Pruning the Vines, Plowing Up the Vineyard

The Sixteenth-Century Culture of Controversy between Disputation and Polemic[1]

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Recultivation of a vineyard requires more than planting and watering; weeds must be eliminated, and diseases, threatening insects, and other invaders must be prevented from destroying the vines and the grapes. As Scott Hendrix reminds readers in *Recultivating the Vineyard*, Luther and his followers regarded their work as more than the positive presentation of the gospel. They viewed their times as the Last Times, and they viewed their task as the pursuit of the eschatological battle of God and his truth against Satan and his lies: "the true church had to be defended against all its enemies."[2] This perception of the world and his task in it was not only, in Hendrix's judgment, the product of Luther's goal of reforming church and society but also grew out of his "suspicion that the theology and practice on which the new Christendom was built would be undercut," and that suspicion grew out of his own personal experiences[3] and his conviction that his opponents, some of whom wanted to burn him at the stake, were "agents of the devil who, in the last days of the world, had unleashed a final assault upon Christendom."[4]

The recultivation of the vineyard, as Luther, Philip Melanchthon, and their students and followers viewed it, took form, however, not only within their eschatological convictions and perceptions of the world. They grew up academically in what scholars across the historical disciplines today are labeling a "culture of controversy" or of "conflict." To understand the role of polemic

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within the entire process of reformation of church and society in the sixteenth century, a broad look at this culture of controversy is necessary.

I. Presuppositions from a Theological Perspective

For many years the study of the phenomenon of controversy and conflict earned nothing but scorn from those in the humanities, and not the least from those in church history and the history of theology. For the phenomenon of conflict – at least in European culture – generally evokes negative connotations. Striving for consensus and convergence, the negotiation of compromises and agreements, the search for freedom wins accolades. Only in recent years have scholars focused on the various forms in which controversial exchanges took place. They began to lay aside their dismissal of the importance of such disputes, to pose questions concerning the diverse processes and structures that governed their development, to explain their concentration on specific topics as the result of mechanisms for discussion that they employed, and to take seriously their far-reaching impact upon the cultures in which they occurred. Nonetheless, when one speaks of a "culture of controversy" in this context, there is certainly the risk of being misunderstood. For the concept of culture used here does not refer to the achievements of an individual or society which may be evaluated as positive – in the sense that those who participate in the culture of controversy progress beyond coarse polemic to a moral, ethical form of discussion. Just the opposite. Here culture is defined as the totality of human activity, the normal practices of people, the essentials parts of their environment, for controversy and conflict clearly belong to daily life in society quite apart from the manner and fashion in which they are conducted, apart from the forms in which people pursue them. In the words of the editors of a recent collection of essays on the culture of controversy, this phenomenon has been rediscovered as "a characteristic and indispensible condition for modern, pluralistic societies of the West."[5]

From the perspective of the history of the church and of theology, and from the vantage point of the history of the development of the confessional positions of the churches, some refinement of this hypothesis is necessary. Four theses guide our consideration.

First, the development of a *theological* culture of "controversy" is a critical characteristic of the early modern period. In reference to the Wittenberg Reformation, placed in the context of the religious and political constellations of that time, it came to "full bloom" in the second half of the sixteenth century. It

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[5] Uwe Baumann, Arnold Becker, and Astrid Steiner-Weber, "Vorwort," in idem, eds., *Streitkultur: Okzidentale Traditionen des Streitens in Literatur, Geschichte und Kunst* (Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2008), 1.

would be worthwhile to ascertain whether in that period in other geographical settings similar clusters of these characteristics can be identified or whether dependence on contingent factors in their environment gave different "cultures of controversy" their unique cast.

Second, all forms of controversy are concerned with, in the broadest sense, a search or a struggle for the "truth" and the validity of the claim that this truth is true. I use the term "truth" in a rather open fashion at this point and define the concept in a broad sense as that which human beings, whether a majority or a minority in society, presume as setting the standard for all, as a fundamental axiom. The concept of truth presumes the agreement of the conceptualization with reality. This means, in terms of theological positions, that the culture of controversy functions as a decisive medium for the search for doctrinal "truth." This is the same also for secular contexts, in my opinion. Even conflict for money, influence, or power presumes that those who participate in the controversy ascribe at least a "truth valid for an individual" to that which they wish to maintain against an opponent. People engage in controversy over that which, whether correctly or allegedly, they regard as right, which they wish to establish as valid in general, in the eyes of all.[6]

Third, disputes, that is, the culture of controversy, give the content which is under discussion a character that bestows specific definition as well as its identifying features upon the subject. Finally, fourth, it is important to note that the solution of problems and the search for truth through oral presentation and counter-presentation cannot be viewed as a new invention of the early modern period. It has a long tradition. The early church recognized the need to condemn false teaching to make its pronouncements of true biblical teaching clear,[7] and by the twelfth century, with Abelard and Peter Lombard, the "*sic et non*" method of searching for the truth had established itself as a primary route to the truth.[8] The culture of controversy in the early modern period can be understood as a transformation of medieval rhetorical forms, of the practices of the medieval university, and of the legal structures of the time on the level of popular justice. Structures of communication that developed their rules in the realm of the university moved into the sphere of daily life and were thereby altered and extended, adapted to individual occasions, situations, and opponents. This focus guides the considerations that follow, and through it provides explana-

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[6] The essays in the volume *Vera Doctrina: Zur Begriffsgeschichte der Lehre von Augustinus bis Descartes. L'Idée de Doctrine d'Augustin à Descartes*, ed. Philippe Büttgen et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), demonstrate that this is true for the disciplines of the early modern university. They treat the concept of true or pure teaching in the humanities, theology, jurisprudence, and medicine.

[7] Hans-Werner Gensichen, *Damnamus: Die Verwerfung von Irrlehre bei Luther und im Luthertum des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1955), 11–18.

[8] Martin Grabmann, *Geschichte der scholastischen Methode* (Freiburg/Br.: Herder, 1911, repr. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1988), 2:esp. 220.

tions for and examples of the first three theses from the context of the Reformations of the sixteenth century and their recultivation of the vineyard of Western European society, especially its ecclesiastical life and thought.

II. From the Medieval Disputation to Confessional Polemic

Controversies over the proper formulation of faith and public teaching, whether in the academic forum or even on the public stage, are not exceptional occurrences or crises in the history of Christianity, and particularly in the history of the Reformation. The solution of problems and the search for the truth found the path of conversation, the confrontation of oral presentation and counter-presentation, an oft-used means for reaching understanding. Crucial roots for this lay in the practice of the academic disputation in the medieval university, which followed firmly established rules and employed specific rhetorical patterns and techniques. Since the disputation was universally practiced in medieval universities, it should be seen as characteristic for the academic life of medieval Europe. The procedures of the disputation frequently served society outside the life of the university since it functioned very well in both oral and written exchanges. Theses provided the basis for the oral disputation, and from the time that print shops began to serve the university, most of them were printed. The most famous example of such theses are the Ninety-five Theses of Martin Luther, composed against the practice of indulgences, which he made public on 31 October 1517, of which copies appeared in print immediately.[9] With these theses Luther had chosen a form for the exchange of ideas that was borrowed from the procedures of the academic disputation and aimed at a public exchange of opinions among scholars. He explicitly called for that in these theses. That the disputation he intended to elicit never actually took place does not change the fact that the way he had chosen to make the issue a matter of academic discussion was in no way unusual. It was completely within the framework of those possibilities which the university professor of that day had at his disposal for clarifying disputed questions and for influencing the process of shaping opinions. His later foe, the Ingolstadt professor Johannes Eck, proceeded in similar fashion when he composed his four-hundred-four theses against the Wittenberg theology in 1530.[10] Eck's theses did differ from Luther's in that

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[9] WA 1:233–38; *LW* 31:25–33.

[10] *... Articulos 404. partim ad disputationes Lipsicam, Baden. & Bernen. attinentes, partim vero ex scriptis pacem ecclesiae perturbantium extractos, Coram diuo Caesare Carolo V. Ro. Imp. semper Augu. ec. ac proceribus Imperii, Ioan. Eckius minimus ecclesiae minister, offert se disputaturum, vt in scheda latius explicatur Augustae Vindelicorum. Die & hora consensu Caesaris posterius publicandis* (Ingolstadt, 1530); *D. Johann Ecks Vierhundertundvier Artikel zum Reichstag von Augsburg 1530,* ed. Wilhelm Gussmann (Kassel: Edmund Pillardy, 1930). English translation in *Sources and*

they were aimed precisely at the ways in which Wittenberg theologians were constructing their public confession of the faith, but the title of his theses indicates that he at least wanted to convey to the public his intention to conduct once again a public disputation of the sort he had with the Wittenberg representatives at Leipzig in 1519. This provides a further example of the fact that the academics of this time were accustomed, out of their background in late medieval educational (university) culture, to search for solutions to academic questions by contrasting theses and counter-theses; they used confrontation as a means of searching for, and when possible attaining, these solutions.

What was new, however, in the sixteenth century, as a part of the Reformation, was that ever more frequently the disputation over true teaching went beyond the academic framework. Disputation made its impact in the non-academic, public sphere and began to make use of the vernacular along with the Latin. That did not at all mean the end of the academic culture of the disputation at the universities and in scholarly circles.[11] But to its side came, more or less as a corollary activity, a form of exchange and discussion which aimed at involving the public beyond academic circles, the religious colloquy or dialogue. What from our perspective can be identified as a process of development, and the different forms of communication that we can distinguish, did not appear to be a different phenomenon from the standpoint of the people of that time. How little they were able to differentiate the distinctive forms of communication and interchange that were being adapted to the needs of the time may be seen in the fact that the very same kind of event could bear the same designations in Latin and in the vernacular: "disputatio," "colloquium," or "religious conversation."[12] Along with this, a further crucial alteration in the theological culture of controversy at this time occurred: the modification of the rules governing the standard methods for the course of a disputation. At least in the initial stages of the Reformation, the Protestant reformers decisively rejected the formal academic procedure for proving a case according to the scholastic prescriptions for verification of the truth of the theological problem under consideration, the syllogism. Not the syllogistic arrangement of positions with major premise and minor premise – *propositiones maiores et minors* – was to serve

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Contexts of the Book of Concord, ed. Robert Kolb and James A. Nestingen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 33–82.

[11] E.g., at the University of Wittenberg, disputations were abolished for about a decade, renewed in the last fifteen years of Luther's life, largely fell again into disuse and then revived to become a permanent part of the plan for instruction after 1580. See Kenneth G. Appold, *Orthodoxie als Konsensbildung: Das theologische Disputationswesen an der Universität Wittenberg zwischen 1570 und 1710* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 15–54; and idem, "Academic Life and Teaching in Post-Reformation Lutheranism," in *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1675*, ed. Robert Kolb (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 83–85.

[12] Irene Dingel, Art. Religionsgespräche IV. Altgläubig – protestantisch und innerprotestantisch, in TRE 28 (1997): 654–81.

as a means of theological truth but rather the hermeneutic drawn from Holy Scripture. The reformers viewed Scripture as the highest norm for truth, as the source of truth. This historically grounded, written source became the authority, the proper understanding of which was raised to the standard by which decisions in regard to the truth were made. Truth and falsehood had to be proven on the basis of the statements of *Scripture*. This change of paradigm emerged clearly as early as the Leipzig Disputation between Luther and Eck in 1519, a discussion between scholars. Another event which was not confined to the scholarly sphere, the first disputation in Zurich on 29 January 1523, can serve as an example. It was a public colloquium, or argument, which was designed to put the viability of the Reformation which Zwingli was proposing to the test. The disputation was arranged by the mayor and the Large Council of the city of Zurich, and the Council defined the criterion which was to serve as the basis for the decision whether evangelical teaching, and with it Zwingli's preaching, was to be permitted. This criterion was to be – as it was called in the sources of that time – the "true, divine Scripture." The Council itself served as judge in the proceedings and exercised the chair as the discussion took place. As practical as this arrangement might appear at first glance – the Council did introduce the Reformation as a result of the disputation – it was still very difficult to establish the authority of Holy Scripture as the final judge since it remained a disputed principle among the parties. The authority of the Scripture was not given the same weight nor was it interpreted in the same way by the two parties. That was one of the most decisive reasons why the religious dialogues, which took as their model the medieval disputation, failed even though they really intended to do nothing else than establish the truth on the basis of an exchange that followed the old rules.[13] This is true – even though the opposite seems likely – in the final analysis also for the religious colloquies within Protestantism, which Lutheran and Calvinistic theologians conducted with each other, as they were organized by political authorities. Indeed, the participants in this case agreed with the other side regarding the "rules" for determining public teaching, namely the acceptance of Holy Scripture as the highest norm and authority, but different hermeneutical approaches blocked the path toward the solution of the disagreements, and indeed to establishing the truth. Neither the Maulbronn Colloquy of 1564 nor the Colloquy of Montbéliard in 1586, the best examples, reached this goal. Paradoxically the attempts to resolve the controversies pro-

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[13] Cf. Dingel, Art. Religionsgespräche, 655–56. The dialogues constructed for popular consumption, for the most part a fictional dialogue or trialogue, usually end by persuading the participants in the dialogue who cannot decide between the medieval way of expressing the biblical message and the evangelical faith of the truth of the latter. See "Disputation zwischen einem Chorherren und Schuchmacher darin[n] das wort gottes / vnd ein recht Christlich wesen verfochten würdt. Hanns Sachs. M D XXiiij," in Hans Sachs, *Die Wittenbergisch Nachtigall: Spruchgedicht, vier Reformationsdialoge und das Meisterlied Das Walt Got*, ed. Gerald H. Seufert (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1974), 41–71.

vided the tinder for new disagreement. It is worth noting that the religious dialogues that served the purposes of the Counter-Reformation and that both in the German lands and in France aimed at great accomplishments, and that proceeded not in the smallest way through the revitalization of syllogistic argumentation, simply ignored the question of authority as well as the hermeneutical differences.

This short sketch demonstrates the great extent to which in the sixteenth century forms of communication derived from the medieval disputation were used as means of explanation and reaching understanding. The countless colloquies and an extensive series of publications and counter-publications, which multiplied, particularly in the second half of the sixteenth century, demonstrate this as ever more published treatises carried on controversies, not only between Evangelical theologians and adherents of the Roman church, but also within Protestantism. Often authors presented their arguments in the discussion under the title *Disputatio* even when no public disputation took place or was planned.[14]

Therefore, such debates and controversies were in no way simply self-serving or some pointless and tangential activity of these theologians. They rather aimed at demonstrating that opponents were wrong with good arguments, at rebutting them, and even in the final analysis at convincing them and drawing them over to the proper position if it was possible to succeed in convincing them of the inadequacy of their position on the basis of a generally accepted presumption of the Holy Scripture as the ultimate authority. That could coincide with ever sharper polemic when the goal was to warn the public of an adversary who had been identified as an incorrigible perverter of the truth and thus one who had to be categorized as theologically dangerous. Exposing the silliness of the opponent's position and demonstrating the absurdity of his seductive teaching served to neutralize his credibility and the danger his teaching posed for society, for the common people. To classify as purposeless such a culture of controversy emerging out of very different contexts, as often happened in the older secondary literature, or to accuse those who took part in these controversies of "intellectual pigheadedness and unresponsiveness,"[15] which we read in the newer literature, fails to recognize that the opposing sides never were trying to negotiate a compromise but rather to establish their absolute claim to the interpretation of the truth. This, they were convinced, would sooner or later rebut the opponent, win over the common people, and convince them of the legitimacy of their own

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[14] The data bank of the project "Controversia et Confessio," which offers a bibliography of the controversial literature within German Protestant circles, chiefly those leading to the Formula of Concord (http://www.litdb.evtheol.uni-mainz.de/datenbank/index_front.php), lists over ninety printed works with "Disputatio" in their titles.

[15] Kai Bremer, *Religionsstreitigkeiten: Volkssprachliche Kontroversen zwischen altgläubigen und evangelischen Theologen im 16. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005), 5.

standpoint and its conformity to Holy Scripture, if they were only skilled enough to fashion their ideas properly and present them with sufficient creativity.

III. The Culture of Controversy in the Context of Lucas Cranach the Younger: The Controversies Flowing from the Augsburg Interim as a Process of Clarification and the Establishment of Confessional Identity

What were the characteristics of the culture of controversy which arose within and around those in the Wittenberg circle at the time of Paul Eber and Lucas Cranach the Younger? These controversies resulted from the introduction of the imperial policy labeled "the Augsburg Interim," fashioned in 1548.[16] The answer to the question must be unfolded on several levels.

From the vantage point of the history of printing and communication in general it is interesting that this theological culture of controversy that developed in the second half of the sixteenth century made use of a host of literary genres: academic disputations and the formulation of theses for such disputations, sermons, confessions of faith, polemical writings, satirical graphics and songs, which either served the purpose of propaganda against opponents and confrontation with their arguments or the purpose of consolation and reinforcement, even for the common people. The literary genres also enable us to follow the course of academic culture from written statements through public addresses and polemic into the level of popular culture. In addition, it is possible to follow the actual sequence of argumentative exchanges and to chart groups that conducted the controversies by reading the publications and counter-publications that used the full range of these genres. No one literary form dominated any longer. The content of these circles of controversy focused on specific theological questions, which were raised by the imperial Augsburg Interim or – more frequently – by the alternative draft of a religious policy for electoral Saxony dubbed the "Leipzig Interim" by its foes. The controversies among the scholars, in Latin, moved quickly into discussions in the vernacular, which implicitly drew the so-called "common man" into the discussion. Most striking, without doubt, is that this culture of controversy in the period after the Interim integrated the confession of faith formulated by the individual, a confession developed for apologetic purposes, into the continuum of controversial literature. This indicates to what a great extent those theological disputes – and this point can certainly be generalized for other cultures of controversy – set in mo-

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[16] For an overview of the several controversies that divided members of the Wittenberg circle at this time, see Irene Dingel, "The Culture of Conflict in the Controversies Leading to the Formula of Concord (1548–1580)," in *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture*, 15–64.

tion the process of creating a personal profile on the basis of one's teaching that contributed to the formation of the larger confessional identity. This process over the long term led to the establishment of the several churches that emerged with such identities in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The culture of controversy within the churches of the late sixteenth century was determined to a large extent by theological issues. The controversies grew out of a situation in which theological formulations of many shades and stripes existed side by side, with varying degrees of tension or tranquility. They were not only determined by factors of religious policies of secular government, as was the case with the Augsburg Interim, but also involved the theological development that arose out of the efforts of those in the Wittenberg circle to sort out and apply anew the insights they had learned from Luther and Melanchthon. In this essay it is impossible to analyze in detail the various positions that their students held in the middle of the sixteenth century. The confrontations that arose in this situation tended to channel the plurality of views into the greatest degree of unanimity possible for the preservation of the Wittenberg theological legacy. That in no way should be taken to mean that this development led to "Lutheran Orthodoxy," set in cement, as can be read in even more recent historical studies. Such a perspective is quite short-sighted and misfocused. The controversies of the period after the Interim only partially reduced the doctrinal pluralism of the time. Indeed, it is important to note, against an oversimplified picture of an orthodoxy which was the worthy goal and a heterodoxy which had to be excluded, that already in the early sixteenth century debates, controversies, and doctrinal discussions which repeatedly broke out, as well as the formal disputations and religious colloquies of several types, initiated a process of clarification that, as mentioned above, flowed into the establishment of theological identities (e.g., the distinction of the Wittenberg from the Zurich or Genevan Reformation and their respective theologies, the distinction between Luther's theology and Melanchthon's, etc.) and later into the culture, both theological and social-political, organized along confessional lines. These processes of clarification and the formation of confessional identity took their course with appeals to secondary theological authorities, which found their place alongside the primary authority of Holy Scripture and were designed to guarantee the hermeneutic derived from the norm set by Scripture. Appeals were made to the great figures of the beginnings of the Reformation, especially to Luther or to Melanchthon, and the two were differentiated from each other. Also those who wished to view the positions of the two Wittenberg reformers as in agreement even where their doctrinal formulations went in different directions – and this was a strong tendency – won a hearing for their argument as they strove to keep the Wittenberg Reformation from fragmenting. Confessions and *Corpora doctrinae* became ever more prominent and thus prepared the way for the establishment of the great confessional churches of Western Christendom. The culture

of controversy in the period after the Augsburg Interim promoted the sharpen-
ing of the profiles of the positions of each group and also the drawing of bound-
aries between the confessional positions in general.

The significance of the controversies following the Interim must also be dis-
cussed from the perspective of the history of culture, which obviously cannot
be separated from the first two perspectives discussed here. That it was not sim-
ply a matter of orthodoxy or heterodoxy is clear.[17]

The arena of conflict involved much more, and that becomes apparent when
we assess what provided the impetus for the developments within this particular
culture of controversy. Attention must focus on several aspects. First, the con-
troversies reflect a strident conflict between generations, between the first and
second generations of the reformers (though the second generation was not of
one mind, either). Without addressing the way the problems were posed in the
individual controversies at this point,[18] even apart from a specific analysis of the
several differing positions on different topics that were of relevance for the his-
tory of theology and were widely held at the time, it is not difficult to establish
that the international throng of Melanchthon's students were divided among
themselves and a part of them turned decisively against their praeceptor. The
dividing line between the groups followed absolutely no geographical or na-
tional borders. This is evident from the fact that the spokesperson of that new
generation – "the young wild ones," it might be said – came from what was then
known as Illyria (today Croatia), had studied in Venice, and then came to Wit-
tenberg: Matthias Flacius.

Flacius combined his unswerving dedication to a theological profile that ad-
hered to the thought of Martin Luther with a theology of history, which he
shared with both of his teachers, Luther and Melanchthon, which he used, how-
ever, in his involvement with the religious-political issues raised by the so-
called "Leipzig Interim," which he presented negatively as part of the struggle
of the Last Times between God and the devil, Christ and Belial, the Christian
and the Antichrist. He viewed the "Leipzig Interim" as a retreat from the clear
confession of the truth that was especially necessary in a time of crisis, when the
gospel was under threat. This raises a second point: The *eschatological emphasis* of
the situation defined by the crisis, the threat of Roman Catholic elimination of
the Lutheran confession of the faith, was decisive in driving the controversies of

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[17] For example, the conflicts that led to clarifying and formulating confessional identity
took place alongside the disputes with the Antitrinitarians, who were surfacing at the same
time and extended over a longer chronological period and a wider geographical area. In
contrast to the controversies that divided the Wittenberg circle at this time, the culture of
controversy on the Antitrinitarian side played itself out largely in the underground. The
controversies of this period, therefore, concern more than simply the dispute between "or-
thodoxy" and "heterodoxy" within the Wittenberg Reformation even if that is only a part
of the larger picture.

[18] See Dingel, "Culture of Conflict."

the period after the Augsburg Interim. Contrasting perceptions of reality and approaches to dealing with reality existed between Melanchthon and some of his students, perhaps even a difference in the way their historical consciousness analyzed the situation. The disappointment of many in the second generation of the Wittenberg circle over the way in which the options for action were handled after Luther's death by his surviving colleagues, such as Melanchthon, Johannes Bugenhagen, and Georg Major, in view of the challenges of the religious and political situation which they faced and which seemed to threaten the Reformation itself, made its impact over a longer period and the sharp tone of the polemic exchanged between the parties. Lists of witnesses to the truth and of martyrs appeared, a theological elite, including political officials – e.g., Elector Johann Friedrich of Saxony, who was taken into captivity by the emperor[19] – as well as clergy who went into exile, as "exules Christi," often several times.[20]

This leads to a third decisive factor in these controversies, a significant characteristic in this culture of controversy. It is the *question of authority* and, connected closely with that question, *the struggle to define the theological legacy* of the Wittenberg Reformation. The controversies posed anew the question of who or what exercised authority that gave direction for life and doctrine in society. The fronts and groups which were forming around different positions each made the claim, often in vehement attacks on each other, that they truly were the successors of the original Wittenberg reformers and were faithfully preserving their legacy, even when that meant opposing the teachers, the first authorities in Wittenberg whom they had revered. Arguments were made with Luther against Melanchthon and vice versa, or some attempted to harmonize the theological views of the two of them in order to prevent a rupture within the ranks of the Wittenberg theologians. The claims of the differing groups, which were continually realigning, that they were able to secure the unadulterated theological legacy of the Wittenberg Reformation in a manner that would last, be authoritative, and establish confessional identity, was the soil that fostered new controversies, which in turn propelled the refinement of theological profiles and the consolidation of confessional positions.

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[19] Robert Kolb, "The Legal Case for Martyrdom: Basilius Monner on Johann Friedrich the Elder and the Smalcald War," in *Reformation und Recht. Festgabe für Gottfried Seebaß zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Irene Dingel, Volker Leppin, and Christoph Strohm (Gütersloh: Kaiser/ Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 145–60.

[20] Irene Dingel, "Die Kultivierung des Exulantentums im Luthertum am Beispiel des Nikolaus von Amsdorf," in *Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483–1565) zwischen Reformation und Politik*, ed. Irene Dingel (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008), 153–75.

Conclusions

This study has led us to observe three significant aspects of the sixteenth century turmoil that emerged from the several calls for reform of that period. First, in the late sixteenth century a culture of controversy developed in the wake of the Augsburg Interim, which took form in relatively closed circles of conflict. This culture of conflict used traditional elements of the academic disputation, which were then adapted in altered conditions to the construction of new forms of dispute in the search for truth and confessional identity.

Second, it is striking that those who participated in this culture of controversy employed a large variety of literary genre. A tendency toward individual theological expression, served by the literary form of the personal confession of faith, combined with a broad popularization of the issues through intentional use of forms of communication that reached the common people, such as songs and sermons. Their publication and their claim for a general recognition of their truthfulness directed the controversies back into the private sphere.

Third, the culture of controversy in the period after the Augsburg Interim cannot be understood without consideration of the theological content and the directions that the theological debates took (even though this essay has not analyzed them). Against this background, it is possible to demonstrate more clearly that an oversimplified contrast of "orthodoxy" and "heterodoxy" does not do justice to the situation. It is also possible to see the explosive impact of the eschatological focus in the crisis situation of the Wittenberg circle at this time and to assess how great an impact the struggle for standard-setting reformational authorities and for the definition of their theological legacy became. In this sense the cultivation of controversy was naturally and inevitably a part of the recultivation of the vineyard.