

MAGDEBURG AS A BRIDGE
FROM REFORMATION TO ORTHODOXY

In her excellent study of the early Reformation, Irene Dingel organizes her analysis of the unfolding of sixteenth-century reform around four geographical centers: Wittenberg, Zürich, Strassburg, and Geneva¹. Other works have focused on the critical role of towns as the stages for the unfolding of the Reformation². These specific places provided the setting for significant calls for reform of church and society in the early sixteenth century. The nature of each place and its geographical and cultural situation in the larger western and central European environment of the time played a part in the way in which the reformers spread their ideas and plans for a new way of organizing church life and interpreting the Bible. In the third quarter of the sixteenth century «Magdeburg» became a symbol of an important part of the bridge that linked the Wittenberg Reformation with subsequent generations.

Magdeburg as Gathering Point for Radical Followers of Luther

«Wittenberg» clearly served as a synonym for those who took their direction from Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, and their colleagues

¹ Dingel, I. *Reformation. Zentren — Akteure — Ereignisse*. Göttingen, 2016.

² E.g., the collection of essays on the Reformation in specific towns: *Europa reformata. Reformationsstädte Europas und ihre Reformatoren* / Hrsg. M. Welker, M. Beintker, A. de Lange. Leipzig, 2016.

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from the late 1510s on. But the «Wittenberg» claim to represent the legacy of that formative period was weakened by the events in the years immediately following Luther's death in 1546. After Emperor Charles V had defeated Saxon and Hessian forces in the Smalcald War of 1546–1547, Philip Melanchthon and his colleagues in Wittenberg attempted to prevent Saxony from falling to the wrath of Emperor Charles V by devising a compromise religious policy for electoral Saxony. Charles had awarded the electorate to Moritz, the cousin of Luther's friend and supporter, Johann Friedrich the Elder, who was jailed for his assertion of Evangelical freedoms in the war.

This compromise alienated many of the students who had learned their way of thinking from Melanchthon and Luther. The emperor promulgated a decree regulating religious policy for all in his German imperial domains until the council organized by Pope Paul III that had begun meeting in Trent in December 1545 made final decisions about the issues confronting Western Christendom under the papacy. Its critics dubbed this imperial policy the «Augsburg Interim». A storm of theological protest responded to the Interim, led by Melanchthon himself³. But Melanchthon aided his new overlord, Moritz, in developing a compromising religious policy, incorporated in what scholars now call the «Leipzig Proposal», presented to the Saxon diet in December 1548. Its opponents dubbed it the «Leipzig Interim». They regarded it as an application of the practices mandated in the Augsburg Interim to electoral Saxony and thus a betrayal of God, the Christian faith, and Luther. In turn, Melanchthon felt betrayed by his students, who in his eyes were acting in bad faith by opposing his attempt to save Lutheran pulpits in Saxony for Lutheran preachers by fending off invasion and occupation by Charles's armies⁴.

³ *Controversia et Confessio. Theologische Kontroversen 1548–1577/80. Kritische Auswahl* / Ed. I. Dingel; 9 vols. Göttingen, 2008–2021. See vol. 1 for both the editor's overview of the controversy and treatises published in its course. See: Rabe, H. *Reichsbund und Interim. Die Verfassungs- und Religionspolitik Karls V. und der Reichstag von Augsburg 1547/1548*. Cologne; Vienna, 1971; *Das Interim 1548/50. Herrschaftskrise und Glaubenskonflikt* / Ed. L. Schorn-Schütte. Gütersloh, 2005; Moritz, A. *Interim and Apokalypse: die religiösen Vereinheitlichungsversuche Karls V. Spiegel der magdeburgischen Publizistik 1548–1551/52*. Tübingen, 2009.

⁴ For both the editor's overview of the controversy and treatises published in its course cf.: *Controversia et Confessio. Vol. 2*.

Several prominent associates of the Wittenberg reformers, such as the superintendent of churches in the duchy of Braunschweig-Calenberg, Anton Corvinus⁵ criticized the Leipzig «Proposal» without becoming actively involved in the conflict over it. Magdeburg became the residence of a number of outspoken critics of Melanchthon's participation in formulating the «Leipzig Proposal». Its return of some key elements of Saxon ecclesiastical practice to medieval forms reflected the position of the Augsburg Confession on the use of customs neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture⁶. Nonetheless, some of Luther's and Melanchthon's most gifted students protested that under pressure from the papacy and the emperor such compromise betrayed the Christian faith, the biblical message, and the legacy of Luther — and of Melanchthon's own teaching⁷.

In this context two groups coalesced, each with its own rival interpretation of certain points of what they had together learned from Luther and Melanchthon. The two groups were not organized, and the lines between them were somewhat porous. Within each group, there arose differences of interpretation of the Wittenberg legacy that brought friends into dispute. Nonetheless, sufficient common characteristics link adherents of one group or the other to justify use of the eighteenth-century terms for these groups, «Gnesio-Lutheran» and «Philippist». The Gnesio-Lutherans tended to be more radical in their interpretation of Luther's theocentric understanding of justification whereas the Philippists tended to emphasize the responsibilities of the believing Christian. Both groups accepted the paradox of the Wittenberg assertion of the total responsibility of God for salvation and all that happens in God's creation and the total responsibility of the human creature for obedience. The Gnesio-Lutherans more radically rejected medieval polity and pious customs than did the early Philippists. The Gnesio-Lutherans also expressed more radically the integrity of the church in relation-

⁵ *Der Briefwechsel des Anton Corvinus* / Ed. P. Tschackert. Hannover; Leipzig, 1900. S. 248–251, 251–252, 286, 287.

⁶ *Arand, Ch. P.* The Apology as a Backdrop for the Interim of 1548, in: *Politik und Bekenntnis. Die Reaktionen auf das Interim von 1548* / Ed. I. Dingel, G. Wartenberg. Leipzig, 2006. S. 211–227.

⁷ *Hase, H. Ch., von.* Die Gestalt der Kirche Luthers, Der Casus Confessionis im Kampf des Matthias Flacius gegen das Interim von 1548. Göttingen, 1940.

ship to secular government, and they took more radical public stances in defense of their views⁸. These differences introduced another stage in the «culture of controversy» that had arisen within the Wittenberg circle at the time of Luther's excommunication by the pope and sentencing to death by the emperor⁹. As within and between the other larger Western European confessional groups of the period, polemic became an integral part of the search for theological truth. Medieval university disputation became a method of public discussion¹⁰.

The conflict arose out of sharp criticism coming from Hamburg and above all Magdeburg. Two of Luther's and Melanchthon's former students, at the time colleagues in the arts faculty of the university, left Wittenberg in protest against the «Leipzig Proposal»: Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575), an instructor in Hebrew and devoted disciple of both Luther and Melanchthon, and Nikolaus Gallus (1516–1570), who was driven out of Regensburg and found refuge in Wittenberg in 1548, six years after he had ended his study at the university as a student and assumed a pastorate in Regensburg. The two eventually found their way to the city of Magdeburg, ninety kilometers down the Elbe River, west of Wittenberg, Flacius in mid-1549 and Gallus in late 1549. There

⁸ Kolb, R. Dynamics of Party Conflict in the Saxon Late Reformation, Gnesio-Lutherans vs. Philippists, in: *Journal of Modern History*. 1977. Vol. 49. D1289–1305; reprinted in: *Luther's Heirs Define His Legacy, Studies on Lutheran Confessionalization*. Aldershot, 1996, essay I, and in: *Calvinismus in den Auseinandersetzungen des frühen konfessionellen Zeitalters*. Göttingen, 2013. S. 151–167.

⁹ Dingel, I. The Culture of Conflict in the Controversies Leading to the Formula of Concord (1547–1580), in: *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1675* / Ed. R. Kolb. Leiden, 2008. P. 15–64.

¹⁰ See particularly the essays of Irene Dingel: Dingel, I. Zwischen Disputation und Polemik. «Streitkultur» in den nachinterimistischen Kontroversen, in: *Streitkultur und Öffentlichkeit im Konfessionellen Zeitalter* / Hrsg. von P. J. Henning, Th. Weller. Göttingen, 2013. S. 17–29; Dingel, I. Pruning the Vines, Plowing Up the Vineyard: The Sixteenth-Century Culture of Controversy between Disputation and Polemic, in: *The Reformation as Christianization. Essays on Scott Hendrix's Christianization Thesis* / Ed. A. M. Johnson, J. A. Maxfield, Tübingen, 2012. P. 397–408; Dingel, I. Streitkultur und Kontroversenschrifttum im späten 16. Jahrhundert. Versuch einer methodischen Standortbestimmung, in: *Kommunikation und Transfer im Christentum der Frühen Neuzeit* / Ed. I. Dingel, W. F. Schäufler. Mainz, 2007. S. 95–111; Dingel, I. Von der Disputation zum Gespräch, in: *Lutherjahrbuch*. 2018. Bd 85. S. 61–84.

a group of protesters had begun to gather by the end of 1548 around the reformer of the city, Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483–1565), who had left the city to become bishop of Naumburg and Zeit six years earlier¹¹. This group initially included Erasmus Alber (ca. 1500–1553), who had taught briefly in Wittenberg and served several parishes before his criticism of the Interims brought him to Magdeburg. These members of the Wittenberg circle did not think that they were experiencing «end of the Reformation»¹². Instead, they regarded themselves and their efforts in opposing the «Leipzig Interim» as the necessary defense and further propagation of the Reformation.

Magdeburg's municipal government had decided to resist the introduction of both the imperial «Augsburg Interim» and any kind of compromise similar to that proposed by the electoral Saxon government. Magdeburg became a center of resistance to the Interim because of the coincidence of political interests revolving around the city's long-term struggle against the claims of its archbishop, to whom it legally belonged, and its «evangelical identity»¹³. This identity reflected the religious mentality that Amsdorf had developed among its inhabitants at every social level¹⁴. At the command of Emperor Charles, Elector Moritz laid siege to the city, but inside its walls protestors such as Amsdorf, Flacius, and Gallus found ready support for their battle to preserve their understanding of Luther's teaching in Magdeburg's population and particularly in its printers. Magdeburg's publishing efforts in criticism of both Interims earned it the epithet «the Lord God's chancery», as these printers generated a host of withering calls to faithfulness in opposition to both Interims¹⁵.

¹¹ Kolb, R. Nikolaus von Amsdorf, Champion of Luther's Reformation. Saint Louis, 2019.

¹² Cf.: Kaufmann, Th. *Das Ende der Reformation*. Tübingen, 2003.

¹³ The apt term coined by Nathan Rein: Rein, N. *The Chancery of God: Protestant print, Polemic and Propaganda against the Empire, Magdeburg 1546–1551*. Aldershot, Hampshire, 2008. P. 100–101. On the siege, its political significance, and the conditions it fostered in the city see: Rein, N. *Chancery*. P. 121–178.

¹⁴ Kolb, R. Amsdorf. P. 18–29.

¹⁵ Cf. volumes 1 and 2 of *Controversia et Confessio: Ende der Reformation*. P. 493–554. Thomas Kaufmann has extended the bibliography of works published in Magdeburg, 1548–1552, compiled by Friedrich Hülse: Hülse, F. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Buchdruckerkunst in Magdeburg, in: *Geschichts-Blätter*

The printers of Magdeburg played a vital role in the defiance of imperial and electoral Saxon religious policy. Thus, they, too, contributed significantly to constructing the bridge from the Reformation to its seventeenth century descendants. Michael Lotter had moved from Wittenberg to Magdeburg in 1529, and he and Amsdorf had worked together to propagate the reform of the city and the defense of Luther's teaching until Amsdorf's departure in 1542. When Magdeburg became a center of opposition to the Augsburg Interim and the electoral Saxon compromise with the emperor, Lotter and two other printers who had come to the city in the 1530s, Hans Walther and Christian Rödinger, worked with the theologians and the city council to defend Magdeburg's resistance and to broadcast the Gnesio-Lutheran defense of the Wittenberg message¹⁶. They produced several hundred, mostly brief, pamphlets and books by the Magdeburg theologians and their sympathizers from other locales. These printers continued to serve their Gnesio-Lutheran clientele, printing smaller publications for more than a decade. However, Flacius, Johannes Wigand (1523–1587), who came to Magdeburg from Mansfeld in 1553¹⁷, and others entrusted their larger projects, such as the Magdeburg Centuries, to printers with larger operations, such as Johannes Oporinus in Basel. Thus, «Magdeburg» continued the close association of Luther's and Melanchthon's teaching with the medium of print, begun in Wittenberg and continued from 1550 into the seventeenth century and beyond in exegetical, dogmatic, devotional, and other genres.

Notable among these publications was the Confession of 1550, which outlined the doctrinal position of the group around Amsdorf, Gallus, and Flacius. It also used Luther's and Melanchthon's argumentation on God's order of governance of human life to set forth a detailed theological justification for the resistance of the city to imperial suppression of the Evangelical churches through the «Augsburg Interim» because it had stepped outside its proper bounds and purpose assigned by God.

für Stadt und Land Magdeburg. 1880. Bd 17. S. 53–68, 150–181, 211–242, 358–397.

¹⁶ Reske, C. *Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet* / 2nd ed. Wiesbaden, 2015. S. 628–630.

¹⁷ Dingel, I. Art. Wigand, in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. Bd 36. Berlin, 2004. S. 33–38.

The «Magdeburg» Theologians

Through its publishing efforts «Magdeburg» became a synonym for this group of Wittenberg colleagues and students that was later dubbed «genuine [gnesio] Lutheran». Pressures of siege and its extremely threatening situation forged friendships and dedication to the tasks modeled in Wittenberg by Luther, Melanchthon, and their colleagues. This «Gnesio-Lutheran» movement coalesced in the city in 1549–1552, but it moved to other centers quickly. Many like-minded, mostly younger, adherents of Luther and Melanchthon shared its concerns and followed its leadership. They all sought to defend and proclaim the theology set forth in the Magdeburg Confession and shared the desire to spread that theology. They also participated in the pursuit of a scholarly agenda that continued to lay the basis for significant elements of Lutheran thinking in the future.

Flacius himself had set forth a three-fold agenda for his future program of scholarly research and publication before he left Magdeburg in 1556. In his extensive and detailed collection of historical criticism of the papacy, his *Catalogus testium veritatis*, he outlined an ambitious plan for his scholarly pursuits. It included composing an Evangelical gloss or commentary on the entire Scripture. Its New Testament volume appeared in 1570; the Old Testament gloss lays two-thirds completed in manuscript at his death¹⁸. Second, he proposed a history of the church, for which he carried out extensive preparation by gathering materials in his Magdeburg years and beyond. The actual writing and publishing of this work, the *Magdeburg Centuries*, lay in the hands of Johannes Wigand and Matthaeus Judex (1528–1564) and their team of assistants¹⁹.

¹⁸ *THE ΤΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΚΑΙΝΗΣ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗΣ ΑΠΑΝΤΑ. NOVVM TESTAMENTVM IESV CHRISTI FILII DEI, EX VERSIONE ERASMI, INNVMERIS IN LOCIS ad Graecam veritatem, genuinumque sensum emendate. GLOSSA COMPENDIARIA M. MATTHIAE Flacij Illyrici Albonensis in novum Testamentum...* Basil, 1570.

The manuscript of the two-third completed Old Testament Glossa is in the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.

¹⁹ *Ilić, L.* Theologian of Sin and Grace: The Process of Radicalization in the Theology of Matthias Flacius Illyricus. Göttingen, 2014. P. 118–120, 123–126; *Scheible, H.* Die Entstehung der Magdeburger Zenturien. Gütersloh, 1966; *Hartmann, M.* Humanismus und Kirchenkritik. Matthias Flacius Illyricus als Erforscher des Mittelalters. Stuttgart, 2001; *Bollbuck, H.* Wahrheitszeugnis, Gottes Auftrag und Zeitkritik: die Kirchengeschichte der Magdeburger Zenturien

Flacius's third endeavor aimed at a detailed exposition of the Hebrew language and its peculiar usage and vocabulary. This project culminated in his *Clavis Scripturae sacrae*, which has been acclaimed by twentieth century scholars as the pioneering work in the development of modern hermeneutics²⁰. These three projects reveal aspects of the larger contribution of the generation of Flacius, Gallus, and Wigand to the future intellectual and ecclesiastical life in the German-speaking lands.

Traditional scholarship has largely focused on the theological contribution made by the students and disciples of Luther and Melanchthon. But these two instructors also bequeathed their common interest in the program of education advanced by the biblical humanists, including Desiderius Erasmus and Philip Melanchthon, to all of their students. These students all promoted and used the humanist tools of logic and rhetoric. Melanchthon's method had shaped their way of thinking and their agenda for a wide spectrum of scholarly interests²¹. Flacius's biblical projects reproduced his mentors' emphasis on the use of the original languages, and the Magdeburg Centuries grew out of Luther's and Melanchthon's interest in historical studies²². These «Magdeburgers» also pursued academic interests alongside their teaching theology or pastoring congregations. Their scholarly pursuits reflected the methods and interests learned in Melanchthon's lectures²³. This tradition of scholarship in theology and commitment to the promotion to non-theological disciplines continued into the seventeenth century and beyond among the Lutherans.

und ihre Arbeitstechniken. Wiesbaden, 2014.

²⁰ *Clavis Scripturae s. seu de Sermonibus Sacrarum literarum...* Basel, 1567. The book appeared in a total of ten editions, ending in 1719. Cf.: Keller, R. *Der Schlüssel zur Schrift, Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes bei Matthias Flacius Illyricus*. Hannover, 1984, and Moldaenke, G. *Schriftverständnis und Schriftdeutung im Zeitalter der Reformation. Teil 1: Matthias Flacius Illyricus*. Stuttgart, 1936.

²¹ Kuroopka, N. *Philipp Melanchthon: Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft, Ein Gelehrter im Dienst der Kirche*. Tübingen, 2002; Bihlmaier, S. *Ars et methodus. Philipp Melanchthon's Humanist concept of Philosophy*. Göttingen, 2018.

²² Ben Tōv, A. *Lutheran Humanists and Greek Antiquity: Melanchthonian Scholarship between Universal History and Pedagogy*. Leiden, 2009; Lotito, M. A. *The Reformation of Historical Thought*. Leiden, 2019.

²³ Kolb, R. *Philipp's Foes but Followers Nonetheless: Late Humanism among the Gnesio-Lutherans*, in: *The Harvest of Humanism in Central Europe, Essays in Honor of Lewis W. Spitz* / Ed. M. P. Fleischer. Saint Louis, 1992. P. 159–177.

Thus, «Magdeburg» played a critical, multi-faceted role in the opening of the next generation of representing Luther's thought. The Magdeburg theologians played an important role in the formation of the longer «Lutheran» legacy. But the city did not stand alone in its opposition to the Interims of Augsburg and Leipzig. From Hamburg came sharp protests, especially from the pens of Joachim Westphal (1510–1574)²⁴ and Johannes Aepinus (1499–1553). Hamburg led a number of Lower Saxon towns in criticism of the Leipzig «Interim» and the developments in electoral Saxony²⁵. And, although colleagues faithful to their positions remained in Magdeburg after the departure of Wigand, Judex, and Flacius in 1556 and 1560, the core of «Gnesio-Lutheran» pastors dispersed to other locations in the next few years. Tilemann Heshusius (1527–1588) became superintendent of the Magdeburg churches in 1560; he represented the positions of his close friend Johannes Wigand and the other Gnesio-Lutherans. Two years later the city council removed him from office for pursuing independent policies, ending the Gnesio-Lutheran direction of the city's ministerium²⁶.

Flacius, Wigand, and Judex first took positions in the Ernestine Saxon government's propagation of this Gnesio-Lutheran interpretation of Luther as professors at the University of Jena²⁷. Gallus turned Regensburg into a center for the defense of the Gnesio-Lutheran positions²⁸. The county of Mansfeld continued the movement begun in Magdeburg under the leadership of Erasmus Sarcerius (1501–1509), Hieronymus Menzel (1517–1590), and Cyriakus Spangenberg (1528–1604), friends of the Magdeburg circle²⁹. In Frankfurt an der Oder, a «loner» or «Einzelgänger» named Andreas

²⁴ *Dingel, I.* Art. Westphal, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopedia*. Bd 35. Berlin, 2003. S. 712–715.

²⁵ *Controversia et Confessio*. Vol. 2. P. 38–11.

²⁶ On the conflicted end of Heshusius's leadership in Magdeburg see: *Kolb, R.* Amsdorf. P. 167–170; *Kruse, M.* Speners Kritik am Landesherrlichen Kirchenregiment und ihre Vorgeschichte. Witten, 1971. S. 63–70.

²⁷ *Gehrt, D.* Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik. Bekenntnisbildung, Herrschaftskonsolidierung und dynastische Identitätsstiftung vom Augsburger Interim 1548 bis zur Konkordienformel 1577. Leipzig, 2011. S. 68–215.

²⁸ Ground-breaking research is being done at present on Gallus in the *Habilitationsschrift* research of Dr. Astrid Schweighofer of the University of Vienna.

²⁹ *Christman, R.* Doctrinal Controversy and Lay Religiosity in Late Reformation Germany: the Case of Mansfeld. Leiden, 2012.

Musculus (1515–158) defended positions similar to those of the Magdeburg theologians even though he did not associate with them closely³⁰. By the mid-1550s leadership of the Lower Saxon elements in this movement was shifting toward the city of Braunschweig, where Joachim Mörlin (1514–1571)³¹ and Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586) slowly constructed their own «Gnesio-Lutheran» fortress. These two added to the agenda of controverted doctrines in their composition of a doctrinal statement governing the teaching of the dukedom of Prussia in 1567, the *Corpus Doctrinae Prutenicum*³². In addition, there were other centers distinct from the Gnesio-Lutheran movement that influenced the course of the interpretation and formulation of Luther's legacy. Strassburg also played a role through Johann Marbach (1521–1581), who had close connections to his fellow students from the early 1540s and generally represented interpretations of Luther's thinking close to those of «Magdeburg»³³. Württemberg's court under Duke Christoph (1515–1568) with Johann Brenz (1499–1570) and the theologians of the University of Tübingen, especially Jakob Andreae (1528–1590), also influenced the doctrinal direction of Evangelical theology.

The doctrinal cohesion among the Gnesio-Lutherans broke over issues of the role of the law in the Christian life³⁴ and original sin³⁵. The Philipists divided over the Lord's Supper and the larger direction of their ecclesiastical policy in general³⁶. Despite these divisions the larger pattern of their stances remained until 1580.

³⁰ Richter, M. *Gesetz und Heil: Eine Untersuchung zur Vorgeschichte und zum Verlauf des sogenannten Zweiten Antinomistischen Streits*. Göttingen, 1996. S. 208–250.

³¹ Kolb, R. Joachim Mörlin, Architect of Concordist Theology», in: *Preaching and Teaching the Reformation: Essays in Honor of Timothy J. Wengert*. Minneapolis, 2021 (in print).

³² Kolb, R. The Braunschweig Resolution: The *Corpus Doctrinae Prutenicum* of Joachim Mörlin and Martin Chemnitz as an Interpretation of Wittenberg Theology, in: *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan* / Hrsg. J. M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas. Aldershot, Hampshire, 2004. S. 67–89.

³³ Kittelson, J. M. *Toward an established church: Strasbourg from 1500 to the dawn of the seventeenth century*. Mainz, 2000, passim.

³⁴ Richter, M. *Gesetz und Heil*, passim.

³⁵ Dingel, I. *Concordia controversa, Die öffentlichen Diskussionen um das lutherische Konkordienwerk am Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*. Gütersloh, 1996. S. 467–541.

³⁶ Hund, J. *Das Wort ward Fleisch. Eine systematisch-theologische Untersu-*

Nonetheless, the first initiatives for the developments that to a large extent determined the shape of the Formula of Concord sprang from the endeavors of Flacius, Gallus, and Johannes Wigand. Their thinking framed and molded the discussions and disputes that led to the Formula of Concord and the body of doctrine that it passed on to seventeenth century Lutheran thinkers in critical ways. This way of teaching was being formed in Magdeburg in 1550.

The Magdeburg Interpretation of Wittenberg Theology

Nathan Rein has summarized the «worldview» that guided the city's population and its ecclesiastical leadership as well as its civil government in five «maxims»: «The world is ordered on principles that reflect the ordinances of God, but this reflection is always clouded and imperfect. Simplicity is better than sophistication. God keeps his promises; therefore, humans should as well. God works through history, and thus, the time and place in which we live are charged with providential significance. German birth makes us different from other people; being German, we are specially blessed, but we also bear special responsibilities»³⁷. What made Germans different, of course, in the eyes of the Magdeburg population was especially God's gift of Martin Luther. Particularly the Gnesio-Lutherans had continued the early Reformation acclamation of the Wittenberg professor as the third Elijah, the last prophet³⁸. But with the Italo-Croatian Flacius in their company, they recognized that God had sent Christ to die and rise for all peoples of the earth. Rein's other maxims do hold true for this group of theological leaders as well as for the general population, but these attitudes rested on the foundation of their understanding of God's actions in behalf of his creation in Jesus Christ. That faith took public form in the Confession of 1550.

Although its signers and their associates seldom cited this Confession in subsequent years directly, its selection of vital questions and its understanding of the Wittenberg legacy determined the agenda of controversy for a quarter century. Its positions foreshadowed much of the

chung zur Debatte um die Wittenberger Christologie und Abendmahlslehre in den Jahren 1567 bis 1574. Göttingen, 2006.

³⁷ Rein, N. Chancery. P. 185–207.

³⁸ Мартин Лютер: пророк, учитель и героическая личность. Санкт-Петербург, 2017. P. XX.

teaching of the Formula of Concord of 1577. The chief author of the Confession, Nikolaus Gallus, was somewhat prescient, for the tensions of 1550 concerned the chief issue raised by the «Leipzig Proposal» regarding compromises in adiaphora to stave off imperial invasion of Saxony. Nonetheless, the Confession treated topics which were central to Luther's and Melancthon's teaching and which all would require refinement as their students strove to sort out the accents in their teaching. The Formula set the framework for the theology of subsequent Lutheran teaching for more than a century and continues to exercise influence five centuries later. Later controverted points, such as those touched upon in Mörlin's and Chemnitz's Prussia Corpus doctrinae, supplemented but did not displace the issues raised by the Magdeburg Confession.

The first article of this Confession planted the Magdeburg circle firmly within the church universal by affirming the credal doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ. Its source and standard for its teaching was Holy Scripture, as confessed in the three ancient creeds of the Western church — Apostles, Nicene, Athanasian — and the Augsburg Confession. The following six articles addressed topics that would become focuses of controversies within the heirs of the Wittenberg Reformation over specific issues.

Article two anchored the doctrine of sin in God's creation of the word and lordship over it. The understanding of sin, specifically original sin, became an issue dividing the Magdeburg circle when Flacius advanced the definition of original sin as the «formal substance of the human being».³⁹ This dispute arose within the context of the larger controversy over the nature of the exercise of the human will in conversion and repentance between the Gnesio-Lutherans and the Philippists⁴⁰.

³⁹ *Controversia et Confessio*. Vol. 2. P. 476/477–478/479. Documents from these controversies are contained in «*Controversia et Confessio*» volumes 5 and 6. See: Gleiss, F. Die Weimarer Disputation von 1560: theologische Konsenssuche und Konfessionspolitik Johann Friedrichs des Mittleren. Leipzig, 2018. This controversy was addressed in article one of the *Formula of Concord: Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* / Hrsg. I. Dingel. Göttingen, 2014; henceforth: BSELK, 1218, 1227, 1318–1345.

⁴⁰ *Controversia et Confessio*. Vol. 2. P. 476/477. Documents from these controversies are contained in: *Controversia et Confessio*. Vol. 5. Cf.: Kolb, R. Bound Choice, Election, and Wittenberg Theological Method: From Martin Luther to the Formula of Concord. Grand Rapids, 2005. P. 103–270. This article was addressed in article two of the Formula of Concord: BSELK 1226–1235, 1346–

The third article of the Magdeburg Confession treated God's law and the good works it commanded. This article emphasized both the accusing force of the law in the life of sinners and the call and command of God to respond to his promises with obedience. The Confession decisively rejected both reliance on good works for salvation and antinomianism, but it did not address the question of the sense in which good works are «necessary». This terminology lay at the heart of an emerging dispute between the Magdeburgers and Wittenberg professor Georg Major over the expression of the «Leipzig Proposal» that «good works are necessary for salvation». That dispute and differences among those within the Magdeburg circle over the proper role of God's law in the Christian life — Amsdorf and others criticized the language of Flacius and Wigand, for example — as well as concern over antinomianism required treatment in the Formula⁴¹.

The fourth article of the Magdeburg Confession set forth the Wittenberg doctrine of justification by faith through the word of promise in the gospel of Christ. It rejected the teaching of the Council of Trent and also any hint of compromise with a doctrine of reliance on works for salvation that might be read in the «Leipzig Proposal». Within a year after the Confession was published, fierce disagreement erupted within the wider Wittenberg circle over the teaching of the reformer of Nuremberg, Andreas Osiander, who had fled the city when imperial troops imposed compromise with the Augsburg Interim upon it in 1549. Osiander advanced a concept of justification which laid aside Luther's and Melancthon's understanding of faith and the power of God's word of forgiveness in his teaching on justification. He relied on presuppositions gained from kabbalistic interpretation of the Old Testament. A storm of protest descended upon him and the very small group of followers whom his prince, Duke Albrecht of Prussia, persuaded to support him. Both Gnesio-Lutherans and Philippists participated

1387. The Formula's authors also believed it necessary to address a related issue regarding the doctrine of God's gracious election of believers, addressed in article eleven: BSELK 1286–1293, 1560–1597.

⁴¹ *Controversia et Confessio*. Vol. 2. P. 480–481–486/487. Documents from these controversies are contained in: *Controversia et Confessio*. Vol. 3–4; cf.: Kolb, R. Amsdorf. P. 87–125; Richter, M. *Gesetz und Heil*, passim, and Formula of Concord articles four, five, and six: BSELK 1240–1255, 1414–1453.

in this criticism⁴². For the Magdeburg circle, the teaching of justification by faith in Christ remained the foundation of biblical teaching, as seen in the Altenburg Colloquy of 1568/1569 between Gnesio-Lutherans, led by Wigand, and Philippists from electoral Saxony⁴³.

The Confession addressed the sacraments in the fifth article. Its treatments of baptism the Lord's Supper, and absolution repeated concerns that had arisen in conflicts between the Wittenberg reformers and their opponents whom they labeled «sacramentarians» and «Anabaptists» in the 1520s and 1530s⁴⁴. Three years later the Magdeburgers' ally in Hamburg, Joachim Westphal, defended Luther's understanding of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper against what he viewed as John Calvin's abandonment of a view closer to Luther's⁴⁵. This initiated two decades of dispute in which Flacius, Gallus, Wigand, and other like-minded theologians battled both adherents of Calvin and the Zurich reformer Heinrich Bullinger but also those in Melanchthon's succession at the University of Wittenberg⁴⁶. The Magdeburg theologians did not

⁴² *Controversia et Confessio*. Vol. 2. 486/487–502/503; documents relating to the controversy are found in: *Andreas Osiander der Ältere, Gesamtausgabe* / Hrsg. G. Müller, G. Seebaß. Gütersloh, 1975–1997. Vol. 9, and: *Controversia et Confessio*. Vol. 7. Cf.: *Stupperich, M.* Osiander in Preussen, 1549–1552. Berlin; New York, 1973; *Wengert, T. J.* Defending Faith. Lutheran Responses of Andreas Osiander's Doctrine of Justification, 1551–1559. Tübingen, 2012; and BSELK 1234–1241, 1388–1415.

⁴³ The Gnesio-Lutheran report is contained in: *Colloquium zu Altenburgk in Meissen Vom Artikel der Rechtfertigung vor Gott. Zwischen Der Churfürstlichen vnd Fürstlichen zu Sachsen etc. Theologen gehalten. Vom 20. Octobris Anno 1568 bis auff den 9. Martij 1569*. Jena, 1569. The Philippists published their own version of the proceedings: *Gantze vnd Vnuerfelschete Acta vnd Handlung des Colloquij zwischen den Churfürstlichen vnd Fürstlichen zu Sachsen etc. Theologen vom Artickel der Gerechtigkeit des Menschen fur Gott vnd von guten Wercken zu Aldenburgk in Meissen gehalten. Vom 20. Octobris Anno 1568. bis auff den 9. Martij / Anno 1569*. Wittenberg, 1570.

⁴⁴ *Burnett, A. N.* Debating the Sacraments: Print and Authority in the Early Reformation. Oxford; New York, 2019.

⁴⁵ *Ehlers, C.* Konfessionsbildung im Zweiten Abendmahlsstreit 1552–1558/59. Tübingen, 2021; *Chung-Kim, E.* Inventing Authority: The Use of the Church Fathers in Reformation Debates over the Eucharist. Waco, 2011.

⁴⁶ On the larger front, see: *Gollwitzer, H.* Coena Domini: Die altlutherische Abendmahlslehre in ihrer Auseinandersetzung mit dem Calvinismus dargestellt an der lutherischen Frühorthodoxie. Munich, 1937. On the resulting controversies in the wake of the Formula of Concord: *Dingel, I.* *Concordia controversa*. On the struggle with the Crypto-Calvinists (more correctly «Crypto-Philippists»). See:

know what lay before them in the following quarter century, but they did recognize the essential elements of what they had learned from Luther and Melancthon. Their Confession set the framework for the development of the reception of the Wittenberg legacy in the future⁴⁷.

The sixth article set forth the Wittenberg concept of the pastoral office as the calling of a servant of God's Word, a proclaimer of the gospel, rather than primarily a conductor of ritual, as had been the medieval priest. This concept of public ministry carried into the seventeenth century and beyond. The seventh article repeated Luther's understanding of the responsibilities and callings of people in the life-situations of political leadership and societal interaction (*politia*) and of the household (*oconomia*), with its responsibilities in family relationships and economic service to the community.

The second, longer, section of the Magdeburg Confession justified resistance to tyrannous governments when they suppressed the gospel of Christ on the basis of four arguments. The first proceeded from the definition of the purpose of God-ordained secular authority in Romans 13:1–4, to pursue the good and to counteract wickedness. When a government promotes what is contrary to God's commands and persecutes those who follow them, it has abandoned its calling to be God's tool for blessing and has become the devil's tool. That justifies resistance to a higher authority, such as the emperor, by a lower-ranking government, a «lower magistrate», such as the city of Magdeburg. Such resistance should not take up arms simply because the higher authority is guilty of the sins common to all in everyday life. The Confession left open the right of the lower magistrate to resist an unjust imposition of power by a higher magistrate, but it accorded the lower magistrate the right of self-defense in such cases. Active resistance becomes necessary when the higher magistrate attempts to force the lower magistrate to sin, as the Magdeburg city council would be doing if it accepted the imperial policy of the Augsburg Interim. «God's clear word and the unchangeable law of nature» require resistance to such tyrannous actions. This argument

Hund, J. *Wort ward Fleisch*.

⁴⁷ See: *Controversia et Confessio*. Vol. 8. It presents treatises exchanged in the controversies over the Lord's Supper and related issues of Christology. The Formula of Concord treated these controversies in articles seven, eight, and nine: BSELK 1254–1281, 1454–1549.

found support in Jesus's command to render to the emperor what belongs to him but to God what belongs to him (Matt. 22:21). Biblical examples of such resistance include Daniel and Naboth (1 Kings 21); from church history the models of Ambrose and Lawrence were cited. Luther's concept of the Christian's calling to positions of responsibility with specific commands for specific callings guided the Magdeburg thinking, and Gallus also presumed that self-defense is part of God's design for human nature⁴⁸.

This spirit took hold among the Gnesio-Lutheran associates of the Magdeburgers. Simon Musaeus (1521–1576), Tilemann Heshusius, and others as well as Flacius, Judex, and Wigand, were sent into exile for protesting and resisting the plans of their rulers. The pattern of defense of the radicality of Luther's proclamation of the unconditional promise of God in Jesus Christ led these Magdeburgers into protest against governmental interference in churchly matters and oppression of subjects with demands for taxes and other unjust measures⁴⁹.

For the most part, late sixteenth and seventeenth century Lutheran preachers recognized that preaching the Ten Commandments coincided with the interests of secular government in preserving order and productivity in society. The twenty-first century accusation that they became submissive servants of the prince often ignores or downplays this basic fact. But exceptions demonstrate that the argumentation of the Magdeburg Confession, even though it was seldom cited, remained present in the consciousness of subsequent generations. For example, the ministerium of the county of Lippe joined its nobility in resisting absolutizing tendencies of their count⁵⁰, as did Swedish Lutherans in defiance of their king. Individuals, such as Paul Gerhardt, also refused to submit to rulers' dictates against their consciences⁵¹.

⁴⁸ *Controversia et Confessio*. Vol. 2. P. 552–585.

⁴⁹ Kolb, R. Dynamics. P. 11–14.

⁵⁰ Schilling, H. Konfessionskonflikt und Staatsbildung: eine Fallstudie über das Verhältnis von religiösem und sozialem Wandel in der Frühneuzeit am Beispiel der Grafschaft Lippe. Gütersloh, 1981.

⁵¹ Ruschke, J. Paul Gerhardt und der Berliner Kirchenstreit, eine Untersuchung der konfessionellen Auseinandersetzungen über die kurfürstlich verordnete «mutua tolerantia». Tübingen, 2012.

Conclusion

In responding to the invitation of the city council of Magdeburg to lead introduction of Wittenberg reforms into the city in 1524, Nikolaus von Amsdorf created a spirit and a worldview among its residents that turned them against Charles V's attempt to suppress the entire Wittenberg movement, as expressed in the Augsburg Interim a quarter century later. Amsdorf returned, and both the policy of the city and the figure of this close friend of Luther and Melanchthon attracted others who opposed the Augsburg Interim and also the religious direction of the new electoral Saxon government of Moritz. «Magdeburg» became the fortress defending the Wittenberg legacy. The theology and practice of the group of pastors that assembled there combined with the city's abhorrence of both tyrannous political domination and deviations from Wittenberg interpretation of the gospel of Christ to create this fortress. The ecclesiastical leadership found support from a number of other places in the German-speaking lands, and these most of these leaders left Magdeburg during the 1550s. But from 1550 to 1560 they constructed a scholarly and theological program that vitally shaped the future of Lutheran teaching, especially through the work of Martin Chemnitz. He had not lived in Magdeburg, but he shared the basic views of its leadership on vital issues in the interpretation of Luther's and Melanchthon's theology⁵². In the pilgrimage of Wittenberg students into a new generation and a new century «Magdeburg» served as an important bridge.

Information on the article

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In responding to the invitation of the city council of Magdeburg to lead introduction of Wittenberg reforms into the city in 1524, Nikolaus von Amsdorf created a spirit and a worldview among its residents that turned them against Charles V's attempt to suppress the entire Wittenberg movement, as expressed in the Augsburg

⁵² *Kolb, R. The Formula of Concord as a Model for Discourse in the Church, in: Concordia Journal. 2006. Vol. 32. P. 189–210.*

Interim a quarter century later. Amsdorf returned, and both the policy of the city and the figure of this close friend of Luther and Melanchthon attracted others who opposed the Augsburg Interim and also the religious direction of the new electoral Saxon government of Moritz. «Magdeburg» became the fortress defending the Wittenberg legacy. The theology and practice of the group of pastors that assembled there combined with the city's abhorrence of both tyrannous political domination and deviations from Wittenberg interpretation of the gospel of Christ to create this fortress. The ecclesiastical leadership found support from a number of other places in the German-speaking lands, and these most of these leaders left Magdeburg during the 1550s. But from 1550 to 1560 they constructed a scholarly and theological program that vitally shaped the future of Lutheran teaching, especially through the work of Martin Chemnitz. He had not lived in Magdeburg, but he shared the basic views of its leadership on vital issues in the interpretation of Luther's and Melanchthon's theology⁵³. In the pilgrimage of Wittenberg students into a new generation and a new century «Magdeburg» served as an important bridge.

Key words: Magdeburg, Nikolaus von Amsdorf, Interim, Luther, Melanchthon, Martin Chemnitz

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В ответ на приглашение городского совета Магдебурга возглавить проведение виттенбергских реформ в городе в 1524 г. Николай фон Амсдорф сформировал среди горожан такие настроения, которые были направлены против попытки Карла V подавить все виттенбергское движение, нашедшей выражение в середине века в Аугсбургском Интериме. Амсдорф вернулся, и как политик городского уровня и как близкий друг Лютера и Меланхтона, сплотил вокруг себя многих, выступавших против временного соглашения, а также против линии религиозных реформ, избранной Морицем Саксонским. «Магдебург» стал крепостью, защищавшей наследие Виттенберга. Это было следствием того, что богословие и практика пасторов, действующих в городе, соединялась с отвращением горожан к тирании и любым отклонениям

⁵³ *Kolb, R. The Formula of Concord as a Model for Discourse in the Church, in: Concordia Journal. 2006. Vol. 32. P. 189–210.*

от виттенбергской интерпретации евангелия. Лидеры церкви были востребованы и в других землях Германии, и многие из них покинули Магдебург в 1550-х гг. Однако в период с 1550 по 1560 г. они разработали научную и богословскую программу, которая существенно повлияла на будущее лютеранского учения. Это в первую очередь труд Мартина Хемница. Он не жил в Магдебурге, но разделял основные взгляды его руководства по насущным вопросам толкования богословия Лютера и Меланхтона. Таким образом, учение магдебуржцев было связующим звеном между началом Реформации в Виттенберге и периодом ортодоксии.

Ключевые слова: Магдебург, Николаус фон Амсдорф, Интерим, Лютер, Меланхтон, Мартин Хемниц

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