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Table of Contents

The Trinity in the Bible	195
Robert W. Jenson	
Should a Layman Discharge the Duties of the Holy Ministry?	207
William C. Weinrich	
Center and Periphery in Lutheran Ecclesiology	231
Charles J. Evanson	
Martin Chemitz's Use of the Church Fathers in His Locus on Justification	271
Carl C. Beckwith	
Syncretism in the Theology of Georg Calixt, Abraham Calov and Johannes Musäus	291
Benjamin T. G. Mayes	
Johann Sebastian Bach as Lutheran Theologian	319
David P. Scaer	
Theological Observer	341
Toward a More Accessible <i>CTQ</i>	
Delay of Infant Baptism in the Roman Catholic Church	

Book Reviews	347
<i>Baptism in the Reformed Tradition: an Historical and Practical Theology.</i>	
By John W. Riggs	David P. Scaer
<i>The Theology of the Cross for the 21st Century: Signposts for a</i>	
<i>Multicultural Witness.</i> Edited by Albert L. Garcia and A.R.	
Victor Raj.....	John T. Pless
<i>The Arts and Cultural Heritage of Martin Luther.</i> Edited by Nils	
Holger Peterson et al.	John T. Pless
<i>Fundamental Biblical Hebrew and Fundamental Biblical Aramaic.</i> By	
Andrew H. Bartelt and Andrew E. Steinmann.....	Chad L. Bird
<i>Intermediate Hebrew Grammar.</i> By Andrew Steinmann..	
Chad L. Bird	Counted Righteous in Christ. By John Piper
Peter C. Cage	<i>The Contemporary Quest for Jesus.</i> By N. T. Wright, Charles R. Schulz
<i>The Free Church and the Early Church: Bridging the Historical and</i>	
<i>Theological Divide.</i> Edited by D. H. Williams	
Paul G. Alms	<i>Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition.</i> By Andrew Purves
.....	James Busher
<i>Music for the Church: The Life and Work of Walter E. Buszin.</i> By Kirby	
L. Koriath	D. Richard Stuckwisch
<i>Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization.</i>	
By Alvin J. Schmidt.....	James Busher
<i>Participating in God: Creation and Trinity.</i> By Samuel Powell	
.....	Timothy Maschke
<i>Doing Right and Being Good: Catholic and Protestant Readings in</i>	
<i>Christian Ethics.</i> Edited by David Oki Ahearn and Peter Gathje	
.....	John T. Pless
<i>The Human Condition: Christian Perspectives through African Eyes.</i>	
By Joe M. Kapolyo	Saneta Maiko
<i>Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism.</i>	
By Philip Benedict.....	Cameron MacKenzie
<i>The New Faithful: Why Young Christians Are Embracing Christian</i>	
<i>Orthodoxy.</i> By Colleen Carroll	
Armand J. Boehme	
 Indices for Volume 68	 381

Syncretism in the Theology of Georg Calixt, Abraham Calov, and Johannes Musäus

Benjamin T. G. Mayes

The question, "What is syncretism?" presents itself repeatedly to the contemporary church. If one consults a theological dictionary, one may discover that in seventeenth-century German Lutheranism a large controversy on syncretism took place. One theological dictionary says, "Syncretism refers in particular, to the irenic movement arising from an effort within the Lutheran Church in the seventeenth century toward inter-confessional union, the sole final result of which was the moderation of the theological spirit. Syncretistic controversies is a phrase summing up the conflict waged between the partizans and opponents of the movement."¹

The Syncretistic Controversy in seventeenth-century German Lutheranism was waged essentially by three groups. The first, led by Georg Calixt (1586-1656), professor at Helmstedt, sought to overcome the split in the western church that took place at the Reformation. The second group, led especially by Abraham Calov (1612-1686) and the theologians of Wittenberg and Leipzig, sought to oppose Calixt by employing a vigorous polemic and proposing the

¹Paul Tschackert, "Syncretism, Syncretistic Controversies" in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1911; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952). 11:219. The article in *Schaff-Herzog* is an abridged translation, with an anti-Calov slant, of the same author's articles "Synkretismus" and "Synkretistische Streitigkeiten" in *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 3. Auflage (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1905), 19:239-262 (hereafter cited in notes as RE³). The articles offer a good summary of the history of the controversy.

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introduction of a new Lutheran Confession, the *Consensus Repetitus Fidei Vere Lutheranae* ("Repeated Consensus of the Truly Lutheran Faith").² Though the *Consensus Repetitus* never became a legally-binding confessional document, the Wittenberg-Leipzig view on syncretism won the day. The official union of the Lutheran and Reformed churches was delayed until the beginning of the nineteenth century in Prussia.³ The third group, led by Johannes Musäus (1613-1681) and the theologians of Jena, along with Philip Jakob Spener and others, also opposed Calixt and syncretism, but refused to support the *Consensus Repetitus*. Musäus' views on the Syncretistic Controversy found expression in Johann Wilhelm Baier's (1647-1695) *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, a work which was used by the Missouri Synod as her first dogmatics textbook and which thereby has become the classical position on syncretism within the Missouri Synod.⁴

Research for this paper began with the hypothesis that Calov's *Consensus Repetitus* would supply the decidedly Lutheran response to syncretism. Careful study, however,

²*Consensus repetitus fidei vere Lutheranae*, in *Consilia Theologica Witebergensia* (Frankfurt am Mäyn: Balthasar Christoph Wust, 1664), 928-995.

³See Joh. Heinr. Kurtz, *Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte für Studierende*, vol. 2, part 2, (Leipzig: August Neumann, 1887), 31-34.

⁴"Der Calixtinische Synkretismus," *Lehre und Wehre* 23 (1877): 83, outlines the distinction between seventeenth-century "syncretism" and nineteenth-century "unionism": "First, regarding the correct understanding of the whole matter, one must not overlook here the difference between the *current Union* and that which was the ideal of the syncretists. While we have in the Union a fusion of *two* ecclesiastical bodies into *one* church under *one* church government, by which the various confessions of the churches concerned are in actuality nullified, syncretism, on the other hand, lets each church exist in its separate position and with its separate confession and demands from these churches only a mutual recognition and patient bearing of their respective doctrinal deviations as different, *non-church-divisive opinions*."

showed certain weaknesses in Calov's argument. Of further note is that this response was not unique; Musäus and the theologians of Jena had the same reaction toward Calov's confession. As such, this article intends to make an examination of the three main positions in the syncretistic controversy as represented by Calixt, Calov, and Musäus (whose views are summarized by Baier).

Georg Calixt was born in 1586 at Medelbye, a town in Schleswig, some one hundred miles north of Hamburg. The son of a pupil of Melanchthon, Calixt was educated in Helmstedt by the humanist Caselius and other students of Melanchthon. He studied philology and philosophy from 1603-1607, turning then to theology with a special emphasis on patristics. From 1609 to 1613 he became acquainted with the Reformed and Roman Catholic churches during travels he made in Germany, Belgium, England, and France. In 1614 he was appointed professor of theology at the university in Helmstedt and remained there till his death in 1656.⁵ His professional activity lasted throughout the Thirty Years War, "when the hatred of the confessions toward each other had reached its height."⁶

Though history remembers him for detaching moral theology from positive (dogmatic) theology and for using the analytical method in systematic theology (as opposed to the synthetic method used in the construction of *Loci Communes*), Calixt is most famous for his "syncretism."⁷ In the midst of the Thirty Years War and the Catholic Reformation, his main goal was to bring about *Kirchen-Frieden*, ecclesiastical peace. He saw the Reformation as being an unfortunate occurrence which could have been avoided, if only all parties of the dispute had acted with more tolerance and calmness.⁸ To heal the schism, Calixt

⁵Paul Tschackert, "Calixtus, Georg," *Schaff-Herzog* 2:348.

⁶*Schaff-Herzog* 2:348.

⁷*Schaff-Herzog* 2:348-349.

⁸Heinrich Schmid, *Geschichte der synkretistischen Streitigkeiten in der Zeit des Georg Calixt* (Erlangen: Carl Heyder, 1846), 122. The

proposed a colloquy of Protestant and Catholic theologians who would give proofs of their church's respective positions in a "calm and dispassionate" manner. Both sides would have to recognize two principles. First, what Scripture teaches is undeniably true. Second, what the church teaches is undeniably true. Only where both of these principles are fulfilled can the two sides come to agreement.

Due to his language of "two principles," *duo principia*, Calixt did not escape the accusation of having a romanizing view.⁹ In reality, however, his view was more nuanced. According to Schmid, Scripture is, for Calixt, the only and highest theological *principium*. Tradition, on the other hand, is nothing other than the testimony of the church concerning the doctrine she has received from Scripture. Thus tradition *per se* has no independent authority in the way Scripture has. Furthermore, Calixt differentiates between the main principle and subordinate principles. Holy Scripture belongs in the first class, tradition belongs in the second. Schmid summarizes: "Holy Scripture is and remains the only place at which revelation is deposited. But tradition is, first of all, nothing other than the testimony of the church concerning the doctrine which she has taken from Scripture. Accordingly it is *per se* not a *principium*, but only a *testimonium*."¹⁰ However, Holy Scripture contains the promise that Christ would keep his church in the truth (Jn. 16:13). Thus Calixt concludes that the doctrine of the church is and must be the true doctrine, and this true doctrine is and must be the doctrine of Scripture. In this way, Calixt can speak of tradition (the doctrine of the church) as being a *principium secundarium*, "because it has its dependence on Holy Scripture," or a *principium subordinatum*, because it is

following summary of Calixt's position is from Schmid, *Geschichte*, 121-133.

⁹Schmid, *Geschichte*, 133.

¹⁰Schmid, *Geschichte*, 133.

subordinated to Scripture and receives from Scripture its power and meaning.¹¹ Calixt's distinction between Scripture and tradition can be summarized with the following five theses:

1. Scripture, he says, is *autopistoi*. It is believed for its own sake, it need not appeal to any further testimony for its authority. Tradition, however, only has authority in so far as¹² it is derived and dependent on Scripture.
2. A single clear passage from Scripture suffices as proof of a doctrine. From tradition, however, we must produce the unanimous testimony of many – the testimony of creeds and individual teachers – if our proof is to be valid.
3. Proof from Scripture can never be lacking. Proof from tradition has a place only where we are dealing with heretics.
4. Proof from tradition is thus added, not because proof from Scripture is *per se* not sufficient and powerful enough, but only because with it the heretics can be disproved more quickly.
5. Proof from Scripture is understandable for everyone. Proof from tradition is only applicable among the educated.¹³

Thus Calixt's view of Scripture and tradition cannot simply be dismissed as a romanizing two-source view. He aimed to stay with the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*, and thus responded to charges of romanizing by

¹¹Schmid, *Geschichte*, 134. See also Calixt, *Gründl. Widerlegung* I. §. 35, 82. *Diss. de myst. tr. th.* 19.

¹²Due to his insistence that the early church's tradition is in actual fact the true doctrine derived from Scripture, Calixt could have perhaps strengthened this to a *quia*: "because it depends on and is derived from Scripture."

¹³Schmid, *Geschichte*, 135.

saying that also the Reformers had looked to the testimony of antiquity as a proof (though not the main one) of their position.¹⁴ However, a difference between the Reformers and Calixt can perhaps be seen in his assumption that the unanimous doctrine of the early church can be known and used as a theological principle. Drawing a conclusion from passages such as John 16:13, Calixt states, "Wherever the unanimous testimony of the church can be shown for a doctrine, that doctrine is thereby proved to be irrefutably true." Other Lutheran theologians did not share this conclusion.¹⁵

The statements above help to clarify why Calixt further claims that the doctrine of the Lutheran church is none other than that of the early church.¹⁶ This statement can work two ways. It can say, "What the Lutheran church believes is true and can be found in the writings of the early church." Or it can mean, "The *doctrine* of the Lutheran church is *limited* to that which can be found in the writings of the early church." That is to say, the early church can be used as a testimony of an independent system of faith (the former view), or it can be used as a norm to make a distinction between the various beliefs of the Lutheran church (the latter view). Schmid states:

Either he must have placed on his opponents the demand that, since they recognized the doctrine of the Lutheran church as agreeing with the doctrine of the early church, they would have to admit immediately the falsities of their own doctrine—and such an admission he could have never expected—or he must have hoped that if only the recognition could be attained that the doctrine of the early church was the norm by which the truth of a doctrine could be recognized, then a point

¹⁴Schmid, *Geschichte*, 136.

¹⁵Schmid, *Geschichte*, 136.

¹⁶Schmid, *Geschichte*, 139.

would have been won from which an understanding between the two confessions [Lutheran and Roman Catholic] could be attained. And the latter is the case. He indicates here already that if the doctrine of the early church were recognized as the *typus* of the true doctrine, as it is in truth, then thereby all the [other] doctrines which were added later to the doctrine of the early church would appear less essential.¹⁷

Aside from his view of Scripture and tradition, Calixt also used the concept of the *articuli fidei*, the "articles of faith," to further his goals of ecclesiastical peace. Already in 1626, Nicolaus Hunnius had written his *Diaskepsis Theologica de Fundamentali dissensu doctrinae Evangelicae-Lutheranae, & Calvinianae, seu Reformatae*,¹⁸ a foundational work for later Lutheran dogmatics with respect to the classification of articles of faith.¹⁹ Hunnius defines an article of faith as "a part of Christian doctrine through which we are led to

¹⁷Schmid, *Geschichte*, 139-140. "Entweder mußte er an die Gegner die Zumuthung stellen, daß sie, indem sie die Lehre der luth. Kirche als eine mit der der alten Kirche übereinstimmende Lehre anerkannten, die Unwahrheit ihrer eigenen Lehre geradezu eingestehen sollten. Und ein solches Geständniß durfte er nicht erwarten. Oder er mußte hoffen, daß wenn einmal zur Anerkennung gebracht sey, daß die Lehre der alten Kirche die Norm sey, an welcher die Wahrheit einer Lehre erkannt werden könne, damit ein Standpunkt gewonnen sey, won welchem aus leichter eine Verständigung der beiden Konfessionen erzielt werden könne. Und das Letztere ist der Fall. Er deutet hier schon an, daß wenn man die Lehre der alten Kirche für den Typus der wahren Lehre anerkenne, wie sie es denn in Wahrheit sey, dadurch alle die Lehren, welche an die Lehre der alten Kirche sich erst angereiht hätten, als minder wesentliche erschienen."

¹⁸Wittenberg, 1626. Translated by Richard J. Dinda and Elmer Hohle as *Diaskepsis Theologica: A Theological Examination of the Fundamental Difference Between Evangelical Lutheran Doctrine and Calvinist or Reformed Teaching*, (Malone, TX: Repristination, 1999). The Dinda-Hohle translation will be the edition referenced.

¹⁹Robert Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970-72), 1:145.

eternal salvation.”²⁰ The articles of faith, then, are divided into fundamental and non-fundamental articles, and the fundamental articles are subdivided into primary and secondary. A primary fundamental article, according to Hunnius, is “a part of Christian doctrine which one cannot not know and yet keep safe his faith and salvation.”²¹ That is, one must both know it and believe it to be saved. A secondary fundamental article is one “which can indeed remain unknown but yet which cannot be denied while faith and salvation are kept safe...”²² Finally, a non-fundamental article is “a part of Christian doctrine which one can not know and deny while keeping his faith safe.” As examples of the latter, Hunnius notes the fall and permanent rejection of some angels, man’s immortality before the Fall, the visibility or invisibility of the church, and others.²³ In addition, Hunnius divided primary fundamental articles into those that are constituting and those that are preserving. “An establishing article is a part of doctrine that without means causes faith. A preserving article is a part of doctrine that necessarily lies beneath the immediate cause of faith.”²⁴ By using these distinctions, Hunnius was able to contradict the Reformed argument that there was an agreement in fundamentals between the Lutheran and Reformed churches.²⁵ Of course, the main test of the distinctions lies in how the actual articles of faith are categorized. The same categories can be used by different authors with vastly different results.

In contradistinction to Nicholas Hunnius, along with Abraham Calov and Johannes Musäus, the list of articles necessary for salvation according to Calixt is significantly

²⁰Hunnius, *Diaskepsis*, 27.

²¹Hunnius, *Diaskepsis*, 28.

²²Hunnius, *Diaskepsis*, 31.

²³Hunnius, *Diaskepsis*, 32.

²⁴Hunnius, *Diaskepsis*, 28.

²⁵Hunnius, *Diaskepsis*, 4.

smaller. To be precise, Calixt holds that the Apostles' Creed contains all the articles that must be known and believed for salvation. Calixt reasons from his understanding of the function of the creed as a summary of the entire saving doctrine. If the Apostles' Creed contained all of saving doctrine at that time, it must still contain all of saving doctrine today.²⁶ Likewise, "it follows ... that the greater number of doctrines which were added in later eras cannot be necessary articles of faith in the same sense as those articles listed in the apostolic symbol."²⁷ That is to say, "...the Apostolic Symbol is completely sufficient for the listing of the articles of faith necessary for salvation."²⁸ More precise definitions and defense of these articles are always to be expected, to be sure, and this is precisely the function that the rest of the ancient creeds play. They add no new doctrines to the Apostles' Creed, but merely help to explain the doctrines therein.²⁹

Whereas Hunnius and those who follow him use the language of primary and secondary fundamental articles and non-fundamental articles, Calixt speaks of "antecedent, constituent, and consequent articles," a distinction traceable to Bonaventure.³⁰ Antecedent articles are those articles that human reason and perception can know without special revelation. Constituent articles are the articles that actually constitute faith. These are the articles all must know and believe in order to be saved. Finally, the consequent articles are all those doctrines which follow as a result or derivative of the constituent articles.³¹ As noted above, the main test of

²⁶Schmid, *Geschichte*, 147.

²⁷Schmid, *Geschichte*, 147. "...so folgt daraus weiter, daß die größere Anzahl von Lehren, welche in späterer Zeit hinzugekommen sind, nicht in gleichem Sinne nothwendige Glaubensartikel seyn können, wie die im apostol. Symbol verzeichneten."

²⁸Schmid, *Geschichte*, 149-150.

²⁹Schmid, *Geschichte*, 147.

³⁰"antecedentia, constituentia, et consequentia." Schmid, *Geschichte*, 156.

³¹Schmid, *Geschichte*, 157.

the distinctions lies in how the actual articles of faith are categorized. What is important is where an author assigns the various articles and how those categories function. For Calixt, the "consequentia" have been the cause of most of the church's controversies.³² This is especially to be regretted, since only the "constituentia" are articles of faith and necessary for salvation. Other articles are not articles of faith at all.³³ In essence, no controverted article could be a fundamental article for Calixt. By assigning all the controversies of the Reformation to the "consequent articles," Calixt essentially denied that all the theological issues raised by the Reformation—justification, election, the sacrament of the altar, baptism, confession—were fundamental articles of faith. To his Lutheran contemporaries, who saw the Reformation as the recovery of the gospel from "popish errors, abuses, and idolatry,"³⁴ Calixt's view attacked the heart of the gospel.

Calixt, convinced that all three confessions—the Lutheran, Reformed, and Roman Catholic—hold to the tenets of the Apostles' Creed, states that there is a communion of faith that exists between them.³⁵ Surprisingly, however, Calixt does not see this communion as grounds for external unity between the divided churches. Before an external union could be effected, there would also of necessity have to be unity on the doctrines that are *related to* the fundamental articles of faith.³⁶ "The confessions [the churches] are especially not agreed in the doctrine of the

³²Schmid, *Geschichte*, 158.

³³Schmid, *Geschichte*, 158.

³⁴*The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert, in collaboration with Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert H. Fischer, and Arthur C. Piepkorn. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 501, *Formula of Concord*, "Solid Declaration," 2.1 (hereafter cited in notes as Tappert).

³⁵Schmid, *Geschichte*, 167.

³⁶Schmid, *Geschichte*, 175.

sacrament of the holy supper, which above all is to be 'a public sign and testimony of common love and unity.' As long as the regrettable disagreement lasts, so long, Calixt recognizes, the division of the confessions must remain."³⁷ In fact, before there can be an external ecclesiastical union, unity in all doctrines must be achieved. Here Calixt makes a distinction between the kind of fellowship that exists between the churches. Since there is agreement on all the fundamental articles (the Apostles' Creed), a virtual fellowship (*communio virtualis*) between the churches already exists, though not an actual and external fellowship by the sacrament ("communio actualis et externa per sacramentum").³⁸ From this it appears that Calixt's goal was to create *Kirchenfrieden*, ecclesiastical peace, not *Kircheneinigung*, an external church union—at least not at first.³⁹ His goal was to find unity between the churches, not to hide the existing divisions.⁴⁰

Calixt's distinction between the two kinds of fellowship is significant. Note well that the virtual fellowship exists between the concrete churches as such. Calixt's contention is not that there is an invisible fellowship of true believers scattered wherever the gospel and sacraments are distributed, but that there is a virtual fellowship between the concrete Lutheran church, the concrete Reformed church, and the concrete Roman Catholic church. Calixt's goal was to blunt the edge of all condemnations. The churches can exist separately, but they must not condemn

³⁷Schmid, *Geschichte*, 175. "Die Konfessionen sind insbesondere nicht einig in der Lehre von dem Sakrament des h. Abendmals, welches doch vor allem 'ein öffentlich Zeichen und Zeugniß der gemeinen Liebe und Einigkeit' sein soll. So lange dieser beklagenswerthe Zwiespalt fort dauert, so lange, erkennt Calixt an, müsse auch die Trennung der Konfessionen fortbestehen."

³⁸Schmid, *Geschichte*, 178.

³⁹Schmid, *Geschichte*, 180.

⁴⁰Schmid, *Geschichte*, 179.

each other. This view, of course, was contrary to the Lutheran Confessions,⁴¹ as well as the Council of Trent.

Calixt's greatest enemy, Abraham Calov, was born in 1612 at Mohrunen, Prussia (about sixty-two miles south of Königsberg), and was educated in Thorn and Königsberg. In the course of his career he lectured in theology at Königsberg and Rostock before finally being called as professor of theology at Wittenberg in 1650. His opposition to Calixt and his followers was consistent, all the way to his death in 1686. One of the main "anti-syncretistic" writings of the time was the *Consensus Repetitus Fidei Vere Lutheranae*,⁴² which, according to Johannes Kunze, "is undoubtedly in its essence the work of Calovius, in its first as well as in its final form."⁴³ An examination of the *Consensus Repetitus* will demonstrate why Calixt's opponents objected to it.

⁴¹Consider, for example, Tappert 311, Smalcald Articles 3.6.4: "Especially do we condemn and curse in God's name those who...", as well as the condemnation statements in AC V, VIII, IX, X, XII, XVI, XVII, and throughout the *Formula of Concord*.

⁴²*Consensus repetitus fidei vere Lutheranae, in illis doctrinae capitibus, quae Contra puram & invariata[m] Augustanam Confessionem, aliosque libros Symbolicos in Formula Concordiae comprehensos, scriptis publicis hodieque impugnant. D. Geogius Calixtus, Professor Helmstadiensis, ejusdemque complices, in Consilia Theologica Witebergensia. Das ist/ Wittenbergische Geistliche Rathschläge Deß theuren Mannes Gottes/ D. Martini Lutheri, seiner Collegen, und treuen Nachfolger/ von dem heiligen Reformations-Anfang/ biß auff jetzige Zeit/ in dem Namen der gesampten Theologischen Facultät außgestellte Urtheil/ Bedenken/ und öffentliche Schrifften/ In Vier Theilen/ von Religion- Lehr- und Glaubens-, Ministerial- und Kirchen-, Moral- und Policey-, Matrimonial- und Ehe-sachen/ und allerley darbey vorfallenden Casibus, Ordentlich zusammen gebracht/ Und zur Ehre Gottes/ Erhaltung der reinen Lehre/ und Nutz der Evangelischen Lutherischen Kirchen/ auff vielfältiges Begehren abgefertiget/ von der Theologischen Facultät daselbesten (Frankfurt am Mäyn: Balthasar Christoph Wust, 1664), 928-995.*

⁴³Johannes Kunze, "Calovius, Abraham," *Schaff-Herzog*, 2:352.

The *Consensus Repetitus*, printed as a diglot (Latin and German in parallel columns), is arranged according to the articles of the Augsburg Confession with two extra prefatory articles. Under each article there are usually three to five "points," each of which is composed of three parts. The first part, introduced with the words "profitemur & docemus" (we profess and teach), gives the positive statement of the doctrine being confessed. The second section, introduced with "rejecimus" ("we reject"), lays out the doctrine being condemned. The final section of each point, introduced with "sic habent verba" or "sic docet" ("thus teaches"), gives quotations from Calixt and others, showing that their doctrine is included under the condemnation of the "rejecimus" statement.

The first article of the preface, dealing with the relationship of the church and her confession, is labeled, "Totius negotii fundamentum" ("the foundation of the entire matter"). The "profitemur" of this article is noteworthy:

We confess and teach that the Christian evangelical, or Lutheran, church—in which in these last times from the great mercy of God, by the faithful work of that most excellent and pious hero, Dr. Martin Luther, the purity of the divine word has shone forth out of the horrendous shadows and darkness by which it was oppressed under the papacy—is the true church of God, in which the gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments are rightly administered.⁴⁴

⁴⁴*Consilia Theol. Witebergensia*, 928. "Profitemur & docemus, Eccl. Christ. Evang. seu Lutheranam, cui postremis hisce temporib. ex maxima Dei clementia, fidei opera, summa pietate praediti & prestantissimi herois, D. Martini Lutheri, et tenebris horrendis & plusquam Cimmericis, quibus sub Papatu oppressa fuerat, puritas verbi divini affulsit, veram esse Dei Ecclesiam, in qua Evangelium recte docetur, & recte administrantur Sacramenta."

Rejected, then, are all those who accuse the Lutheran church of having no fewer errors than the "Papistic and Calvinistic" churches.

Point two continues by stating that "we" do not condemn individuals or whole churches outside of the Holy Roman Empire that err due to simplicity without blaspheming against the truth of divine doctrine. But we *do* condemn "fanatical opinions," false teachers and blasphemers, such as the Papists and Calvinists. The idea that a teacher could defend Papist or Calvinist doctrine and retain the foundations of salvation (*fundamenta salutis*) is explicitly rejected. Calixt is quoted as saying that all those who believe in the creed, be they Lutheran, Roman Catholic, or Calvinist, and walk according to the Spirit, not the flesh, will be saved. Calixt is also quoted as saying that the *fundamenta salutis* in the Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Reformed churches are *integra* (whole and complete).⁴⁵ Calov rejects these views of Calixt.

Point three states that the ecumenical creeds do not contain all the fundamental articles necessary for a person to know for salvation.⁴⁶ Point four states that just as the ancient church created symbols to refute heretics, so also "in our times" it is necessary to have additional symbols. The Lutheran Confessions are such symbols, through which our churches condemn and are separated from the Papists and other heresies that arose thereafter (the Calvinists). Rejected is the view that the only heretics are those who expressly deny a part of the Apostles' Creed and that other points are merely side issues.⁴⁷

The second prefatory article of the *Consensus Repetitus* deals with Scripture and emphasizes the *sola Scriptura*

⁴⁵*Consilia Theol. Witebergensia*, 929.

⁴⁶*Consilia Theol. Witebergensia*, 929.

⁴⁷*Consilia Theol. Witebergensia*, 930-931.

principle. The Scriptures need no testimony of the fathers in order to be recognized as God's word. Verbal inspiration is upheld. He rejects the view that the unanimous testimony of the early church fathers is equal to the truth of Scripture.⁴⁸ Against Calixt's use of Vincent of Lerins' famous dictum, "*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus,*" the *Consensus Repetitus* states that the Scriptures are clear even apart from the five ancient patriarchal churches, and that Vincent was an anti-Augustinian, Pelagian monk, and thus of no authority. Finally, Scripture is the only theological principle. The *Consensus* rejects all views positing two sources of theology, as well as Calixt's belief that the fathers, though not a second principle, are a *secondary* principle. Finally, the view that the Scriptures are obscure is rejected.⁴⁹

Under every article of the Augsburg Confession, errors in the theology of Calixt and other syncretists are delineated and rejected. It is beyond the scope of this essay to examine all of these, but the article corresponding to articles VII, VIII, and XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession ("On the Church") deserves special attention. For the *Consensus Repetitus*, the church is principally the society of faith and the Holy Spirit in hearts, though it has external marks: the pure gospel and sacraments. Calvinists and Papists, however, are not the true church, nor are they members of the true church. Calixt's view, which saw the Lutheran, Reformed, Roman Catholic, and Greek churches as being four branches, families, or parties of the one church, is rejected. Also rejected is Calixt's view that what the four churches believe in common is true, but what they believe alone is false.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Consilia Theol. Witebergensia*, 933. "Rejicimus eos, qui docent, pro verbo Apostolico & scriptura explicata habendum esse, quod Doctores veteris Ecclesia in scriptis quae adhuc superant, uno ore docent & tanquam Apostolicum se accepisse tradunt, & praeter scripturam, quam implicitam Traditionem dicunt, dari scripturam explicatam & resignatam, quae sit Traditio Ecclesiastica."

⁴⁹ *Consilia Theol. Witebergensia*, 934-936.

⁵⁰ *Consilia Theol. Witebergensia*, 968-970.

Point two of this article states that the Lutheran confession is the catholic faith. "Catholic," then, cannot be defined as that on which the Lutherans, Calvinists, and Papists are agreed.⁵¹ Point three is comparatively long, a fact which may indicate its importance within the *Consensus Repetitus*. It states, in agreement with the text of the Preface to the Book of Concord, the Smalcald Articles, and the Treatise, that there can be no fellowship with the Papists. Calixt's statement that no dogma of Trent is harmful unless it militates against the Apostles' Creed is rejected.⁵²

As noted above, many other doctrines of Calixt and his allies are identified and rejected. A few examples will show what kinds of doctrine Calov rejected as heretical. Under the article corresponding to articles IX and XIII of the Augsburg Confession the sacraments in general are discussed. Sacraments are defined as "visible rites mandated by God with the added promise of grace."⁵³ What is striking about this definition is the lack of a physical, earthly element. The *Consensus* proceeds to set the number of Old Testament "sacraments" at two—circumcision and the paschal lamb—and the number of New Testament sacraments also at two—baptism and the Lord's Supper. Rejected is the statement that "it is not possible to understand from Scripture what a sacrament is, or what properly constitutes a sacrament, and hence how many truly and properly are sacraments."⁵⁴ Calixt's position was that a definite number of sacraments could not be proved from either the Bible or the early

⁵¹*Consilia Theol. Witebergensia*, 970.

⁵²*Consilia Theol. Witebergensia*, 970-971.

⁵³*Consilia Theol. Witebergensia*, 972.

⁵⁴*Consilia Theol. Witebergensia*, 972. "Rejicimus eos, qui docent, quid Sacramentum sit, vel quia proprie Sacramentum constituat, & proinde quot vere & proprie Sacramenta sint, ex Scriptura non posse intelligi."

church fathers, a view that can be found in the Lutheran Confessions.⁵⁵ Calov rejects this position.

In the article on the Lord's Supper, corresponding to articles X, XXII, and XIV in the Augsburg Confession, Calov denies that John 6 speaks of the sacrament of the altar.⁵⁶ The ubiquity of Christ's flesh outside of the Lord's Supper is professed.⁵⁷ Whereas Lutheran ministers function in the stead of Christ, Papist and Calvinist ministers do not, but are "antichrists."⁵⁸ Calov does not, however, discuss the question of whether or not the Papists and Calvinists have the true body and blood of Jesus in their Eucharist.

The overall tone of the *Consensus Repetitus* is one of confidence. Calov is absolutely certain that "the true church of Christ" is none other than the Lutheran church. This confidence may have been one of the reasons, however, that the *Consensus* never received legally confessional status. The *Consensus* was opposed not only by the Syncretists, but also by anti-syncretists such as Johannes Musäus and the theological faculty of Jena. Paul Tschachert notes some of the reasons the *Consensus* was opposed by anti-syncretists: Not only did it condemn some of the odd positions of Calixt and his school as un-Lutheran and heretical, but it also made Calov's theological opinions (*theolegoumena*) into churchly dogma, which would brand one who disagreed as a heretic. Among these theological opinions were: the view that Old Testament believers knew the doctrine of the Trinity; that infants brought to baptism have actual faith; and that Christ is present to all believers according to his human nature even outside of the sacrament.⁵⁹ Though these views may have been prevalent among Lutherans, the opponents of the *Consensus* did not see them as articles of faith divisive of church unity. Thus the *Consensus Repetitus*

⁵⁵Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XIII:2.

⁵⁶Consilia Theol. Witebergensia, 976-977.

⁵⁷Consilia Theol. Witebergensia, 979.

⁵⁸Consilia Theol. Witebergensia, 979.

⁵⁹RE³ 19:255.

proved to be unsuitable for the Lutheran church and so was never accepted as a new Lutheran confession. Nevertheless, to Calov belongs the distinction of being the leader of the fight against syncretism. Throughout his life, he never stopped fighting against syncretism, even when ordered to keep silence about the matter. Even if his solution was untenable, his courage may be admired.

If Calixt and Calov are examples of the extremes in the syncretistic controversy, then Johannes Musäus (1613-1681) is an example of a mediating position. Though accused by Calov of syncretism,⁶⁰ Musäus did not approve of the irenic overtures of Calixt, but, indeed, opposed Calixt and other syncretists.⁶¹

For Musäus, everything depends on how the *fundamentum fidei* (the foundation of faith) is understood. Arguing as had Nicolaus Hunnius, Musäus stated that the Calvinists do not agree with the Lutherans on which articles of faith are fundamental. The Lutherans hold all those articles as fundamental that Scripture says are necessary for salvation and those that are necessarily derived from the

⁶⁰RE³ 19:248. "So ist denn', klagt Calov, 'aus dem Conventu wegen der Jenensium, die Calixto favoriert, nichts geworden."

RE³ 19:260. In the late 1670s Calov began attacking Musäus publicly in sermons, disputations, and writings, accusing him of syncretism, since he opposed the *Consensus Repetitus*. Since Musäus seemed to have thwarted Calov's objections against the syncretists, "he must have been worse than they were."

⁶¹RE³ 19:250, 254, 260. The faculty of Jena agreed in 1662 with the Wittenberg and Leipzig faculties in stating that it was wrong for the Lutheran Church in Hessen to drop the public condemnation of the Reformed and Roman Catholics from the divine service. In 1664, Jena joined many other Lutheran faculties in protesting the syncretistic measures of the elector of Kurbrandenburg (Berlin). Likewise, in 1679, the faculty of Jena officially renounced syncretism, though Tschachert implies they may have been forced to do this.

former.⁶² Calixt, on the other hand, with his division of articles into *antecedentia, contituentia, et consequentia*, holds that derivative articles of faith (*consequentia*) are not fundamental. In so doing, he agrees with the Reformed.⁶³ If Calixt is correct in his distinction of the articles of faith, then all the other non-constitutive doctrines become matters of indifference. Musäus, however, defines as fundamental not only those articles of faith that are saving, but also those that are edifying. Musäus wrote:

But more rightly do our theologians accept the foundation of faith and the fundamental articles of faith more widely in the same way as declared, and state that for the true peace of the church and entering into fraternal concord, consensus is required in *all parts of Christian doctrine* that constitute the foundation of faith or have a necessary connection with [the foundation]. Or, to restate the matter, consensus is required in all fundamental articles of faith, whether they exist and are said *per se* positively and directly, or by reason of another, indirectly and negatively. Which is the same [as to say], consensus is required in the entire Christian doctrine, which is useful for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God be whole [*integer*] and ready for every good work.⁶⁴

⁶²Schmid, *Geschichte*, 409.

⁶³Schmid, *Geschichte*, 410.

⁶⁴Schmid, *Doctrinal Theology*, 410-411, quoting Musäus' *Questiones theol. de syncretismo et scriptura s.*, 36. "Verum rectius Nostrates theologi fundamentum fidei et articulos fidei fundamentales in latiori, eoque modo declarato sensu accipiunt, statuuntque, ad veram ecclesiae pacem et concordiam fraternam ineundam requiri consensum in omnibus doctrinae christianae partibus, quae fundamentum fidei constituunt, aut cum eo necessariam quandam connexionem habent, sive, quod eodem redit, requiri consensum in omnibus articulis fundamentalibus sive per se positive et directe sive ratione alterius indirecte et negative tales sint et dicantur, quod idem est, atque requiri consensum in tota doctrina christiana, quae utilis est

Like the theologians of Wittenberg and Leipzig, Musäus denied that there can be unity between the divided churches on the basis of the early church creeds. Unlike Calixt, he stated that there is a *dissensus fundamentalis* (fundamental dissent) and thus he rejected Calixt's aims for theological tolerance.⁶⁵ While there may be individuals within the Reformed and Roman Catholic churches who are believers in Christ, these churches as such are not united in Christ. As for individuals, we cannot make judgments on their hearts, but must judge according to their confession. Therefore we cannot act as if we are unified as long as they cling to their false confessions.⁶⁶ In Musäus' discussion of *Kirchenfriede* ("ecclesiastical peace") and the articles of faith, he is in line with Calov's doctrine and that of Nicolaus Hunnius.⁶⁷

In the doctrine of the church, however, Musäus, and the Jena school with him, differs with both Calixt on one hand and Calov on the other. The most readily available source for exploring Musäus' systematic theology is the *Compendium Theologiae Positivae* of Johann Wilhelm Baier. Baier, Musäus' son-in-law and disciple, was asked by Ernest the Pious of Saxony to compose a brief dogmatics text to replace Leonhard Hutter's antiquated *Compendium*. The book, which appeared first in 1686, is characterized by its dependence on Musäus' writings. It is, for the most part, a compilation of Musäus' writings, and, due to its conciseness

ad doctrinam, ad redargutionem, ad correctionem, ad institutionem, quae est in justitia, ut integer sit Dei homo ad omne opus bonum apparatus."

⁶⁵Schmid, *Doctrinal Theology*, 412.

⁶⁶Schmid, *Doctrinal Theology*, 412-413.

⁶⁷See Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae* (Berlin: Gust. Schlawitz, 1864), 28-39, Ch. 1, § 27-34 (Baier's *Compendium* is an epitome of Musäus' theology). Abraham Calov, *Systema Locorum Theologicorum* (Wittenberg, 1655), 1:774-791. Nicolaus Hunnius, *Diaskepsis Theologica*, trans. Dinda and Hohle (Malone, TX: Repristination, 1999), 4-32.

and clarity, Lutheran universities have used it since the seventeenth century.⁶⁸ In 1879 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod republished the work, together with additional quotations from Lutheran theologians compiled by C. F. W. Walther. It was the basic dogmatics text at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, before the publication of Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*.

This essay does not intend to discuss the place of Musäus' ecclesiology in the history of doctrine. Some aspects of his ecclesiology, however, are noteworthy in relation to the syncretistic controversies of the seventeenth century. Considering the church militant, Baier distinguishes between the church as it is considered properly and precisely, that is, true believers in Christ, and the church as it is considered improperly and *per synecdochen* (by way of synecdoche), that is, the whole group of true believers together with hypocrites and evil people.⁶⁹

The attributes of the church are those of the creed: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.⁷⁰ The church, considered properly, is without division (*una*). When it comes to the church's *external* unity however, there must be the same confession of faith and participation of the sacraments before there can be unity.⁷¹ Next, the church is catholic, not only by having orthodox doctrine, but also by being universal with respect to places, peoples and nations, persons, and time. "That is to say, that by virtue of its institution it is not bound to a certain place, people or nation, but is *diffused through all peoples* in the entire world, or at least is *being diffused*."⁷² This point is one that

⁶⁸Johannes Kunze, "Baier, Johann Wilhelm," *Schaff-Herzog*, 1:420.

⁶⁹Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §2.

⁷⁰Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §11.

⁷¹Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §13.

⁷²Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §15 & §15 (c). "Sive, quod vi institutionis non sit ad certum locum, populum aut gentem alligata; sed toto terrarum orbe *per omnes populos ac gentes diffusa*, vel certe *diffundenda*..."

contradicts both Calixt and Calov. Whereas for Calixt the church catholic was to be found at a certain time (the early church) and in certain nations (the chief patriarchal churches), and for the *Consensus Repetitus* the church catholic seems to be identical with the Lutheran church, for Baier, "catholicity" transcends time, place, persons, and nations.

This does not mean, however, that particular, concrete groups cannot be considered "church." Baier states that the church diffused throughout the world has many different groups who can (rightly) claim for themselves the name and definition of "church."

Namely, the faithful themselves are diffused throughout the world, nevertheless in order to be united here and there by certain bonds, they coalesce into certain *congregations* and constitute them: insofar as they use *one ordinary and complete ministry*, which is distinct from the ministries of other congregations.⁷³

These groups of believers, each united by one ministry, are particular churches. Baier goes on to state that Scripture's promise to the church that it will endure forever (e.g., Matthew 16:18) does not apply to any *particular* church, but only to the church viewed *absolutely*, that is, the church universal.⁷⁴ In these particular churches, true believers *everywhere* have fellowship with non-saints, both hidden *and*

⁷³Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §19. "Nempe fideles ipsi ita diffunduntur per orbem terrarum, ut tamen hic atque illic certis vinculis uniti, in *congregationes* quasdam coalescant, easque constituent: quatenus *uno ministerio ordinario* atque *integro*, sed ab aliarum congregationum ministeriis *distincto*, utuntur." Note that for Baier the boundaries of particular churches are not geographical (local congregation) as much as they are ministerial. Groups of congregations that use a ministry which is complete and distinct from the ministry of other congregations is an *ecclesia particularis*.

⁷⁴Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §20.

*manifest sinners. When this happens we use the term ecclesia per synecdochen.*⁷⁵

Since no particular church is free of non-saints, does that mean that all churches are equally pure or equally corrupt? Baier answers, "no." A church where the saints, pure doctrine, and pure practice hold sway (even though non-saints are mixed in) is "Christ's church simply and absolutely." On the other hand, when non-saints, false doctrine, and false practice hold sway in a church, this is an "corrupt church."⁷⁶ In this way Baier distinguishes between a true or pure church (*ecclesia vera seu pura*) and a false or impure church (*ecclesia falsa seu impura*), without implying that an *ecclesia vera* is completely perfect and without fault.⁷⁷ A "pure, true church" can thus be described as one that has everything which must be believed for salvation and done for holiness of life, in which spiritual sons of God are born, who are joined to Christ their head in one body through true faith.⁷⁸

Now, although many groups are rightly called "churches of Christ," nevertheless adding them all together does *not* constitute the one, catholic or universal church.⁷⁹ Unlike Calixt, Baier (and Musäus) do not see the catholicity of the church as something the church lacks, which can only be achieved by external unity. Next, whereas the *Consensus Repetitus* had said it did not condemn individuals or whole churches outside of the Holy Roman Empire that err due to simplicity,⁸⁰ Baier went further, stating that if the word of God is preached and baptism is kept whole (*integrum*), then

⁷⁵Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §21.

⁷⁶Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §22.

⁷⁷Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §23.

⁷⁸Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §24. For evidence of Walther's dependence on Baier, see Lawrence R. Rast Jr., "Catholicity and Missourian Orthodoxy," in *Lutheran Catholicity, The Pieper Lectures Volume 5*, John A. Maxfield, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Historical Institute and the Luther Academy, 2001): 58-82.

⁷⁹Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §26.

⁸⁰*Consilia Theol. Witebergensia*, 929.

spiritual sons of God can be born also in corrupt churches.⁸¹ Like Calixt, Baier (and Musäus) are willing to see individuals within other churches as being Christians. For Baier, however, this willingness does not lead to indifference concerning a church's doctrine and practice. For Baier, true particular churches can be distinguished from false ones⁸² by the marks of the pure preaching of the word and the pure administration of the sacraments.⁸³ As a warning, Baier notes that it is possible that one day there will be no true particular church. In fact, this has been divinely predicted (Rev. 12:14f.; 13:12f.; 17:2f.; Luke 18:8; 2 Thess. 2:11).⁸⁴ Finally, Baier declares that syncretism, the union of disagreeing parties, is opposed to the true unity of the church.⁸⁵

To summarize, whereas Calixt posited a *Glaubensgemeinschaft* ("fellowship of faith") between particular churches, Baier, following in the footsteps of Musäus, posited a *Glaubensgemeinschaft* among individual believers wherever they might be, but *not* with the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches. Whereas the *Consensus Repetitus* equated the Lutheran church with the true church of God without explanation of what those terms meant, Baier carefully defined the Lutheran church as a "particular church," which happens to be the only one currently giving expression to the *una sancta ecclesia* (the one holy church) by means of pure preaching and sacraments.⁸⁶

⁸¹Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §27.

⁸²Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §28.

⁸³Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §30.

⁸⁴Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §29.

⁸⁵Baier, part 3, chapter 13, §37.

⁸⁶Harry Mathias Albrecht, "Das ekklesiologische Ringen des Johannes Musäus," *Union-Konversion-Toleranz*, ed. Heinz Duchhardt et al. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2000), 50, 52.

The theological positions at play in the syncretistic controversies of the seventeenth century and the struggles of those times have much to teach contemporary Lutherans. Lutherans can learn much from Georg Calixt, Abraham Calov, and Johannes Musäus, both positively and negatively. Calixt was wrong on his understanding of the ancient creeds. The Apostles' Creed was never meant to be an exhaustive list of fundamental doctrines. Calixt was also mistaken when he considered the doctrinal issues of the Reformation to have only a secondary or non-fundamental importance. On the other hand, a one may also respect Calixt's assumptions about ecclesiastical union, namely that there must be unity of doctrine and practice before there can be external ecclesiastical union. This viewpoint seems to be lacking in modern ecumenical dialogue.

From Abraham Calov, one may conclude that the attempt to make certain *theologoumena* ecclesiastical dogma was imprudent, if not plainly wrong. Calov's aggressive vilification of his opponents serves as a negative example of theological discourse. On the other hand, Calov was right in spotting an error which, if unchecked, would have overturned the Reformation. Calov had the courage to lead the fight. Even if his love for the truth led him to excesses, he may be respected for the fact that he fought against falsehood.

From Johannes Musäus one may learn how to distinguish the controversial point from the non-essential, how to act as a churchman in both defending the truth and not placing a stumbling-block before others unnecessarily. Musäus' importance has continued beyond his own day in the fact that his doctrine, epitomized by Baier, was taught to a generation of LCMS pastors. From this fact, Musäus' position on syncretism and ecumenism can be seen as the classical position of the Missouri Synod.

An article on "The Syncretism of Calixt," appearing in 1877 in the pages of *Lehre und Wehre*, summarizes the history of the syncretistic controversy and gives readers a biblical

way of looking at syncretism and unionism: The church is called to preserve true doctrine and to fight against false doctrine (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:13; 1 Tim. 6:13-14; Prov. 1:6; Tit. 1:9; Phil. 1:27). The church is also called to avoid false prophets and to warn others about them (Matt. 7:15; Rom. 16:17; Jer. 23:31; 2 Thess. 3:24; Tit. 3:10; 2 John 10). Christ and the Apostles rebuked false doctrine (Matt. 16:6; 23:23f.; 23:2; 7:15-23; Gal. 1:8-9; 2:4; 5:4, 10, 12; 2 Peter 2:1). They also named names and rebuked false *teachers* (*nominal-elenchus*) (1 Tim. 1:10; 3 John 9-10; Rev. 2:15; Mt. 23:23f.). These are not isolated examples, but are examples to be followed by the church (Phil. 1:27). The Lutheran Confessions also condemn false doctrine. Unity is based on doctrine (1 Cor. 1:10). Love and peace cannot be used as a rationale to compromise doctrine (Matt. 10:34; Luke 12:51; 1 Cor. 13:6; Zech. 8:19; 1 Cor. 9:19-22).⁸⁷

Calixt's goal was ecclesiastical peace. Instead of hatred between Lutherans, Catholics, and Reformed, he wanted only love. Like Luther, however, Calov and Musäus however, saw the danger in love at the expense of doctrine. "We are surely prepared to observe peace and love with all men, provided that they leave the doctrine of faith perfect and sound for us. If we cannot obtain this, it is useless for them to demand love from us. A curse on a love that is observed at the expense of the doctrine of faith, to which everything must yield—love, an apostle, an angel from heaven, etc.!"⁸⁸ His conclusion?

⁸⁷ "Der Calixtinische Synkretismus," *Lehre und Wehre*, 23 (1877): 8-15, 55-57, 76-89, 116-119. The article focuses mainly on Calixt's theology and a refutation of the same. The article is anonymous, and was "submitted by request of the Cleveland pastoral conference."

⁸⁸ Martin Luther, "Lectures on Galatians 1535: Chapters 5-6," Tr. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 27 of *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 38.

Therefore doctrine and life should be distinguished as sharply as possible. Doctrine belongs to God, not to us; and we are called only as its ministers. Therefore we cannot give up or change even one dot of it. Life belongs to us; therefore when it comes to this, there is nothing that [they] can demand of us that we are not willing and obliged to undertake, condone, and tolerate, with the exception of doctrine and faith, about which we always say what Paul says: 'A little yeast, etc.' On this score we cannot yield even a hairbreadth.⁸⁹

⁸⁹Martin Luther, "Lectures on Galatians," 37.