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The Echo of Controversy: Caspar Fuger's Attempt to Propagate the Formula of Concord among the Common People

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Controversy and criticism immediately greeted the Formula of Concord, the result of the last large-scale attempt to achieve comprehensive confessional unity within German Lutheranism, following its composition and dissemination (1577/1580). Most critiques were directed at a theologically educated audience, but through translations composed in the vernacular the challenge was carried to the popular level. Defenders of the Formula had to secure support from the common people. One vehicle for securing such support was Caspar Fuger's *A Brief, True, and Simple Report of the Book Called the Formula of Concord*, composed in the form of a catechism. This study of the factors which impelled Fuger to issue his popular appeal, the topics he addressed, and his mode of meeting opponents' arguments reveals the conditions under which he and others attempted to secure popular allegiance for the Formula within the specific historical context, and what structures were chosen to counter the attacks of critics.

THE FORMULA OF CONCORD is generally recognized as the last of the great Lutheran confessional documents. It was the result of an attempt to create an all-embracing unity in the confession of the faith. This attempt extended over a long period but finally failed. A six-man committee of theologians met at Cloister Bergen in 1577¹ to complete the definitive and final revisions of the so-called Torgau Book. This Bergen Book (which became the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord) incorporated reactions to the previously circulated text of the Torgau Book from various principalities and cities. This committee had undertaken its work at the behest of the leading German Evangelical princes,² nonetheless, it intended to

¹With Jakob Andreae, Nikolaus Selnecker, Martin Chemnitz, David Chytraeus, Andreas Musculus, and Christoph Corner were Württemberg, Electoral Saxony, Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, and Electoral Brandenburg represented as the most prominent supporters of the Concordian settlement. David Chytraeus from Rostock can be seen as a representative of Mecklenburg, but like Chemnitz, he was more important for the effort because of his personal reputation as a theologian and because of his work on the third stage of the composition of the Formula, the "Swabian-Saxon Concord."

²The chief promoters of the Concordia settlement were Duke Christoph of Württemberg (later his son Ludwig), Duke Julius of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, and from 1574 on, Elector August of Saxony. On the preparatory stages of the Formula of Concord, see *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* [hereafter cited as BSLK], 8th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), xxxii-xlv. In addition see Inge Mager, *Die Konkordienformel im Fürstentum Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel: Entstehungsbeitrag, Rezeption, Geltung*, Studien zur Kirchengeschichte Niedersachsens, 33 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); and Ernst Koch, "Striving for the Union of Lutheran Churches: The Church-Historical Background of the Work Done on the Formula of Concord at Magdeburg," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 8, no. 4 (1977): 105-121.

create, first and foremost, not a political unity, but above all the basis for a theological *concordia*.

In the sixteenth century, faith and the confession of the faith were not exclusively the domain of individual decision, as we have slowly come to regard them since the Enlightenment. Indeed, the Reformation emphasis on the saving faith of the individual, which God effects, did oppose the collective administration of the treasures of grace by the church. The Reformers, by contrast, emphasized the individual standing before God. Nonetheless, this did not mean that the autonomous subject could freely decide what is right in thought or action. Instead, the individual remained bound in a dualism that embraced correct belief on the one hand, and social and political order on the other. These two poles continued to be closely connected, and they necessarily supported each other. Pluralism or even fragmentation of theological teaching and of the confession of the faith was viewed as a threat to the common good. The Reformers' message had indeed liberated Christians from the compulsion of the demands for human performance in winning salvation. Nonetheless, it was still true that harmony, agreement—peace and unity, or in Latin, *concordia*—formed “the foundation of the order of the world as Christians understood it.”³

This had been the case throughout the Middle Ages. Individual liberation on the one hand contrasted with the social and political necessity of religious *concordia*. By the same token, the *ordo politicus* had been established by God. This political order had been given the responsibility before the judge of the universe to guarantee that the subjects whom God had entrusted to the ruler would practice the proper worship of God in peace and unity. A correct, standardized confession of faith—and the commitment to that confession which the governing authorities established and administered—promoted the preservation of the common good. Within the bounds of such a confession, every individual could be protected from deceptive false teachings, which could carry one unawares away from the right path to God.

This is, in summary, the ideological framework in which the origin of the Formula of Concord must be understood. Historically considered, it is the Protestant confession that has elicited the most controversy and criticism. Neither in the sixteenth century nor in later periods did it accomplish the theological concord which it sought, although those who were theologically trained rose to its defense with abundant apologetic, for both political and ecclesiastical reasons. Some ecclesiastical leaders also attempted to make the theological content of this extensive document speak to the common people—albeit in a highly condensed form—and to set aside all second thoughts that they might have. Even in the sixteenth century, support among the common people was important for the governing officials.

³Klaus Schreiner, “Rechtgläubigkeit als ‘Band der Gesellschaft’ und ‘Grundlage des Staates.’ Zur eidlichen Verpflichtung von Staats- und Kirchendienern auf die ‘Formula Concordiae’ und das ‘Konkordienbuch,’” in *Bekenntnis und Einheit der Kirche, Studien zum Konkordienbuch*, ed. Martin Brecht and Reinhard Schwarz (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1980), 353.

A tract by Caspar Fuger,⁴ a theologian from Dresden and former electoral Saxon court preacher, offers a paradigm for such attempts at defending the Formula of Concord before a popular audience. It appeared in print shortly before the Formula was published in 1580 under the title *A Brief, True, and Simple Report on the Book Called The Formula of Concord*.⁵ It was apparently designed to help pave the way for the Lutheran confession of the faith in electoral Saxony. This principality had turned to a more distinctly Lutheran form of church life as a result of the suppression of so-called Crypto-Calvinism in 1574, three years before the final editing of the Formula of Concord. Fuger echoed the arguments that were being set before the learned public in such a way as to indicate that he was striving to win popular support for the Formula. His tract's publication in the vernacular and its simplified argument suggest a popular audience. In addition, Fuger used the genre of catechism, the most popular medium of the age for the religious instruction of the common people. To understand why Caspar Fuger chose this approach, we must briefly sketch the presuppositions governing the consolidation of Lutheranism through the Formula of Concord, as well as the critical responses to it in the controversies that arose with its publication. Finally, we shall review the kinds of attempts which were made to neutralize objections to the carefully crafted "concordia," which were being pressed in the public arena.

PRESUPPOSITIONS BEHIND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION OF FAITH AND ITS THEOLOGICAL GOAL

After the death of Martin Luther (1546) and the publication of the Augsburg and Leipzig Interims (1548), a host of controversies broke out within the camp of the German Evangelicals. With the death of Philip Melancthon (1560) they had lost their second great authority figure, next to Luther. It was a sorry scene. Protestantism in the German empire presented the picture of a group collapsing in upon itself, fractured in faith and doctrine. At about this time Roman Catholicism had emerged strengthened by the Council of Trent. In the Second Helvetic Confession European Calvinism had experienced a confessional consolidation extending beyond national borders. All the while, the followers of the Augsburg Confession were grappling with developments that not only addressed the general question of

⁴Caspar Fuger or Füger was born in Dresden in 1521. His name is found in the matriculation list of the University of Leipzig in 1541; there he received the baccalaureate degree and soon thereafter earned the master of arts. He served as court preacher several years in Torgau and Freiberg and became deacon at the Church of the Holy Cross in Dresden in 1562, where he remained until retirement in 1587. He died five years later. See *Sächsisches Pfarrerbuch: Die Parochien und Pfarrer der Ev.-luth. Landeskirche Sachsens (1539-1939)*, vol. 2, pt. 1, ed. Reinhold Grünberg (Freiberg i. Sa.: n.p.1940):214.

⁵*Kurtzer/Warhafftiger vnd einfeltiger Bericht/ von dem Buch/ Formula Concordiae: Fu(e)r die albern vnd einfeltigen/ auff Frage vnd Antwort gestellt/ ...* (Dresden: [Gimel Bergen], 1580). Evidence for its appearance before June 25, 1580, is found in question 16: "Will this book [the Formula of Concord] still be issued and appear in the public forum and be read among the people?" *ibid.*, E3a.

faithfulness to their confession⁶ but also appeared to modify the heart of the Evangelical confession, the Lutheran doctrine of justification.

Controversies rent the Lutheran churches over the significance of good works,⁷ the role of the human will in relationship to God,⁸ the function of the proclamation of the law,⁹ and the indwelling of the divine righteousness in the human creature.¹⁰ Added to these were issues raised by contemporary Calvinistic thought, which expressed themselves in controversies over predestination¹¹ and the Lord's Supper.¹²

Above all, at this same time these Calvinizing tendencies gave the religious differences a political relevance, for the Religious Peace of Augsburg (1555) guaranteed toleration under imperial law only to those who subscribed to the Augsburg Confession. The Calvinists were excluded from the Pax Augustana. From the late 1550s on, attempts had been made by the princes to hold the Evangelical estates together under the one doctrinal position of the Augsburg Confession. But neither the diet of Evangelical princes at Frankfurt in 1558 nor that at Naumburg in 1561 led to such unanimity in the confession of the faith.

At Naumburg the government and theologians of the Palatinate, who were already tending toward Calvinism, sought a general recognition of the altered Augsburg Confession, with its more open formulation of the Confession's article on the Lord's Supper, as a permissible interpretation of the Unaltered version. Especially Duke Johann Friedrich the Middlerer of Saxony opposed this attempt, and with it the Palatinate suggestion that the princes set before the emperor an explanation of their common subscription to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession in this more open sense. Johann Friedrich had commissioned the Weimar *Book of Confutation*, prepared by his court theologian Matthias Flacius Illyricus and several

⁶In the Adiaphoristic controversy (1548-1552 and even later) Matthias Flacius Illyricus, Joachim Westphal, and others insisted against Melancthon and his disciples that *in statu confessionis* even less central points of the evangelical confession could in no way be subject to public compromise.

⁷Against Georg Major's proposition that "good works are necessary for salvation" several theologians brought strong objections in the Majoristic controversy (1552-1558), and indeed Nikolaus von Amsdorf advanced the counter-proposition that "good works are detrimental to salvation."

⁸The Synergistic controversy (1555-1563) placed first Johann Pffeffinger and Nikolaus von Amsdorf, later Viktorin Strigel and several Gnesio-Lutherans, above all Matthias Flacius Illyricus and Johannes Wigand, in opposition. The point of departure in this controversy was Melancthon's doctrine of the three *causae concurrentes* in the conversion of the human creature, which placed the human will alongside the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

⁹The "first" antinomian controversy between Johann Agricola and Philip Melancthon caused dissension within the circle of Luther's followers already in the 1520s and 1530s. Later so-called antinomian controversies, in the 1550s and 1560s, involved different issues; one ranged Anton Otho and Anton Poach against Flacius and Wigand, another Andreas Musculus against Abdias Praetorius.

¹⁰In the so-called Osiandrian controversy (1549-1566), Andreas Osiander and his few followers viewed this inhabitation of the divine nature of Christ as the basis for the justification of the sinner and thus diminished the worth of the human nature of Christ.

¹¹In 1561-1563, controversy arose between Johann Marbach and Hieronymus Zanchi in Strasbourg on the doctrine of election and the perseverance of the saints.

¹²The second controversy over the Lord's Supper between John Calvin and Joachim Westphal, which took place 1555-1562, made a deep impression. On these intra-Protestant controversies mentioned in notes 7-12, see *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, ed. Carl Andresen, vol. 2: *Die Lehrentwicklung im Rahmen der Konfessionalität* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980): 102-138.

associates in 1559, as a response to the Frankfurt Recess, which Melancthon had composed in 1558. This *Book of Confutation* demanded faithfulness to the confession without any compromise. The duke won the support of some other estates for its position.¹³

After the Palatinate officially adopted a Calvinist theological position in its new church order and in the Heidelberg Catechism, in 1563, the attempt was made at the instigation of the Palatinate's Lutheran neighbors, Duke Christoph of Württemberg, Count Palatine Wolfgang of Zweibrücken, and Margrave Karl of Baden, to set aside the differences between the two parties at the Colloquy of Maulbronn (1564). There among others, the Württemberg Lutheran Jakob Andreae and the Palatine Calvinist Zacharias Ursinus confronted each other face to face.¹⁴ But their thorough discussion of critical issues failed to reconcile the two sides.

The collapse of all these princely efforts to set aside differences and achieve unity in the confession of the faith left the field to the theologians. The governments of Württemberg, Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel and, at first, also Hesse had supported their efforts at establishing concord. Later, electoral Saxony, above all, joined the group; Hesse left the circle of those who were promoting the Concordia through the efforts of these theologians. In the end, although they were commissioned by the princes, it was the theologians who were entrusted with the assignment of working out the basis for theological unity. At last, in 1577 they fulfilled this assignment with the drafting of the Formula of Concord. It was not conceived as a new confession. Instead, it was designed to win definitive recognition as the authoritative interpretation of the teaching of the Augsburg Confession within the context of the controversies which had erupted at the time.

Some of the disputes had already been settled to a large extent. In fact, the authors of the Formula of Concord actually succeeded only in concluding those disputes that had been largely resolved beforehand. Further discussion took place regarding the doctrine of original sin, over which the Flacians had disputed with other Gnesio-Lutherans, and above all over the doctrine of the Lord's Supper (along with the closely associated questions of Christology), which had caused controversy among Lutherans, Philippists, and Calvinists. The Flacians were repeatedly driven out of their pastorates and professorships and thus were not able to exercise significant theological influence. On the other hand, the controversies over the proper understanding of the Lord's Supper, which broke out again in reaction to the Formula of Concord, attained great political relevance, precisely because the Formula of Concord had made the unaltered Augsburg Confession the basis of its teaching. Thus, it appeared to assert not only an anti-Calvinistic, but also

¹³These were the North German cities and the Lower Saxon Circle. Cf. on the Frankfurt Recess, Gustav Wolf, *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Protestanten 1555-1559* (Berlin, 1888), 110-126, and on the Diet of Naumburg, Robert Calinich, *Der Naumburger Fürstentag 1561. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Luthertums und des Melancthonismus aus den Quellen des Königlichen Hauptstaatsarchivs zu Dresden* (Gotha, 1870).

¹⁴Wagenmann/Nestle, s.v. "Maulbronn," *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 3d ed., ed. J. C. Hinrichs, vol. 12 (1912): 441-445.

a menacing anti-Philippistic interpretation of the Religious Peace of Augsburg. The controversies over the Formula of Concord carried especially the debates concerning the Lord's Supper and Christology into the broader public forum. The Formula of Concord, which was intended to introduce theological clarification and unanimity in the confession of the faith, had the opposite effect: it was responsible for triggering a host of new public controversies.

DIRECTIONS IN WHICH THE ECHO OF THE FORMULA OF CONCORD
RESOUNDED

Even before the publication of the Book of Concord in 1580 individual critiques of it by theologians and other scholars found their way into print. They cast doubt upon the procedures which the authors of the Formula of Concord had followed, particularly their preparation of a confession without recourse to a general synod, and their right to pronounce condemnations of doctrines as they formulated their teaching. Both points highlight concerns that all opponents of the Concordia had in common, and each was discussed with varying degrees of emphasis in the public forum.

The question of whether the pronouncement of such condemnations was compatible with Christian love was first fought out in Strasbourg, in the controversy between the rector of the Academy there, Johann Sturm, and Johann Marbach's successor as president of the Assembly of Clergy, Johann Pappus. The Assembly of Clergy had already committed itself firmly to the Formula of Concord. In view of this fact, Sturm feared that the lutheranization of the city could destroy the international reputation and even the existence of his Academy, which the sons of the upper middle class and the nobility from various parts of Europe had been attending. The Academy's attraction for both Lutheran and Calvinist elites could be preserved only if a middle course between the two confessional groups was maintained. Apart from this concern, Sturm's own personal experiences bound him very closely to the persecuted Huguenots in France. They felt that they were being crowded into a corner by the Formula of Concord and thus abandoned by those who subscribed to the Augsburg Confession. The written exchanges from Sturm's initially private dispute with Pappus were gathered and printed as a collection in Geneva in 1579.¹⁵

Landgrave Wilhelm of Hesse warned against going public with shrill protests against the publication and enforcement of the new *Corpus doctrinae*, the Book of Concord. He regarded it as a diplomatic mistake to take a public position on a book that he still fully doubted could be successfully introduced. Nonetheless, from Geneva came publications which strongly represented the interests of the Calvinists. There Theodore Beza, Lambert Danaeus, François Hotman, and Jean-François Salvard were active; they constituted a significant group among those forces that

¹⁵Johann Sturm, *Antipappi tres contra D. Ioannis Pappi charitatem et condemnationem Christianam ...* (Geneva: n.p., 1579).

represented the interests of Western European Protestantism against the development of the Lutheran confessional church of the Formula of Concord.

In cooperation with the Genevan Company of Pastors but against the recommendation of Landgrave Wilhelm, François Hotman, the French lawyer and religious refugee, issued his judgment on the legally untenable procedure of the Concordia theologians in a booklet entitled *Protestatio nullitatis* [*Presentation of the Vanity* (of the Formula of Concord)], published under the pseudonym Joannes Palmer. He criticized them for possessing neither the juridical competence of independent judges nor the theological qualifications to pronounce condemnations in matters in which they had personal concerns, especially in regard to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The illegitimacy of their judgment, which had been issued without a single hearing of those who disagreed at a general synod, discredited the Concordian fathers in his eyes. So did their flagrant exaggeration of the significance of the writings of Martin Luther, to which—in Hotman's opinion—they accorded the same authority as the Word of God and the four ecumenical councils of the ancient church. The entire process of eliciting agreement and subscription to the Formula of Concord was another point of his criticism. Secrecy in procedure, the use of deception and coercion in obtaining subscriptions to the document, and the possibility of subscription through a representative rather than in one's own hand, which simply bypassed the individual in the decision-making process, were to him signs of indefensible deceit on the part of the Concordia fathers.¹⁶ Hotman's joining in the fray triggered a polemical exchange with the superintendent of the churches in Lubeck, Andreas Pouchenius, a dispute in which the former pastor of the congregation of French refugees in Frankfurt am Main, Jean-François Salvard, also intervened.¹⁷

Shortly before the appearance of Hotman's booklet, the Dutch Calvinists joined the battle under the leadership of the court preacher of the house of Orange, Pierre Loyseleur de Villiers, with a "Circular Letter of the Dutch Church."¹⁸ Although the Formula of Concord was intended above all to unite the Evangelical churches within the German empire, the Dutch felt that the condemnations of false doctrine in the Formula of Concord clearly struck against them, since all those who disagreed with the document's doctrine were to be ostracized.¹⁹ This was viewed as a grievous threat, not in the least because the religious peace of June 22, 1578, which had been negotiated for the Netherlands, not only guaranteed toleration both to the Roman Catholics and to the adherents of the Augsburg

¹⁶See Joannes Palmer, *Protestatio nullitatis Aduersus Condemnationem Orthodoxarum Ecclesiarum, nuper institutam a quibusdam Doctoribus vbiq[ua]ritarijs ...* ([Geneva: Jacob Stoer], 1578).

¹⁷Pouchenius, *Ad Iohannis Palmerii sacramentarii protestationes oppositas Formulae Concordiae: Christiana responsio* ([Lubeck: Assver Kroeger, 1579]). Salvard, *In virulentem planeq[ue] sophisticam Andraee Pouchenii superintendentis Lubecensis Criminationem ...* (Geneva: François Le Preux, 1580).

¹⁸*Sendbriefff Der KirchenDiener/ so in den Reformirten Kirchen der Niederlanden das wort Gottes Predigen: Geschrieben An die Authores oder Schreiber deß Bergischen Buchs / welches sie das Concordien Buch nennen* ([n.p., n.p.], 1580), a translation of *Ministorvm qui verbum Dei in reformatis in Belgio ecclesis concionatur, ad authores Libri Bergensis, qui etiam Concordiae dicitur, Epistola* ([n.p., n.p.], 1580). A Dutch translation by Jeremias Bastynck is dated 1580.

¹⁹Cf. the foreword to the Formula of Concord in BSLK, 755.18–757.19.

Confession; it also secured the free practice of religion for the Calvinists.²⁰ This resulted in continuing tensions and finally led to the secession of the Catholic Walloon provinces through the Treaty of Arras in January 1579 and to their rapprochement with Spain. Thus, the urgent demand which the "Circular Letter" [*Sendbrief*] placed before the theologians of the Formula of Concord called for a "legitimate, impartial synod"²¹ which would establish an all-embracing Christian unity. For the Dutch, this demand was not only a theological but also a critical political concern.

Johann Wigand, the Gnesio-Lutheran bishop of Pomesanien in Prussia, answered another printed challenge to the Formula of Concord from Loyseleur. This treatise called for a new theological and political *concordia*.²² In his reply Wigand made it clear that a general European alliance of Protestants against the threat of the combined might of the papacy and the French and Spanish kingdoms was of no interest to those who had composed the Formula. Their efforts in behalf of ecclesiastical unity within the empire sprang simply from theological concerns.²³ The theologians of the Formula had sought only to guarantee the purity and truth of the confession of the faith. This observation caused Loyseleur to declare that they were lacking in political insight and bunglers in the field of diplomacy.

The polemical works that publicly pressed their case against the Formula of Concord and the Book of Concord before the two had appeared in print emphasized the failure to call a general synod and the condemnation of false doctrine. After 1580 the reactions gave priority to questions of doctrine. In addition, they addressed the way in which the content of the Formula was composed, as well as the authority it accorded to the Augsburg Confession and the standing it attributed to Martin Luther.²⁴

A compendium of Calvinist protests against the Concordian settlement was issued by the press of Matthaeus Harnisch in Neustadt/Hardt in 1581. With the appearance of this work, the *Admonitio Christiana* [*Christian Admonition*] of Zacharias Ursinus,²⁵ it became clear that the driving force behind the protests against the Concordian settlement was Prince Johann Casimir, the second son of Elector Frederick the Pious of the Palatinate and brother of Elector Ludwig VI, who had

²⁰It "established permission for public exercise of religion to each of the three confessions anywhere where they were represented by at least one hundred families." The acceptance of this Peace was left to the discretion of the individual provinces; see *Nuntiatuiberichte aus Deutschland nebst ergänzenden Aktenstücken: Dritte Abteilung 1572-1585*, ed. Joseph Hansen (Berlin, 1894), 2: lvi. On further developments and the largely unsuccessful Conference of Pacification for the Netherlands, held at Cologne, 1579, *ibid.*, xxxvi-lxv. The Religious Peace of Augsburg was never valid in the Netherlands.

²¹*Sendbrief* Der Kirchen Diener, 7-11; *Epistola*, 7-9.

²²*Ratio ineundae Concordiae inter Ecclesias Reformatas: Siue Quibus modis occurri possit mirificis artibus, quibus Pontificij per quasdam imprudentes Theologos vniuersas Christi ecclesias potissimum autem & primum Germanicas pessundare conantur ...* (n.p., n.p., 1579).

²³Wigand, *Commonefactio de fraudibus quorundam Sacramentarium: Opposita scripto anonymo: De ratione ineundae concordiae* (Wittenberg [n.p., 1579]).

²⁴See Irene Dingel, "Ablehnung und Aneignung. Die Bewertung der Autorität Martin Luthers in den Auseinandersetzungen um die Konkordienformel," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 105 (1994): 35-57.

²⁵*De libro Concordiae quem vocant, A quibusdam Theologis, nomine quorundam Ordinum Augustanae Confessionis, edito, Admonitio Christiana: Scripta Theologis et Ministris Ecclesiarum in ditone Illustrissimi Principis Iohannis Casimiri Palatini ad Rhenum Bauariae Ducis, etc.* (Neustadt: Matthaeus Harnisch, 1581).

become a Lutheran. At the same time similar protests were registered in the principality of Anhalt and in the city of Bremen. Duke Johann Casimir tried to influence these protests by propagating the *Christian Admonition* as well as a work by a municipal bureaucrat from Nuremberg, a Calvinist partisan, Christoph Herdesianus, to support his position against the Book of Concord.²⁶ In this book Herdesian described the Formula of Concord as a deviation from the progress that had been made in the previous decades toward confessional openness and conciliation. He alleged that the theologians of the Concordian settlement lacked judgment and the proper critical understanding—in contrast to the model that Martin Luther had presented in faith and doctrine.

Herdesian's work and the *Admonitio Christiana*—as well as the more cautious echoes of the dispute over the Concordia from the theologians of Anhalt and Bremen—reveal what questions would become the focus of the discussion regarding the Formula of Concord among theologians in the following years, and what kind of atmosphere would surround these discussions. However, these critiques, in contrast to the Genevan and Dutch criticism issued before the publication of the Book of Concord in 1580, did not play a role in the campaign to win acceptance of the Formula of Concord among the common people. This may have been due in part to the fact that they directed the debate toward a more learned class of readers, even though most of them appeared in German translation as well as in the Latin original. Critical, however in their failure to shape the efforts to propagate the Formula on the popular level was the simple factor of chronology. The campaign in its defense for the support of the common people had to begin immediately, in that moment when critical voices first attempted to discredit the Concordian efforts toward unity. Thus, it was absolutely necessary for the defenders of the Formula to counterbalance the initial efforts of its opponents even before the publication of the Book of Concord and therefore to set in place a popular defense against the further critiques which could still be expected to appear.

HOW LUTHERAN LEADERS TRIED TO NEUTRALIZE OPPOSITION TO THE FORMULA OF CONCORD IN PUBLICATIONS FOR THE COMMON PEOPLE

Passionate polemical works over acceptance of the Book of Concord began to appear on the academic level before its publication. More modest were the literary efforts that aimed at winning the support of the common people, attempting to make the decisions of the Formula of Concord understandable in their terms. Nonetheless, it was deemed necessary to confront the threat of doctrinal drift among the populace promptly in view of the work of those who opposed the efforts for concord, who began to broadcast criticism from various sides. Without prompt action this doctrinal uncertainty could gradually spread. An approach had to be found quickly to meet directly the skilled arguments of the opponents. The

²⁶ *Consensus orthodoxvs sacrae scripturae et veteris ecclesiae, de sententia et veritate verborum coenae Dominicae ...* (Heidelberg: [Johannes Maier, impensis Matthaei Harnisch], 1574; later editions: Zurich, 1578, 1585; one further edition apparently, 1605.

case made by the Formula's proponents would have to make sense to the common people. It would have been untenable to permit the years of effort at attaining unity among the Protestants to collapse shortly before the publication of the Book of Concord because the people would not accept it.

This popular campaign for the acceptance of the Book of Concord took place in several literary genres, each of which used means that had proved successful in the early period of the Reformation. In 1579, through preaching and the published sermon, Jacob Andreae tried to propagate the doctrine of the Formula of Concord among the common people²⁷ and to clarify the procedures which led to its composition. His five sermons on the Concordian effort were quickly available in a little book.²⁸ In view of the rising literacy of the second half of the sixteenth century, it can be presumed that it was broadly disseminated in the manner in which the early pamphlets of the Reformation found their audience.²⁹

Alongside the sermon stands the poetic piece, designed for reading aloud. In 1578 an anonymous author³⁰ entered the lists with a longer poetic effort, published together with a prayer by Johann Habermann, who had become superintendent of the Stift at Naumburg-Weitz after many years as a pastor in electoral Saxony and brief periods as an instructor at the universities of Jena and Wittenberg.³¹ The poem defended Jacob Andreae against attacks and mockery from all sides. It charged that the opponents of the Formula of Concord were the ones primarily responsible for the final division of the Evangelical churches and for the misfortune which these opponents were alleging had erupted with the Formula's composition. According to the anonymous author, Andreae (whose name at birth had been Schmidt) faithfully lived up to this name; for he had forged the Concordian settlement with the tongs of God's Word and had fashioned the Formula of Concord as nothing more than a presentation of the unadulterated, true doctrine of the scripture. Thus, he had prepared the way to unity and peace without any self-promotion, of which he was frequently accused.³² Indeed, through his poem the author

²⁷His chief emphasis fell upon the questions of Christology and particularly the two natures of Christ.

²⁸The Dresden edition is dated 1580. Andreae himself reported in his dedicatory preface to the electoral Saxon nobility, that opponents of the Concordianist effort were responsible for the unauthorized Magdeburg and Eisleben printings of the sermons which he had delivered in Wittenberg and Leipzig; see Andreae, *Fu(e)ntf Predigen: Von dem Wercke der Concordien, Vnd endlicher Vergleichung der vnorgefallenen streitigen Religions Artickeln ...* (Dresden: Gmel Bergen, 1580 [also an edition, Tübingen: Alexander Hock, 1580]), B1b-a.

²⁹A similar homiletical effort by Andreae had launched the drive which created the Formula of Concord, his *Sechs Christliche Predig Von den Spaltungen so sich zwischen den Theologen Augspurgischer Confession von Anno 1548 biss auff diss 1573. Jar nach vnd nach erhaben ...* (Tübingen: Georg Gruppenbach, 1573), in English translation (with introduction) by Robert Kolb, *Andreae and the Formula of Concord: Six Sermons on the Way to Lutheran Unity* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977).

³⁰The name of the author appears to be hidden under the abbreviation M.C.B.V. on the title page.

³¹Habermann (1516-1590) later (1581) was appointed electoral commissioner for obtaining the subscriptions of the Wittenberg professors to the Formula of Concord. See Hermann Beck, "Habermann, Johannes," in *Realencyklopädie Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 3d ed., 7:281-282.

³²*Lobwürdige preisung der Formula Concordiae, kurtzlich in Reimenweiß verfasst. M.C.B.V. Darbey ein schon Gebett Vmb einigkeit des Glaubens / Johann Habermans* (n.p., n.p., 1578), A1a-B2b.

contributed to the view that Andreae was really the only creator of the Formula of Concord, an argument often advanced by its foes. Thus the participation and the conciliatory influence of Martin Chemnitz, Nikolaus Selnecker, and David Chytraeus, who were at least as important as Andreae, were completely overlooked.

Particularly interesting as a third type of literary form is a handbook, composed in the form of a catechism, the *Brief, True, and Simple Report*.³³ This “catechism on Concordia” by Caspar Fuger offers a clear example of the effort to provide the common people with a solid anchor in the midst of the sharp criticism which was beginning to ferment against the Formula. At the same time, it attempted to explain the doctrine of the Formula of Concord, reduced to a brief extract. While the Formula of Concord, with its two parts, the “Epitome” and the “Solid Declaration,” formed a weighty volume, which would have required several hours to read, the *Brief, True, and Simple Report* of the former electoral court preacher offered a summary of the articles of the Formula of Concord reduced to ten quarto pages. He raised the number of articles from twelve to fourteen by replacing Article 12, against “other factions and sects,” with three loci fashioned for popular consumption, on each of the three “estates” of medieval and Lutheran social theory, “*ecclesia, oeconomia, and politia*,” church, household, and state.³⁴ Article 12 of the Formula had indeed included comments on the errors of Anabaptist and Schwenckfeldian theologies in regard to the three social estates.

The detailed explanation of proper teaching and false teaching, characteristic of the Formula of Concord, was reduced to the briefest statements for each of the fourteen articles and presented alongside each other in two columns. The doctrine of the Formula of Concord is decisively identified with the Word of God. Fuger did not begin each article, as did the Epitome of the Formula of Concord, with the confessional formulation, “we believe, teach, and confess.” Instead, he postulated directly: on the doctrine of original sin, “the Word of God teaches”; on the free will, “the Word of God teaches.”³⁵

In this way he implicitly rejected the criticism lodged by the Calvinists that through its continuous argumentation on the basis of the writings of Martin Luther, the Formula of Concord exaggerated his authority and replaced the holy scriptures with the documents in the Book of Concord. Indeed, the authority of the Wittenberg reformer was not mentioned at all, nor did Fuger cite his writings. At the same time, he dismissed all those who did not want to endorse the Concordian effort on the basis of doctrinal considerations as enemies of the Word of God, since it was appropriately expressed in the Formula of Concord. Condemnation of false doctrine was superfluous. By dispensing with the “*damnamus*” [“we condemn”] in this way, Fuger skillfully set aside another rock of offense to which the opponents of the Book of Concord repeatedly called attention. Fuger’s “Catechism to the Book of Concord” issued no condemnations, but it did contrast the

³³See n. 5 above.

³⁴Fuger, *Kurtzer warhafftiger und einfeltiger Bericht*, D3a-b.

³⁵Ibid., e.g., C3a and in other passages.

teachings which faithfully presented God's Word with those which contradicted God's Word and were therefore to be considered false.

This construction of the contrast between true and false, proper and improper, teaching leveled the broad theological spectrum of opposition to the Book of Concord in a single stroke. There was no place provided for compromise. Those who had taken positions against a strict doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, as presented in the Formula of Concord, but who at the same time did not want to separate themselves from the two authorities of the Reformation, Luther and Melancthon, had to recognize that they were fighting a losing battle. A "no" to the Word of God, as presented in the Formula of Concord—according to Fuger—could only be a move into false teaching.

This "Brief Summary of true and false teaching on the most important and currently disputed articles"³⁶ offered a digest of the teaching of the Formula of Concord. This digest was simply the answer to one question among a series of fifteen other questions. In catechetical style this series addressed all the points that had been raised in the course of the disputes over the composition of the Formula of Concord, over its teaching, and over the process by which it became the standard of doctrine for the churches subscribing to it in the period after 1578.³⁷

This tenth question, regarding the rule and guide for the confession of the faith, Fuger answered with reference to holy scripture, the ancient creeds, and all the documents contained in the Book of Concord. The question offered the opportunity to present the doctrine of the Formula authoritatively. This identification of the doctrine of the Formula of Concord with the Word of the Bible was once again reinforced by the following question, "Should only God's Word, and that which is in conformity with it and reproduces its teaching, be regarded as the

³⁶Ibid., C3a.

³⁷The *Kurtzer Begriff* was also printed apart from reference to the controversial issues which it treated. For catechetical instruction they were irrelevant, so they could be omitted when only the content of the Formula of Concord was to be presented to the children and the common people in an understandable form which was easy to learn. Already in 1581, immediately following the publication of the Formula of Concord, Fuger's *Kurtzer Begriff* appeared as an appendix to catechetical questions prepared by Adam Crato. Crato was superintendent of the church in the small town of Calbe, which belonged to the cathedral chapter of Magdeburg. This Lutheran theologian used only the popular summary of the Formula of Concord in fourteen articles. The "contrary doctrine" is not accurately reproduced, and even with improvements in a separate printing in 1585, this section is not corrected according to the original printing. *Einfeltige vnd nothwendige Fragstu(e)cken zum Catechismo geh(o)rig/ fu(e)r die Kinder/ mit angehengtem bericht/ was das Concordien Buch nach der schrift von der Person Jesu Christi lehret* (Magdeburg: [Andreas Gehne?, 1581]), D7a-E3b. Also in 1585 a separate printing appeared under the title: *Kurtzer Begriff/ Rechter vnd falscher Lehre/ in den fu(e)rnehmsten jetziger zeit streitigen Artickeln/ auß dem Concordienbuch zusamen gezogen* (Dresden: n. p., 1585). Attached is a catechism question from the brief summary of the doctrine of the Formula of Concord on the person of Christ and his two natures. The question and the answer to it are identical with a section in Crato's work, with the only variation in formulation Crato's asking what the scripture teaches from the person of Christ. See Crato, *Einfeltige und nothwendige Fragstu(e)cke*, C1b-C4a, and Fuger, *Kurtzer Begriff*, B2b-B4a. Both contain the question about the usefulness of this knowledge of the person of Christ in three parts. First, it is useful for teaching; in addition, it focuses the view on Christ's person as almighty helper on the one side and, on the other, a comfort as he suffers with believers in their weakness; and finally, the correct understanding of the person of Christ protects from all error. See Crato, C4a-b, and Fuger, B4b-C1a.

measure of all teaching in the church of Christ, and alone be taught and preached?"³⁸ Fuger followed the formulation which Martin Chemnitz, for instance, was developing for Lutheran dogmatics, as he based his case for the pre-eminent authority of God's Word upon the "certainty" [*certitudo*] of the scripture, and upon its "clarity" [*claritas*], "sufficiency" [*sufficiencia*], and its assertion of its own truthfulness [*perspicuitas*].³⁹ If this was true of the scripture, then the same could be said of its faithful interpreter, the Formula of Concord, Fuger argued.

Conveying the doctrinal content of the Formula to the common people was, however, only one aspect of this work, which the printer Gimel Bergen in Dresden published. More important appeared to be its addressing points of criticism which were being delivered from Strasbourg, Geneva, and the Dutch churches. The presentation in the form of questions and answers not only offered instruction regarding the document's teaching; it also made it possible to put words in the reader's mouth with which appropriate reactions might be given to the emerging criticism of the Concordian settlement. Fuger employed the tried and true method of catechism, which he integrated with his own application of the rhetorical tools that Melancthon's heirs learned at the university. He outlined his argument in questions and answers according to the following pattern:

What is the Formula of Concord?

By whom was it composed?

What justification and reason did they have for doing so?

What was the purpose, the authority, and the legitimate office of the fathers of the Concordia?

Why was it composed at this time? was not a synod necessary?

Were the heretics given a proper hearing? should there not have been consultation with foreign churches?

Was it necessary to issue condemnations of false doctrine?

To this Fuger added his rule and guide for confessing the faith with his "Brief Summary of True and False Doctrine."

Questions 5 through 10, leading up to this "Brief Summary," addressed precisely those topics which the opponents of the Concordian settlement had fashioned as the criteria for rejecting it, the center of their critique. Particularly in electoral Saxony, where the government had instituted a confessional shift to a strict Lutheranism after the collapse of Crypto-Calvinism in 1574, fears were justified that this criticism of the Book of Concord could stir up a general disenchantment with the settlement. When Fuger poses the question, "Have the people who undertook such a large task and have now completed it, also had a command to do this?"⁴⁰ it sounds like the decisive question that François Hotman had raised on the

³⁸Fuger, *Kurtzer warhafter und einfeltiger Bericht*, question 11, D4a.

³⁹*Ibid.*, D4a-E3a, questions 11-15. Indeed, he did not use the dogmatic terms. See Jobst Christian Ebel, *Wort und Geist bei den Verfassern der Konkordienformel, Eine historisch-systematische Untersuchung* (Munich: Christian Kaiser, 1981), 52-75; Chemnitz subordinated the certainty, clarity, sufficiency, and perspicuity of the Confessions to that of the scripture itself.

basis of his background in jurisprudence, concerning the jurisdictional competence of the theologians who composed the Formula of Concord.⁴¹ In his pseudonymous protest of 1578 Hotman had pilloried the authors for formulating doctrine on a major scale and pronouncing condemnations of false doctrine without authorization from any proper authorities.

Fuger turned the question against the critics. He knew how to meet this objection and to support his position with citations from the New Testament.⁴² He argued that it belongs to the office of every Christian, not only to avoid false teachings and teachers, but also to condemn them, as a responsible action in behalf of the neighbor, who otherwise could fall victim to godless seduction. The conduct of all those who had promoted the Concordian settlement and endorsed it simply could not be wrong. "For they did nothing else than that to which their office obliged them, that which was necessary to save their own souls so that the blood of those who were seduced into error and thereby damned might not be on their hands, so that they might not be punished like mute dogs, so that they might not bring God's terrible wrath upon themselves. Ezek. 3[:20], Isa. 56[:10]."⁴³

Just as explosive was the demand for a general synod of all the churches of the Reformation, which had already been raised and which would be repeated often after the publication of the Formula of Concord. All those who believed that they had been excluded by the doctrine of the Lord's Supper and the Christology of the Formula had an interest in this call for a general synod. Not only the foreign Calvinist churches, which saw a dangerous conspiracy against their own political situation in the Lutheran establishment of their confession,⁴⁴ but also those German churches which distanced themselves from the settlement, objected to the failure to call a general synod to act upon the Book of Concord.⁴⁵

Fuger addressed this issue in his sixth question: "Is it right that they did this by themselves alone, without waiting until a general synod could be arranged, called, and held for this purpose?"⁴⁶ His answer offered in a popularized form an argument which was at least quite similar to the argument which Johann Pappus had used in his dispute with Johann Sturm in Strasbourg, and which Wigand and Pouchenius had employed in their exchanges with Loyseleur and Hotman or Salvard. Christian freedom itself permits not only the confession of the truth of the divine Word, but also the condemnation of improper teaching. Indeed, the practice of the ancient church and the conduct of Jesus Christ in holy scripture offer examples which demonstrate that the exclusion of false teaching does not depend

⁴⁰Fuger, *Kurtzer warhafftiger und einfeltiger Bericht*, B1a.

⁴¹Hotman called this the 'prima causa nullitatis'; Palmer, *Protestatio nullitatis*, 8-10.

⁴²Rom. 16:17-20; John 2:14-17; Titus 3:10; John 20:23; Gal. 1:8-9.

⁴³Fuger, *Kurtzer warhafftiger und einfeltiger Bericht*, B1b.

⁴⁴This is expressed clearly in the work of the court preacher of the house of Orange, Pierre Loyseleur de Villiers, *Ratio ineundae concordiae*, n. 22.

⁴⁵Originally an assembly of this kind had been planned for Magdeburg in the fall of 1577, and later there was discussion of a general synod to be held in Smalcald in 1578. See Heinrich Heppe, *Geschichte des deutschen Protestantismus in den Jahren 1555-1581*, vol. 3 (Marburg, 1857): 211-214.

⁴⁶Fuger, *Kurtzer warhafftiger und einfeltiger Bericht*, B2a.

upon having conducted a synod previously. Athanasius condemned the doctrine of the Arians before a synod had been called for that purpose. Christ had urgently warned against false prophets without benefit of a synod. The responsibility of “pastors and shepherds” [*Seelsorger und Hirten*] for those who have been entrusted to their care, as well as the menace of the danger which proceeds from false teaching, are the criteria that determine how to act in such a situation. Fuger asked: “Should a shepherd run into the village when a wolf approaches the sheep to summon the peasants together and take counsel with them before he yells at the wolf and drives it away from the sheep? How often did Christ condemn the Pharisees in the presence of his disciples? How often did the true apostles not condemn the false apostles, without the assembling of a synod?”⁴⁷

This argument also provided an effective answer to the demand which the lawyer Hotman, above all, but also Sturm and Loyseleur had repeatedly raised, namely, that those who are subject to a proceeding that is determining whether they are teaching correctly or falsely have the right to be heard before they are condemned or anathematized.⁴⁸ Be that as it may, Fuger saw a distinct difference between the practice of a secular court and the judgment of proper teaching and confession. The latter is an obligation of every Christian, which cannot be abandoned to the public forum for decision, “for every Christian bears in his own bosom the necessity and the right to decide on the basis of God’s Word and the holy catechism. According to them he may and must speak his judgment on every doctrine. Those who teach contrary to God’s Word and his catechism, he may and must condemn, whoever they may be. He may not wait until the judgment is passed somewhere else, or seek it at a synod.”⁴⁹

In addition, Fuger pointed out that the Formula of Concord had not treated new errors in its condemnations, but it had treated doctrine which had been under public discussion for many years. Without question, everyone was already sufficiently informed on these matters. A public hearing of those who for a long time had defended their errors “obstinately and stubbornly” [*hartnäckig und halsstarrig*], Fuger felt, was clearly superfluous.

On the basis of these fundamental principles Fuger presented his view that the publication of the Formula of Concord had taken place independently of diplomatic and political considerations in regard to those who disagreed. The diplomatic mission that the Frankfurt Assembly of 1577 planned,⁵⁰ and the position of the Western European churches which had become known, not in the least through Loyseleur’s *Circular Letter*, occasioned the question: “Should not the French, English, and Dutch churches have been consulted before the book, the Formula of Concord, was released, and the matter discussed with them?”⁵¹ With an allusion to

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, B2b.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; cf. the seventh question, B3b.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, B4b.

⁵⁰ Prince Johann Casimir of the Palatinate issued invitations to a conference in Frankfurt/Main, which was to create a confessional union of Calvinists from all parts of Europe. See J. N. Bakhuijzen van den Brink, “Het Convent te Frankfort 27-28 September 1577 en de Harmonia Confessionum,” *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis* 32 (1941): 235-280.

the absurdity of the situation, Fuger answered no. Sacramentarians and Calvinists, according to Fuger, had shown clearly on the basis of their conduct toward God's Word that they did not hold to his commands nor did they know the fear of God—for which their stubbornness in pushing their doctrine of the Lord's Supper is one proof. This made it impossible for them to be involved in giving counsel in any way. He was firmly convinced that the truth was on his side in understanding the holy scripture and in teaching and confession.⁵² In addition, he was afraid of providing corrupt, false teaching a foothold through offering a hearing to those who disagreed in an irresponsible way. This permitted Fuger to reject every possibility of dialog categorically.

What he ignored therefore were the possible consequences which the condemnations might have in the political sphere even if they were pronounced only within a theological framework. Fuger emphasized—and thus made the position of the Formula of Concord properly his own—that the condemnations were in no way intended to occasion any intervention of the temporal authorities. The idea, or at least the fear, which some opponents of the Concordia settlement clearly expressed, that the interpretation of the Augsburg Confession by the Formula of Concord could introduce a narrower interpretation of the Religious Peace of Augsburg, did not occur to him. He took the position, consistent with the understanding of the practice of the reformers, that “nothing else is sought by such condemnation of false doctrine than that the false teachers recognize their error and heresy, and desist from it, so that they may not fall into eternal ruin, for if that would happen on their part, they would be accepted again with joy as most beloved little children, by the mother, the Christian church, Luke 15.”⁵³ Dealing with such people according to Titus 3:10 (“After a first and second admonition, having nothing more to do with anyone who causes divisions”) was intended to deprive the pursuit of dialog with the opponents of the Concordia settlement of all its significance. This approach actually sought to divert their influence from the theologically untrained parts of the population. In fact, there had been attempts from the Lutheran side to win the western European neighbors for the Concordian settlement.⁵⁴ These attempts would remain unsuccessful.

The campaign to win popular support for the Formula of Concord was initiated immediately after its composition and dealt with the first hostile reactions to it.

⁵¹Fuger, *Kurtzer warhafftiger und einfeltiger Bericht*, B4b.

⁵²Questions 11-15 in the *Kurtzer Bericht* emphasizes the holy scripture as the sufficient, sole, and authoritative guide for all teaching. In comparison to the Bible, the witness of the ancient fathers could in fact have only a slight significance; the fathers themselves remain largely obscure. This argumentation addressed the attempts of the opponents to give legitimacy to their own doctrine on the basis of its “orthodox consensus” with the doctrine of the church throughout the ages. See particularly the work of Christoph Herdesianus, *Consensus orthodoxvs...* (n. 26 above).

⁵³Fuger, *Kurtzer warhafftiger und einfeltiger Bericht*, C2a.

⁵⁴See, e.g., Lukas Osiander's work, *Pia et fidelis admonitio: Scripta ad ecclesias Gallicas & Belgicas* (Tübingen: n.p. 1580).

This campaign not only was designed to introduce the doctrinal content of the Formula in a form which reduced its teaching to a minimum and formulated it for a broad audience in easily understood language. The campaign also transmitted to the common people arguments against the opponents of the Concordian settlement; at the same time these arguments could have served as effective apologetic at the level of the learned. Not only pastors and scholars were to support the new book of confessions, however. The "simple folk" were also supposed to grasp that what was at stake here was the preservation of the truth of the gospel and defense against false teaching. Caspar Fuger's *Brief, True, and Simple Report* combined both parts of this intention, providing a fine example for further argument. In this way it contributed to the neutralization of the opposition to the Concordian settlement which was breaking out with ever more vigor. It met this opposition above all where uncertainty about the establishment of confessional Lutheran church life was present, attempting to find support for the Formula of Concord among the common people.