

# *The Preface of The Book of Concord as a Reflection of Sixteenth-Century Confessional Development*

by IRENE DINGEL

AS IS THE CASE with every significant publication or any official document prepared for public use, *The Book of Concord* was provided with a preface. The princes and theologians who were responsible for its composition and printing crowned their achievement with an introductory message for readers and users. At first glance this is nothing unusual, and the casual reader, then and now, finds the text of this “Preface” a concise, fair, well-balanced introduction to the essential content of *The Book of Concord*. It reviews the background for the entire effort at restoring concord among the German Evangelical churches and sketches the most important points of emphasis in its contents.

Nonetheless, there are two striking factors in this preface that give it a special significance. First, it focuses not on the *Book of Concord* as a whole, but on the last document in its table of contents, the Formula of Concord. Second, a long list of signatures underwrites it. The list does not include the names of those who wrote the documents of the book, but the names of electors, princes, and estates of the Holy Roman Empire. The reader sees who claims responsibility for the book’s content. That consideration alone signals that the preface to *The Book of Concord* lies outside the parameters of normal expectation.

In this sense, the preface had assumed a critical function in the long process of constructing the Lutheran confession of the faith. In the final analysis it provided the decisive conclusion of the many-faceted efforts to attain confessional unity, reaching a provisional settlement in the Formula of Concord. It can be said that the preface was the final word in this entire development, if the controversies over the Concordian settlement in the subsequent years are given separate consideration.<sup>1</sup>

In 1578, a year after the composition of the Formula of Concord, and even before the composition of the preface, political leaders of the Concordian enterprise had endeavored to publish *The Book of Concord* as a new *Corpus doctrinae* in order to restore harmony among the strife-ridden Evangelical churches. In the 1530s the Wittenberg theologians had begun using the term *Corpus doctrinae*—body of doctrine—to denote the core teaching of the Christian faith, a synonym for the *analogia fidei* (rule of faith) as often used in the expression *Summarium et Corpus doctrinae*. They also used the term to designate the specific corpus of printed works that function as the epitome of their teaching, the standard for what is to be taught by adherents of the Augsburg Confession. This still somewhat informal list included not only the Augsburg Confession and its Apology but also in some instances Luther's catechisms, Melancthon's *Loci communes*, or any of a number of other works by Melancthon. Finally, after 1560, the phrase became the title of a volume which contained confessional statements recognized as the doctrinal standards of a principality or city. This third usage sprang from the collection of several of Melancthon's writings published shortly before his death, the *Corpus doctrinae Philippicum*, or *Corpus doctrinae Misnicum*, which became the official rule and norm for public teaching in several Evangelical territories in the course of the 1560s.<sup>2</sup>

Up to 1578 efforts to unite all the Evangelical estates and free cities of the empire in a common confessional position had not been successful, even though pastors and teachers of a number of churches had subscribed to the Formula of Concord in that year. So the attempts to neutralize objections to the Formula and *The Book of Concord* and to win further supporters for the volume continued. But Elector August of Saxony, along with Duke Ludwig of Württemberg and Duke Julius of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, the leading promoters of the Concordian settlement,<sup>3</sup> as well as Elector Johann Georg of Brandenburg, had decided not to delay any longer the publication of the settlement that had offered a solution to the doctrinal disputes of many years.<sup>4</sup> They contended that authorized dissemination would give *The Book of Concord* binding force.

The campaign to gain adherence to the Concordian settlement in 1577 and 1578 took a similar course in many Evangelical territories. The political authorities who were promoting and supporting the settlement established commissions of theologians. They traveled across the principality and addressed groups of ecclesiastical office-holders (professors, pastors, and teachers) who had been assembled specifically for this purpose. The theologians shared information about the reasons for composing the Formula of Concord and the way it had been created. Then the entire text of the Formula was read to the group, and the participants were asked to subscribe to it.<sup>5</sup> But not every Evangelical land followed this process. A substantial opposition to the Formula remained. For the final revision of the Formula of Concord at Bergen Cloister in 1577, an attempt was made to take account of all of the critiques of the previous draft, the Torgau Book, that had been submitted, but it had not been possible to satisfy all the criticism and win over every adversary.

The support that the Formula had received during the course of 1578 and early 1579 encouraged those leading the effort for concord to move ahead. On April 12, 1579, Jacob Andreae, the theologian from Württemberg, whose dedication to the task of creating concord had made him the architect of the Formula of Concord, informed the Saxon elector that for the publication the book lacked only the preface and the list of signatures already obtained.<sup>6</sup> Andreae wanted to publish the list of signatures, several thousand names, in as complete a form as possible. He assured the elector that it would not require all that many pages since about 650 names could be fit onto one printed page.<sup>7</sup> Andreae believed it advisable to print as many signatures as possible to make it clear that the Concordian settlement “was not the contumacious effort of a few theologians, as some had asserted, but was rather the unanimous Christian consensus of many thousand teachers of the church.”<sup>8</sup> Now the attempt was to be made to win over all the princes and cities who had kept their distance from the Formula by means of the preface that had been formulated precisely for this purpose.

Among them was the third of the three Evangelical electors of

the German Empire, Elector Ludwig VI of the Palatinate. Electors August of Saxony and Johann Georg of Brandenburg, along with their theologians, wanted by all means to gain him for the Concordian settlement. Obviously, to have all three of the leading Protestant princes behind *The Book of Concord* would lend it additional prestige. Therefore, the preface was supposed to build a bridge to the efforts toward unity for the Palatine elector as well as for all the others who were hesitating or criticizing the settlement. It should do so by addressing and finding conciliatory formulations for the controversial questions which remained under dispute. That meant that the decision to create a preface and to make it the point at which churches either accepted or rejected the settlement set up the decisive, final step in completing the efforts for concord.

A few months earlier, subscription to the Formula of Concord had already been regarded as that final point. Now the opportunity to attract others to *The Book of Concord* through this preface occasioned still another “last chance” for extending the settlement. Several extensive consultations on a draft of its text preceded this decision, which set forth key elements in the proper understanding or interpretation of the Formula of Concord. When all was said and done, the preface did become the final, concluding component of *The Book of Concord*. However, the signatures of all those who had subscribed from every corner of the empire did not appear appended to the preface, as Andreae had still wished. Instead the names of the princes and cities of the empire who had subscribed appeared in the order of their political importance, with the elector of the Palatinate—newly won for the cause—in first place.<sup>9</sup>

The very nature of the preface to *The Book of Concord* and Formula of Concord also determined its contents. It addresses those topics that had raised controversy in the development of the confessional position of Lutheranism and that were only partially settled through the Formula and *Book of Concord*. Some of those topics remained under discussion, as criticisms of the Formula were lodged in the months after its publication. The initial objections of Elector Ludwig had given prominence to these issues in the period before the ratification of the Formula of Concord. When he enunciated them, they had all the more weight because he was

very much inclined toward Lutheranism. The preface had to be designed to meet his concerns and win him for the Lutheran position of the Formula. This essay first summarizes the significance of this preface that was constructed after the fact from the standpoint of the intention of its authors and assesses the purpose for which it was written. Then it turns to the historical background and the origin of the preface before presenting the distinctive aspects of the content of the preface and the effect they were designed to have.

*The Change of Confession in the Palatinate and its Significance for the  
Concordian Settlement*

Ludwig had assumed power as elector of the Palatinate on October 26, 1576, after the death of his father, Elector Frederick III. In 1563 Frederick had led his principality from the Lutheran confession to Calvinism through the promulgation of the Heidelberg Catechism and a corresponding constitution for the church, through changes in ceremonies across his territories, and through appointments of new professors and pastors. Ludwig's accession meant another change in the confessional position of his lands,<sup>10</sup> for he set aside Calvinism by reworking the ecclesiastical constitution of his father's predecessor Ottheinrich.<sup>11</sup> This shift in confessional position was as significant for the efforts at seeking concord among the Lutherans as had been the collapse of so-called "Crypto-Calvinism" in electoral Saxony less than three years earlier. For the changes in the Palatinate gave the theologians of the Formula of Concord the hope that they might find in its influential elector an ally in their pursuit of a theological settlement, just as they had won a dedicated supporter in August of Saxony in 1574.

But Ludwig, to whom the previous draft of the Formula, the Torgau Book, had already been sent at the time of its composition in June 1576, kept his distance at first. That remained true in 1577 when the Bergen Book appeared as the revised version of the settlement now under consideration.<sup>12</sup> Ludwig was taking a mediating position, trying to find a middle way between the enthusiastic

supporters and the resolute opponents of the Concordian settlement as he was carefully proceeding with the Lutherizing of his lands.<sup>13</sup> He found himself caught between the two fronts. Thus began a bitter struggle between the two sides for the allegiance of the young elector. Both parties—Elector August of Saxony and the theologians of the Formula of Concord on the one side, Landgrave Wilhelm of Hesse-Kassel and Prince Joachim Ernst of Anhalt on the other—tried to win Ludwig for their respective positions. Ludwig's relationship with Wilhelm was close because the latter was his father-in-law.

In fact, his objections to the Concordian settlement corresponded at key points with the concerns of Hesse, Anhalt, and many other opponents of the Concordia. For instance, early on he had criticized the Book of Concord as a plan for a new *Corpus doctrinae*, that would brush aside important writings of Melanchthon that were not included in the new *Corpus* even though they had enjoyed unqualified respect as parts of established *corpora doctrinae* up to that time.<sup>14</sup> Because the envisioned collection would include only the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Apology from Melanchthon's pen, Ludwig believed it perfidiously played the theologies of Luther and Melanchthon against each other and above all cast suspicion on those other writings of Melanchthon. He was referring first of all to the *Loci communes theologici* and the Altered Augsburg Confession, that had been standard components of the *Corpus doctrinae Philippicum*. It had enjoyed high esteem as a standard of public teaching in a number of territories, among them Hesse and Anhalt.<sup>15</sup> Ludwig was not the only one who had raised this criticism. The theologians of Pomerania had taken offense at the Torgau Book for much the same reasons. They viewed it as an attempt to make a new *Corpus doctrinae* binding. They charged that it was intended to displace the confessions and standards for public teaching that had already been adopted and integrated into the ecclesiastical life of several principalities, each in its own way.<sup>16</sup>

To avoid this impression the problematic designation *Corpus doctrinae* had been eliminated completely in the revisions that led to the Bergen Book. This document (the Formula of Concord's Solid Declaration), which presents itself as a digest of the confessional

documents contained in *The Book of Concord*, substituted for the expression *Corpus doctrinae* the concept of a “binding summary, basis, rule, and guiding principle.”<sup>17</sup> This was, however, only a terminological modification and did not alter the fact that behind the Formula and *Book of Concord* stood the claim of its authors and supporters to offer exactly what was expected from a *Corpus doctrinae*: a guiding principle for public teaching and a generally accepted confession that expressed doctrinal consensus for a church.<sup>18</sup> While Pomerania remained outside the Concordian settlement, the objections of the Palatinate were at least partially met by an explanation issued in a letter from Andreae to Ludwig, in which he announced his intention to change the terminology and also emphasized the goal of treating the writings of Luther and Melancthon as expressions of the same teaching.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, he did not succeed in setting aside the reservations of the elector completely.<sup>20</sup> Because of this it was decided on October 14, 1578, at a meeting in Smalcald,<sup>21</sup> that brought together emissaries from the Palatinate with theologians and counselors from electoral Saxony, electoral Brandenburg, and Braunschweig, to compose a preface, which would be presented to the elector of the Palatinate for his review and signature before it was printed. This is the reason why the preface of the Formula of Concord expressly returned to certain topics. In this way the remaining objections of Ludwig VI were addressed anew and an official solution to the problems he had raised was provided.

Viewed from this historical perspective the preface was directed above all to the Palatine elector, in the (indeed justified) hope that it would meet his reservations. But it was certainly aimed at a general audience as well. For the questions it treats, including the explanation of *The Book of Concord* as a newly constructed *Corpus doctrinae*, was not only of interest to the Palatinate. It had general significance for the understanding and acceptance of the Concordia settlement. This fact justified presenting the preface to the public even though it was written to win the approval of a relatively small number of people. It fit well into the plans of its sponsors, who had been seeking further support even after they had begun arranging for printing the document that was to establish Lutheran

harmony. The theologians agreed that “the preface could be formed in such a way that no one would be frightened away but rather invited in a friendly manner to accept this settlement.”<sup>22</sup>

### *The Origin of the Preface*

The preface was seen to be the final possibility to disarm criticism of the Concordian settlement and to placate the opposition. Jacob Andreae was commissioned to compose such a preface. At the beginning of December 1578 he presented two different drafts to the elector of Saxony. One was written in the name of the elector and the estates, that is, those whose names would appear in print as the subscribers to the Formula of Concord; the other in the name of the theologians who had drafted it. Both versions were considered at a conference of Jüterbog, to which August of Saxony invited the six theologians who had participated in composing the Formula and his counselors Johann von Werbisdorf and Haubold von Einsiedel. On January 28, 1579, the two drafts were sent to Ludwig VI of the Palatinate in the name of the electors of Saxony and Brandenburg for his evaluation and reaction. Only after receiving his response was an attempt to win over Hesse and Anhalt for the Concordian settlement to be undertaken.

At first it was suggested that both proposals be put into print, appending the declaration of the theologians to the Formula of Concord as an epilogue. But this plan proved to be impractical. In fact, rather than having his concerns treated in a preface, the elector of the Palatinate would have preferred to be able to integrate these concerns, primarily the retention of Melancthon's authority, into the text of the Formula of Concord itself. He continued to demand alterations in the text of the Formula, but since countless principalities and cities had already approved the text as it stood, so radical an alteration could not be undertaken. The supporters of the settlement were not prepared to go that far. Finally, Elector Ludwig declared that he agreed, that he would view the preface as meeting his concerns, but under the condition that some changes would be made. The “Report” of the theologians, which expressly ad-

dressed the most important points of controversy apart from the special concerns of the Palatinate, should be completely set aside.<sup>23</sup>

The theologians' "Report" had formulated seven points. The first explained in detail why the authors of the Formula had omitted Melancthon's writings and even his name. The second referred to the authority of Luther's writings; by affirming their position as a secondary norm subsidiary to the Holy Scripture, it met opponents' reservations. In the third point the doctrine of original sin taught by Matthias Flacius was once again repudiated. The next point discussed the role of the free will and denied its *capacitas* or *aptitudo passiva* in the period leading up to conversion (whereas the second article of the Formula had held to this expression in a mediating manner, much as Melancthon had used it). The fifth point made clear, with reference to article five "on law and gospel," that Andreae alleged that Melancthon's understanding of the term "Gospel," although not unbiblical, nonetheless pointed in a false direction that insufficiently clarified the distinction between the proclamation of repentance and the proclamation of grace.

While the critics of the Concordian settlement and adherents of a theology shaped more by Melancthon had to regard this as an affront, Andreae took a more mediating position in his sixth point, the treatment of the article on the Lord's Supper. Concurring with the wishes of the Palatine elector, it specifically maintained that only the Words of Institution can serve as the basis for understanding the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine. Christological argumentation was to serve only as a means of repudiating the opinions of opponents and thus it should be introduced only as a supplementary line of reasoning. This had been true already in Luther's dispute with Zwingli over the Lord's Supper, during which Luther had argued on the basis of the doctrine of Christ's two natures that the human nature of Christ can be omnipresent. Andreae had attracted much animosity by holding fast to the interpretation of the communication of attributes held by his older colleague in Württemberg, Johann Brenz. Their view was labeled "ubiquitarianism" by their opponents. Andreae's seventh point in the "Report" made it clear that the Formula had rejected this

position. He recapitulated the fundamental christological principles in some detail since the Palatine elector wanted to avoid an abstract way of speaking about the natures of Christ and their characteristics, that is, a way of speaking of the natures as though they could be discussed independent of their concrete connection to the person of the redeemer. The very comprehensiveness with which the last two points were discussed demonstrated how controversial they had been before the composition of the Formula and how controversial they remained after its publication.

This was also true of the use of formal rejections of false teaching and of the phrase “we condemn” first and foremost. The elector of the Palatinate had strongly urged that the phrase be avoided. Andreae answered that he could demonstrate from Holy Scripture that condemning false teaching in this manner was a proper way of practicing theology.<sup>24</sup>

In general, it was clear that the theologians’ preface had not been designed for mediation but rather to legitimize and defend the theology of the Formula. Without any doubt this would have been a source of further controversy if it had been published since in it Andreae did not seem to signal the slightest readiness to yield to the elector of the Palatinate in even a single point under debate.<sup>25</sup> He recommended to Elector August that those who supported the Concordian settlement should do without the theologians’ “Report” completely rather than defer to the Palatine objections. The decision was reached to begin *The Book of Concord* with a preface drafted in the name of the secular estates, the princely and municipal governments, in the form of a *historica narratio*. Elector August commissioned his counselor Hartmann Pistorius with the task of composing it. In fact, he took Andreae’s wording in the draft presented in Jüterbog and followed it to a very great extent.

### *The Integrative Dynamic of the Preface*

The preface that was finally printed in *The Book of Concord* arose out of Pistorius’ reworking of the text and several other smaller revisions. Chemnitz and Andreae met to revise the text one last

time at Bergen Cloister on February 25, 1580.<sup>26</sup> After many additional modifications they had finally been able to attain the approval of the elector of the Palatinate.<sup>27</sup> That still did not mean that he was prepared to subscribe to the Formula of Concord, but it decisively paved the way for obtaining his signature. At this point, the second phase of the campaign in its behalf began with the dispatch of the preface to every principality that had not yet pledged support to the Concordian settlement, in order to win them over with the help of its text.<sup>28</sup> When *The Book of Concord* finally appeared in print on the fiftieth anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession, on June 25, 1580, it bore the signature of Ludwig VI. The preface had contributed decisively to the conclusion of the Concordian settlement.

The preface offers first of all its “historical narration” in the form of a history of the Reformation reduced to selected key events, climaxing with the Formula of Concord and *The Book of Concord*. The Reformation is examined from the point of view of the public confession of the faith. Therefore, the account does not begin like other historical retrospectives of the period, with the rediscovery of the gospel by Martin Luther, but instead it places the Augsburg Confession at the beginning and central point of the development: “In these last days of this transitory world the Almighty God . . . has allowed the light of his holy gospel and his Word that alone grants salvation to appear and shine forth purely, unalloyed and unadulterated out of the superstitious, papist darkness . . . .” As a result of this “a short confession was assembled out of the divine, apostolic, and prophetic Scripture. In 1530 at the Diet of Augsburg it was presented . . . to . . . Emperor . . . Charles V . . . and disseminated . . . in the whole wide world.”<sup>29</sup> This Augsburg Confession, the preface emphasized, is an expression of pure teaching as contained in Holy Scripture and summarized in the three creeds of the ancient church. The Confession had been professed by countless “churches and schools” as the “Symbol of their faith” for this time.<sup>30</sup> In this way the Augsburg Confession was placed in a continuum of confessions based upon Holy Scripture, and at the same time it was emphasized that the Confession was responsible for the creation of a consensus that challenged the dominant false teaching

of the time. This ideal situation, the preface's delineation continued, was destroyed soon after the death of Martin Luther.

Without reviewing the controversies within the Evangelical churches that broke out after the defeat of the Protestant princes in the Smalcald War (1546–1547) and the Augsburg and so-called Leipzig Interims of 1548 that followed in the wake of the war, the preface made the “false teachers” and “misleading doctrines”<sup>31</sup> responsible for the destruction of the consensus that once existed. This situation compelled the Evangelical estates from that point on to strive for a return to the original harmony in the truth of the gospel as it had once been enjoyed. The preface mentioned two dates as decisive on the way back to that harmony: the diet of princes in Frankfurt in 1558 and that in Naumburg in 1561. Both gatherings constituted important stages in the development of the Lutheran confession of the faith in so far as they mark attempts at the initiative of the princes to unite the Protestant estates, fractured as they were into different theological schools of thought. In both instances a renewed appeal to the Augsburg Confession had been issued. But because Melancthon, at the behest of his prince, Elector Johann Friedrich the Elder of Saxony, had updated the text of the Augsburg Confession in order to make it more useable in negotiations with the Roman Catholics, there was uncertainty over which text was the authoritative text. Changes of expression regarding the Lord's Supper complicated the matter because the Calvinist Elector Frederick appealed to the altered article ten to defend his own legality. Because the toleration guaranteed by the Religious Peace of Augsburg of 1555 extended only to those pledged to the Augsburg Confession, but not to deviating confessional positions, such as Calvinism and Zwinglianism, such a policy had been most necessary for the Palatine government. Which version of the Augsburg Confession actually served as the basis for the guarantees of the Religious Peace was never clearly defined and became a burning issue in the wake of the Naumburg diet of Evangelical princes in 1561.

Andreae's preface first addressed the Frankfurt Recess of 1558, however. Melancthon himself had laid the groundwork for the text of this document. It had established a formula for unity on

the basis of a minimal theological consensus. He was able to do that by referring to the Augsburg Confession and its Apology explicitly as a "summary and *Corpus doctrinae*," for they were viewed as a compendium of the statements of Holy Scripture and the content of the three ancient creeds set down as a rule of faith. This made the Frankfurt Recess a part of the Protestant development of the public confession of the faith. What the preface of the Formula did not mention, is the fact that this consensus document was not able to attain the comprehensive unity of the Evangelical churches for which it strove, neither in the short term nor in the long term.<sup>32</sup> That was due, first of all, to the fact that August's cousins, the Gnesio-Lutheran Saxon dukes of the Ernestine line, went their own way and formulated their own *Book of Confutation* as a counter-confession against the Recess. Second, in the long run it was of considerable importance that in his draft Melanchthon had treated, alongside the controversial questions of justification, good works, and adiaphora, the problems connected with the Lord's Supper<sup>33</sup> and that he reflected and employed the position of the Altered Augsburg Confession, not the Unaltered Augsburg Confession presented at the diet in Augsburg in 1530.

The opponents of the Concordian settlement had precisely this point in mind when they appealed to the Frankfurt Recess against a strict Lutheran interpretation of the Lord's Supper in the Formula of Concord, in order to denigrate the Concordian settlement as a digression from the proper path of confessional development.<sup>34</sup> This, as well as Melanchthon's position on good works (in the Frankfurt Recess he had maintained that they were necessary as the new obedience that flows from justification) had caused the elector of the Palatinate to insist that the description of the Frankfurt Recess as a "Christian Recess" be retained in the preface to the Formula. However, Duke Julius of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel was just as vehemently opposed to the use of the adjective in describing the Recess, and he wished to have it stricken.<sup>35</sup> When it later came to light that two different versions of this passage in the preface were being circulated and subscribed, Andreae admitted this but declared that the failure to delete the adjective was due to scribal oversight. In whatever way the Frankfurt Recess was eval-

uated in the final analysis, the preface of the Formula of Concord covered the contradictory attitudes toward it with a mantle of silence and tried to integrate this event as a positive step in the development that led to the Formula of Concord.

On the other hand, the Naumburg Diet was treated in much greater detail as a further step in the history of the Lutheran confession of the faith. This treatment indicates with striking clarity how the preface worked at integrating still another controversial event, the Naumburg Recess, into its story of unanimous consensus around the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and thus into the development of the Formula of Concord. This meeting of princes in January and February 1561 was arranged by Dukes Christoph of Württemberg and Johann Friedrich of Saxony, who were able to win Elector Frederick III of the Palatinate as well as Elector August of Saxony, Landgrave Philip of Hesse, and Count Palatine Wolfgang of Zweibrücken for their endeavor. They sought the restoration of unity in the fractured Evangelical churches. This unity had become ever more important in view of papal plans to resume the Council of Trent. At Naumburg Christoph and Johann Friedrich sought a new subscription of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 to serve this cause; the preface of the Formula gave this fact the emphasis its authors thought it deserved. It reads, "with divine assistance" the princes pledged "to remain and persist unwavering in the truth once recognized and confessed at Augsburg in the year 1530," and they had made it clear to the emperor and the estates of the empire, that they wish in no way "to accept, defend, or spread some different or new teaching."<sup>36</sup> In fact, however, when the diet's report to the emperor had been prepared, Elector Frederick III of the Palatinate, who was already at that time sympathetic to Calvinism, had prevailed against the protest of the Ernestine Saxon duke, Johann Friedrich, in having the Altered Augsburg Confession recognized as a legitimate interpretation of the original text. Melancthon's revision of its article on the Lord's Supper along the lines of the Wittenberg Concord (the 1536 accord he had worked out with Martin Bucer) provided Elector Frederick the leeway he needed to maintain his own legal status and his Calvinist faith.

The “historical narration” glossed over these components of the story, to which those opponents of the Concordian settlement inclined toward Calvinism frequently appealed. They had continued to use the decision at Naumburg to reinforce their claim that the Altered Confession was legitimate. What mattered in the preface of the Formula was the demonstration of steadfast faithfulness in the confession of the never-changing truth of the faith. It was vital to maintain the faithful adherence to this Confession against an understanding of confessional development which was open to the possibility of making new formulations that fit in new situations. For this approach could then accept divergent formulations as an authentic interpretation of the original position. In this way the preface was also directly confronting the Roman Catholic criticism that there were so many different versions of the Augsburg Confession that the Evangelical theologians themselves did not know any more “which is the genuine Augsburg Confession that had been presented back then.”<sup>37</sup>

The preface intends to make it clear beyond any doubt that the history of this Confession had pursued one single path. Thus, it had to interpret the Naumburg Recess so that it did not diverge from this path but confirmed the primary claim of the Unaltered Confession. It did so by viewing it as the authoritative interpretation of the altered text. Indeed, in view of the controversies within the Evangelical churches that could not be simply ignored, it was regarded as necessary to set forth the faith and public teaching of the church in clearer formulations and to differentiate it from false teaching. The composition of the Formula of Concord had to take this necessity into account, and so the process by which it had come into being was sketched in broad strokes, with a focus on its princely supporters. Against this background the Formula was presented as an “unalloyed explanation of the truth,”<sup>38</sup> and was, the preface specified, being publicly accepted by the estates of the Augsburg Confession, as they subscribed to it, as the proper, Christian interpretation of that Confession.<sup>39</sup> That was written to make it unmistakably clear that the Formula of Concord was not setting forth some kind of new confession alongside those which already existed, but actually only repeated the content of the an-

cient creeds and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, which was simply a summary of Holy Scripture. The preface impressed upon its readers that the Frankfurt Recess and the Naumburg Diet had not intended to deviate from these basic tenets of the confession. The Formula thus claimed to continue, uninterrupted, the history of confessing the faith in the tradition of the standards it was repeating (Holy Scripture, the ancient creeds, and the Augsburg Confession) while it simply eliminated those developments from consideration which, especially through Melancthon's progressive modifications of the Augsburg Confession, had led to variation in Evangelical teaching. Indeed, the preface tried to reverse this course of events.

This had to provoke all those who continued to rely on the Altered Augsburg Confession as a confession and standard for teaching. It certainly affected the domains where Frederick III had introduced Calvinism and Ludwig was now gently trying to restore the Lutheran confession. Frederick had used the Altered Augsburg Confession again and again to maintain his claim on legality for his Calvinistic reforms. The Formula now claimed to bring the latitude of interpretation he had employed to an end since, as the interpretation of the Augsburg Confession officially authorized by the Protestant estates, it specified that the Unaltered Augsburg Confession was the only authentic text of the Confession. Against this background it is understandable why Ludwig VI vehemently advocated striking or reformulating all those passages which spoke of the "first and unaltered" Augsburg Confession in contrast to the "altered" Confession. He could not afford to alienate the many in his lands who in good faith had upheld and defended the Altered Confession under the direction of his father.

The preface took this request of the elector seriously. In accordance with his desire, the Confession was referred to as that "presented in 1530," or "presented at that time," or, preferably, reference was made to the "first" or "second" edition,<sup>40</sup> emphasizing at the same time the single line of development in the history of the confession of the faith. This was, however, not the real or most important reason for the improvements in the preface. To a much greater extent, it was vital for the Palatine elector, in view

of the history of his own territory, not to exclude adherents of the Altered Augsburg Confession as theologians who had strayed from the truth or taught falsely. Against this background it had to satisfy him, and indeed other princes, that the preface more or less reversed the roles of the Unaltered and Altered Augsburg Confession. No longer was the modified version regarded as the explanation, correction, or interpretation of the original text, but the Unaltered Augsburg Confession was deemed the standard for interpreting the altered version and for evaluating and approving other theological publications. It was to be used to rule out contrary positions but also to integrate a spectrum of evangelical points of view, as the preface stated expressly, “. . . we never understood nor accepted the second edition as conflicting with the first Augsburg Confession as it was presented. Nor have we desired the other very profitable writings of Master Philip Melancthon, as well as of [John] Brenz, Urbanus Rhegius, [John Bugenhagen] of Pomerania, and others to be rejected or condemned, in so far as they are in agreement with the norm incorporated in the [Formula of] Concord.”<sup>41</sup>

With these comments on the history of the confession of the faith and on the Augsburg Confession the *historica narratio* of the preface actually came to a close. That several other topics received careful attention beyond this was due to reflections on the situation out of which the Formula arose, as it has been presented above. The preface drew upon the topics of the Lord's Supper and Christology as treated in the “Report” of the theologians, which had been discarded. In fact, these issues were treated only briefly, but in such a way that went to the heart of the current status of the discussion. Those questions were so explosive that the opponents of the Concordian settlement and its supporters had divided sharply over them even before the publication of *The Book of Concord*, and the divisions remained long thereafter.

Also in regard to these topics the preface pursued the goal of integrating as many signators as possible into the settlement and thus to place the statements of articles seven and eight of the Formula in the proper light, or even to temper them. For this purpose it was emphasized that the Words of Institution were the only basis for the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. With a view toward the

controverted Christological argumentation of the Formula the preface accentuated its agreement with the second article of the Creed. This preface confirmed in much clearer fashion than had the "Report" of the theologians that the attributes of the natures of Christ could not be defined apart from the personal or hypostatic union of Christ's two natures, that is, not "in the abstract" but only "in the concrete," to use the terminology of the debates of the 1550s-1570s.<sup>42</sup> In this regard the preface not only demonstrated a readiness for compromise to the elector of the Palatinate, but also tried one more time (but in vain) to deal with the concerns of the prince of Anhalt and the landgrave of Hesse. Both of them held fast to a Christology shaped by Melancthon, and thus they rejected the Christological statements on the communication of attributes in article eight of the Formula, which were based on Chemnitz's Christology.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, a readiness for compromise and the desire to integrate as many as possible into the settlement determined the final concluding explanation of the rejections of false teaching in the Formula. Here again the preface presents its arguments in clearer fashion than did the "Report" of the theologians, which did no more than refer to the examples in Holy Scripture in regard to this issue. The preface composed in the name of the princes, on the other hand, pointed out that the "condemnations" functioned as warnings and were in no way to be understood as referring to specific persons or churches but only to deceptive teachings and their refractory defenders. They were not intended to condemn those who had been deceived but to give warning against those who wanted to lead the church astray and against the distortions in their teaching. In this way the preface intended expressly to rebuff the criticism that because its forthrightly Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper and Christology excluded Calvinism, the Formula would contribute to the persecution of Calvinists in certain countries where Protestantism was already under severe oppression.

By focusing on particularly these specific circumstances, the preface called attention once again to the fact that the Concordian settlement had been planned and executed first of all among and for the sake of adherents of the Augsburg Confession. With that

the preface actually returned once more to the historical narrative with which it had begun, its history of the Reformation as the history of the confession of the faith. No new Confession had been produced with the Formula of Concord, but rather an explanation of the articles under dispute among the Evangelical churches, according to the standard of Holy Scripture, the ancient creeds, and the Augsburg Confession as presented to the emperor in 1530. They were to be regarded as the standard and heart of the *Corpus doctrinae* into which the Formula of Concord itself was integrated.

### *Concluding Theses*

The preface of the Formula of Concord was of great significance for the Concordian settlement both theologically and politically. It aimed first of all at winning the support of Elector Ludwig VI of the Palatinate for the settlement, as the third of the secular electors of the German Empire, alongside Saxony and Brandenburg. The preface addressed his concerns and tried to meet them. In fact, Ludwig did subscribe to the Formula of Concord, but his territory remained Lutheran only to his death in 1583 when his Calvinist brother Johann Kasimir succeeded him.

With the composition and distribution of the preface a second phase of the attempt to enlist supporters for the Concordian settlement began. It turned to those whose criticism of the Formula of Concord had not been able to be satisfactorily addressed. In doing so it became a commentary on the Formula of Concord, its first theological interpretation. It was designed to legitimate its composition and to make its most controversial assertions milder or at least clearer, particularly in the questions of the Lord's Supper and Christology. It did not succeed in every regard. A significant opposition remained, within its ranks the principality of Anhalt and the landgravate of Hesse, which both developed affinities for Calvinism.

In terms of theology the preface attempted to rehearse a single line of confessional development, which concluded with the Formula of Concord and *The Book of Concord* as a *Corpus doctrinae*.

Thus, it was appropriate that the preface of the Formula of Concord was also placed at the beginning of the entire *Book of Concord*. For the commitment to the Formula of Concord that was attained through subscription to the document also signified acceptance of the entire *Book of Concord* as a *Corpus doctrinae*. The sketch of the history of confessing the faith in the preface was the attempt of the authors of the Formula to define the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as the foundation and inception of a development which embraced Melancthon and aimed at the most comprehensive integration of Evangelical theological pluralism possible. The unity in confession of the Formula of Concord as the interpretation of the original Augsburg Confession was placed in contrast to theological and confessional pluralism.

#### NOTES

1. On these controversies, see Irene Dingel, *Concordia controversa, Die öffentlichen Diskussionen um das lutherische Konkordienwerk am Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996). [Hereafter cited as Dingel, *Concordia controversa*.]

2. See Irene Dingel, "Melancthon und die Normierung des Bekenntnisses," in *Der Theologe Melancthon*, ed. Günther Frank (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000), 195–211. [Hereafter cited as Dingel, "Normierung."]

3. Elector August assumed this role after the so-called "crypto-calvinist" affair of 1574; see Ernst Koch, "Konkordienformel" in *Theologische Realencyklopädie* 19 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990): 478–480, and Irene Dingel, "Die Torgauer Artikel (1574) als Vermittlungsversuch zwischen der Theologie Luthers und der Melancthons," in *Praxis Pietatis, Beiträge zu Theologie und Frömmigkeit in der Frühen Neuzeit, Wolfgang Sommer zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans-Jörg Nieden and Marcel Nieden (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1999), 119–134. Until 1578 Duke Julius of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel had stood at his side. At that time, because his fourteen-year-old son Heinrich Julius had received Roman Catholic consecration as administrator of the Foundation of Halberstadt (on December 6, 1578) and Julius' two younger sons had received the tonsure to enable them to take over administration of ecclesiastical territories, Julius and the Braunschweig pastor and co-author of the Formula of Concord, Martin Chemnitz, were alienated. Julius distanced himself from that point on from the Concordist effort; see Inge Mager, *Die Konkordienformel im Fürstentum Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, Entstehungsbeitrag—Rezeption—Geltung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 325–370.

4. A committee of Württemberg theologians had addressed this question in a meeting in Bebenhausen, September 23, 1578, and recommended this policy. Its members included Jacob Andreae, Jacob Heerbrand, Theodor Schnepff, Johannes Brenz, Lukas Oslander, Wilhelm Holder, Eberhard Bidembach, and Johannes Mager. The committee's

memorandum is treated, with excerpts, in Theodor Pressel, "Churfürst Ludwig von der Pfalz und die Konkordienformel," *Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie* N.F. 37 (1867): 287–293 (the entire article is found on pp. 3–142, 268–318, 444–470, 473–605). [hereafter cited as Pressel, *ZHTh*.]

5. The commission created by the Saxon elector consisted of Jacob Andreae, Nikolaus Selnecker and Polycarp Leyser. For details on its work, see Pressel, *ZHTh*, 38–39, and in other lands, Werner-Ulrich Deetjen, "Concordia Concors—Concordia Discors, Zum Ringen um das Konkordienwerk im Süden und mittleren Westen Deutschlands," *Bekenntnis und Einheit der Kirche. Studien zum Konkordienbuch*, ed. Martin Brecht and Reinhard Schwarz (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1980), 329–334.

6. Pressel, *ZHTh*, 590–591.

7. *Ibid.*, 591.

8. A letter of Jacob Andreae to Elector August, April 12, 1579, cited by Pressel, *ZHTh*, 591.

9. The names of pastors and teachers from some, though not all, of the lands and cities that accepted *The Book of Concord*, were published in some early editions of the book, e.g. the *Concordia* of the Dresden printers Matthes Sto[e]ckel and Gimel Bergen, of 1580.

10. On the situation in the Palatinate at the time of Ludwig's accession, see Dingel, *Concordia controversa*, 100–110.

11. Ottheinrich had introduced the Reformation to his electorate with this constitution in 1556; see Emil Sehling, ed., *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts. Kurpfalz. Bd. 14* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1969): (23–25), 113–220.

12. The Torgau Book, revised in May 1577 at Bergen Abbey in response to reactions solicited from all Evangelical ministeria, had been submitted to Ludwig on July 11, 1576.

13. The older literature interpreted his actions at this time as indecisive wavering. His return to the ecclesiastical constitution of Ottheinrich (that was not rigidly Lutheran) suggests rather that he was pursuing a cautious and careful process of attaining his goals. It must also be noted that he did not reintroduce the exorcism in baptism, a mark of commitment to the Lutheran confession at the time. On his position, see Volker Press, *Calvinismus und Territorialstaat. Regierung und Zentralbehörden der Kurpfalz 1559–1619* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1970), 267–298, and Dingel, *Concordia controversa*, 104.

14. The criticism with which Ludwig reacted to the Torgau Book when it was submitted to him in 1576 is clear from Andreae's answer to this criticism; see the excerpt in Pressel, *ZHTh*, 10–11. Cf. the treatment of the "Binding Summary, Basis, Rule, and Guiding Principle" in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* 11th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 833,1–838,14 [hereafter cited as BSLK]; *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 526–529 [hereafter cited as BC]; *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 503–506. [hereafter cited as BC-T].

15. The *Corpus doctrinae Philippicum* had been officially introduced as a standard of public teaching in electoral Saxony in 1566. There it became suspect as the so-called "crypto-Calvinist" movement gained ground. Pomerania had made it a binding standard of teaching already in 1561. Anhalt, Hesse, Nuremberg, principalities in Silesia, Schleswig-Holstein, and Denmark used the *Corpus doctrinae Philippicum* in some official

or semi-official way to guide and guard public teaching. On its composition, see Dingel, "Normierung," 202–206.

16. See the memorandum composed under the leadership of Greifswald theologian Jacob Runge, in Jacob Heinrich Balthasar, *Andere Sammlung einiger zur Pommerschen Kirchenhistorie gehöriger Schriften, Nr. II* (Greifswald: Andreas Buß, 1725), 11–15; the entire critique is found 9–83. Cf. also the Pomeranian critique of the preface, *ibid.*, 202–221.

17. BSLK, 767,8–9 and 833,1–2; BC, 486 and 526; BC-T, 464 and 503. This formulation makes clear what the term *Corpus doctrinae* signified: it not only designated a collection of writings but also a unitary confession that constituted a general standard for public teaching, as the Formula of Concord, that was to be understood as a *corpus doctrinae*. Regarding this terminological problem, see Dingel, "Normierung," esp. 200–202.

18. Dingel, *Concordia controversa*, 15–20.

19. See Andreae's letter to Elector Ludwig, December 6, 1576, excerpts in Pressel, *ZHTh*, 10–17. Here Andreae stated, "In regard to the new *Corpus doctrinae*, as it has been noted from other places, this expression can very well and easily be omitted, and the books to which we all pledge ourselves with one mind as the correct explanation of our position can be named and brought together without this title. These books include the two writings of Philip, the Confession and the Apology, and three from Luther, the Smalcald Articles and his two catechisms. That means that there is no offensive separation of Luther's and Philip's books. They will be placed on the same level as long as they clearly agree with each other," p. 11. The background of this statement clearly includes the experience that the "sacramentarian" ideas had been able to gain currency without being noticed in electoral Saxony under the *Corpus doctrinae Philippicum*; see p. 13.

20. Nonetheless, Ludwig VI had held out the prospect of his joining the Concordist effort at the meeting at Smalcald in mid October 1578. On this meeting, see Pressel, *ZHTh*, 285–302. Ludwig's intentions can be seen in his instruction for the counselors and theologians who represented his government at the meeting in Smalcald, printed in Pressel, *ZHTh*, 293.

21. From the electoral Palatine government the counselors Niklas von Schmidberg and Julius Mycillus as well as the theologians Martin Schalling, M. Zeidler, and Paul Scheckius were present. Jacob Andreae, Nikolaus Selnecker, Andreas Musculus, Christoph Körner, Martin Chemnitz, Jakob Gottfried, and Heinrich Bruckmeyer represented the Concordist team. Although uninvited, Hessian participants (Antonius von Wersabe and a Dr. Hundt) were also present. See Pressel, *ZHTh*, 293–294.

22. From the memorandum of the committee that met in Bebenhausen (n. 4); the text in Pressel, *ZHTh*, 290.

23. See Pressel, *ZHTh*, 452–453.

24. See the theologians' preface, "Bericht der Theologen auf etliche fürgewendte Bedenken, auch des Gegentheils durch öffentlichen Druck und sonst wider das Buch der Konkordien vor Publicirung desselben ausgesprengte Schriften," Pressel, "Zwei Actenstücke zur Genesis der Concordienformel aus den Originalien des Dresdener K. Archivs," *Jahrbücher für Deutsche Theologie* 11 (1866): 711–742. On the objections of the Palatinate, as they were presented at the meeting in Smalcald, see Pressel, *ZHTh*, 294.

25. Pressel, *ZHTh*, 448–453.

26. *Ibid.*, 544.

27. The text is printed in Pressel, *ZHTh*, 304–318; he indicates the changes clearly. Cf. BSLK, 739–762; BC, 5–15; BC-T, 3–15. The alterations can be determined from the textual apparatus.

28. The individual copies of the Preface with the accompanying documentation are found in the Dresden Hauptstaatsarchiv, Geheimrat (Geheimes Archiv) Loc. 10302–10309. The princes who dispatched the preface and undertook to seek the signatures of other governments were Elector August of Saxony, Duke Ludwig of Württemberg, Duke Julius of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, Margrave Georg Friedrich of Brandenburg-Ansbach, Duke Wolfgang of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, Count Palatine Philip of Palatinate-Neuburg, and Duke Carl of Baden.

29. BSLK 740,5–741,10; BC, 5, §2; BC-T, 3.

30. BSLK 741,11–742,4; BC, 5, §3; BC-T, 3.

31. BSLK, 743,31 and 45; BC, 6, §5 and 6; BC-T, 4.

32. The text of this “Abschied der evangelischen Kurfürsten und Fürsten in Religionssachen zu Frankfurt am Main aufgerichtet, anno 1558” is found in *Corpus Reformatorum*. Ed. C. G. Bretschneider et al. (Brunsvigae and Halis Saxorum: C.A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1834–60), 9:489–507. See Irene Dingel, “Melanchthons Einigungsbemühungen zwischen den Fronten: der Frankfurter Rezeß,” in *Philipp Melancthon. Ein Wegbereiter für die Ökumene*, ed. Jörg Haustein (2. ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 121–143.

33. These questions had become burning issues during the period of controversy following the Interims, and particularly in the controversy over the Lord’s Supper in electoral Saxony.

34. Cf., for example, the work of Christoph Herdesianus, published under the pseudonym Ambrosius Wolf, *Historia Der Augspurgischen Confession . . .* (Neustadt an der Hardt: Matthaeus Harnisch, 1580).

35. See Pressel, *ZHTh*, 565–575; BSLK, 744, n. 2; BC, 6, n. 8; BC-T, 4, n. 3.

36. BSLK, 745,19–22 and 16–19; BC, 7, §7; BC-T, 5.

37. BSLK, 746,25–27; cf. BSLK 746, 10–27 for the context; BC, 7–8, §8; BC-T, 6.

38. BSLK, 748,24; BC, 9, §13; BC-T, 7.

39. BSLK, 749,1–20; BC, 9, §16; BC-T, 7–8. Here “Book of Concord” refers to the Formula of Concord.

40. For example, BSLK 749, 32; 751,7; 751,37; 752,16f.; BC, 10–11, §16–17; BC-T, 7–9.

41. BSLK 752,15–24; BC, 11, §17; BC-T, 9.

42. BSLK 754,20–755,11; BC, 12, §19; BC-T, 10–11.

43. That refers above all to the *genus maiestaticum*, as found in the Formula of Concord (although the term itself is not explicitly used). According to this genus, the characteristics of the divine nature of Christ are transmitted to the human nature on the basis of the close co-existence of the two natures within the person of Christ, especially on the basis of its exaltation to the right hand of God; see FC SD VIII: 67–68, BSLK, 1039,26–1044,3; BC, 629–631; BC-T, 604.