsed into his peace-making tendency. One can point to mistakes in Luther too, but especially in the lives and activities of some of the second generation of confessors. Not their lives and private writings became a pattern for the Church, but their confession, as officially given before

⁶⁷Kolb, p. 50.

⁶⁸Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "Melanchthon the Confessor", *CTM XXXI*, September 1960, p. 541.

God to the Church. It was, therefore, not only their private concord in confession, but the Church's concord in confession.⁶⁹

These confessions are final as far as they go. They cover the issues which were at stake at the time when the controversies appeared. But these confessions have a dynamic aspect. They are not just static descriptions of historical situations. On the one hand they are final patterns for the continuous proclamation and confession of the Church today for the sake of the unity of the Church. On the other hand they have to be regarded also as starting points for the continuous work on the way to concord. Since the controversies move their positions and cover different areas, so also the confession of the Church has to move along. From the bases already conquered, the Church has to continue on the way to concord to affirm the new bases which modern controversies want to dispute.

The Church always needs humble men of courage to become confessors in the hands of God, "when and where he wills", to lead the Church continuously on the way to concord for the sake of the unity of the Church.

⁶⁹Robert D. Preus, "Confessional Subscription", *Evangelical Direction for the Lutheran Church*, edited by Erich H. Kiehl and Waldo J. Werning (Chicago: The Lutheran Congress, 1970), p. 46: "... the confession is not the doctrine of an individual but of the church". — Holsten Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions* (1529-1537), translated by Gene J. Lund (St. Louis and London: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), p. 12: "They appeared within a limited period of time, written by men who were personally near to one another, and they claimed to represent the church and not merely private theologians".