

2

Theological Background

Protestant Confessions

THE CONFSSIONAL SITUATION OF early nineteenth-century Prussia, which provides the backdrop for the debates and publications to be discussed in this study, cannot be properly understood without some awareness of its historical theological development. This introductory chapter intends to give an account of the political events and theological debates that informed the formulation of the most important Protestant confessions, and it introduces the key players from the Reformation to the seventeenth century.

THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The first Protestant confession of faith to be officially regarded as a symbolic book is the Lutheran *Confessio Augustana* of 1530. However, this was by no means the earliest Protestant statement of confession. The first such documents were generated in the vicinity of the Zürich Reformation during the 1520s. By the end of the sixteenth century, more than forty confessions had been produced in Europe,¹ many of which achieved only regional importance. Among the earliest statements are the *Sixty-seven Theses* or *Conclusions of Zürich* (1523) penned by the leader of the Reformation in Switzerland, Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531), a “humanistically trained exegete.”² They were followed in 1526 by the *Eighteen Theses* of

1. See Plasger and Freudenberg, *Reformierte Bekenntnisschriften*, 9.

2. Muller, “John Calvin,” 131.

PART ONE: Schleiermacher's Conception of Election

Ilanz and in 1528 by the *Ten Theses of Bern*, edited by Zwingli, all of which tried to clarify the Reformed faith, but none of which received official recognition outside their regional sphere of influence.

In 1529, Martin Luther (1483–1546) published both his *Small* and *Large Catechism*; they represent the only summary of Protestant teaching by Luther in a single text. Motivated by his church visitations in Saxony Luther intended the two catechisms for instruction in the Protestant faith: the *Small Catechism* for the fledgling Protestant communities and their young people, the *Large Catechism* for ministers and preachers. Although they were not meant to be confessional statements, both catechisms would be included among the final collection of Lutheran symbolic books.

In 1530 the Holy Roman Emperor Karl V (r. 1519–1556) called an Imperial Diet to the south German city of Augsburg with the intention to end the religious controversies in his Empire by gathering everybody under the umbrella of Roman Catholicism. Much as his desire might have been theologically motivated, Karl V also needed a united Christian front for the impending war against the Turks. The Diet occasioned the production of several confessional statements. Elector³ Johann Friedrich of Saxony (r. 1532–1554) asked the Wittenberg theologians to work out a statement of apology or defense of the Lutheran congregations for Electoral Saxony. In the absence of Martin Luther, who was still holed up in Castle Coburg and was therefore prevented from attending the Diet, Philipp Melancthon (1497–1560) drafted a defense statement. He also produced a preface to this statement about ecclesiastical customs, which was to accompany the actual confession by way of an introduction. Both documents together constitute the *Confessio Augustana*. It set out to prove that doctrinally the Protestants agreed with the Catholic Church, and it played down their opposition against the papacy and transubstantiation in favor of stressing their agreements. It was signed by the representatives of Electoral Saxony, Ansbach, Braunschweig-Lüneburg, Hesse, Anhalt, Reuchlingen, and Nuremberg.

3. In the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, there were traditionally seven Electors, also known as Duke Electors, Prince Electors, or Electors Palatine. Since 1257, these were the Archbishops of Mainz, Cologne and Trier, the Count Palatine of the Rhine, the Duke of Saxony, the Margrave of Brandenburg, and the King of Bohemia. In 1648, the Palatinate was added to this list, and in 1692 Hanover. The Electors formed the College of Electors, which had the sole right to elect the Roman-German King; this title traditionally symbolized the candidature for the Holy Roman Emperor. After the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire by Napoleon in 1806, the title of Elector became obsolete.

The *Augsburg Confession*, as it also came to be known, was to be read out at the Diet and presented to the Emperor in written form. However, even before it was submitted, the Catholic delegation decided to commission a critique and refutation of it, trying to deflect from its criticism concerning the misuses of the Church in the last few articles by making the Lutherans out to be heretics. A committee of Catholic theologians drafted the *Confutatio*, and read it out at the Diet. The Emperor considered the *Augsburg Confession* to be thus refuted and demanded obedience to this judgment. The Protestants, however, did not consider themselves to be defeated. Although he was denied access to a written copy of the text of the *Confutatio*, Melanchthon drafted a theological evaluation, the *Apologia*, as a counter reply; the Emperor refused to accept it and the Protestant estates then left the Diet in protest.

Melanchthon proceeded to extend and improve his *Apologia*, an amended form of which was finally published in May 1531. Although it was originally a private document, the *Apologia* gained the status of a symbolic book in 1537 when it was signed by the Lutheran theologians of the Schmalkald League⁴ and adopted alongside the *Augsburg Confession*. The latter, in turn, had attained the status of a symbolic book of the Protestant princes and estates when its preface was signed by Gregor Brück, the chancellor of Electoral Saxony. The *Augsburg Confession* in tandem with Melanchthon's *Apologia* became the most important Lutheran confession of faith. It served a dual function as a legal document and as a guide for spiritual teaching. Its first twenty-one articles stress the agreement with Scripture and the Catholic tradition, and only articles twenty-two to twenty-eight discuss controversial issues and call for the cessation of misuses. These misuses concern the two elements of communion, marriage of priests, mass, confession, food laws, monastic vows, and the power invested in the office of bishop. Much to Luther's dismay, the *Augsburg Confession* was silent on the issue of papal primacy.

Also in preparation for the Imperial Diet at Augsburg, the Strasburg reformer and former Dominican theologian Martin Bucer (1491–1551) had met with Luther and Melanchthon to discuss the possibility of a statement of faith that they could all subscribe to. When this proved to be impossible, chiefly because of their conflicting interpretations of communion, Bucer, with the assistance of Wolfgang Capito (1478–1541)

4. This was a defensive alliance of the Protestant princes and cities of the Holy Roman Empire. It was concluded at Schmalkald in 1531 in order to ward off potential Catholic attacks. The Schmalkald League would become "the most powerful Protestant political force in Europe" until the late 1540s. MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 174.

PART ONE: Schleiermacher's Conception of Election

produced the *Confessio Tetrapolitana* (1530) for the four Upper German cities Strasburg, Memmingen, Konstanz, and Lindau for presentation to the Emperor. The *Tetrapolitana* was never officially recognized as a symbolic book. For the Swiss Protestants, their leader Huldrych Zwingli only managed to submit his private confession, the *Fidei Ratio ad Carolum Imperatorem* (1530), in order to clarify the Swiss Reformed position.

After the Diet, Bucer met repeatedly with Melanchthon with the intention to overcome the alienation between the south German cities and the Wittenberg Reformers. Their debates culminated in a statement agreed in Kassel in 1534. This was adopted in the *Wittenberg Concord* (1536), which contains compromise formulations that both sides agreed on, and acknowledges the *Augsburg Confession* and *Apologia* as well as a communion formula drafted by Melanchthon. As a result, doctrinal unity was achieved in Protestant Germany. At the same time, however, this unity meant that from then on Germany and Switzerland would go their separate ways in the further progress of the Reformation.

Also in 1536, Basel saw the production of the first common confession held among the German-speaking Reformed Swiss cities, the *Confessio Helvetica Prior*. Intended to help form a union with the Lutherans, the twenty-seven articles of this confession were penned by Zwingli's successor in Zürich, Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575), as well as Oswald Myconius (1488–1552) and others under the unionist influence of Bucer and Capito. During the year 1536, the *Theses of Lausanne* and the *First Geneva Confession* were drafted in French-speaking Switzerland. It is worth noting that 1536 also marked the publication of the first edition of *Institutio Christianae Religionis* by John Calvin (1509–1564).

In 1537, Luther published the *Schmalkald Articles*, which were originally intended for presentation at the 1537 Council of Mantua. They sharply emphasize the Lutherans' confessional opposition to Rome—the same opposition which the *Augsburg Confession* had tried to cover up. The *Schmalkald Articles* were signed only by theologians attending the Schmalkald Convention of 1537, but they were eventually recognized as a symbolic book in 1580.

During the late 1530s, Melanchthon was working on a revision of the *Confessio Augustana*. He had been commissioned by the Schmalkald League to draft an official new edition of the *Augsburg Confession* for the impending doctrinal discussions. In 1540 he re-published it as the so-called *Variata*. From then on, the original version of 1530 was also known as the *Invariata*. Leaving the preface of the *Augsburg Confession* untouched, in the *Variata* Melanchthon took account of the recently

developed understanding of the doctrine of communion, which brought it into line with the *Wittenberg Concord*, and he greatly extended the text of the original 1530 version. The contrast to the Roman Catholic Church and the Anabaptists also became much sharper. With regard to the church history, the original version, the *Invariata*, remained the standard confession of faith in the Lutheran Churches.

The *Variata* was eyed with great suspicion as a crypto-Calvinist document. As a corollary, it gained its importance from the fact that most Calvinist theologians (though not the Zwinglians) could actually subscribe to it. In fact, even Calvin himself signed the *Variata*. It was also the official document presented at the Colloquy at Worms in 1540 by the Schmalkald League.⁵ With the *Variata*, Melanchthon had quietly distanced himself from Luther's view. He had moved relatively close to the Calvinist understanding of the presence of Christ during communion, in that he shared with it a strong sense of the mystery of Christ's presence. As a result, he was open to an agreement with Calvinist views. The *Variata* was to become particularly important after the Religious Peace of Augsburg of 1555.

This Religious Peace was preceded by another two important statements of confession: one was the *Consensus Tigurinus*, or *Zürich Confession*. It developed out of negotiations between Calvin and Bullinger to unite the Swiss Protestants, and set off a "burst of confessional activity among the Reformed."⁶ Drafted by Bullinger in 1549 and published in 1551, it expressed an agreement regarding the doctrine of communion between Calvinist Geneva and Zwinglian Zürich and Bern. It favored the Zwinglian symbolic explanation of the presence of Christ at communion, but allowed a range of definitions of the sacrament. It was quickly accepted by both the French-speaking and the German-speaking Swiss Reformed churches. Safeguarding the Swiss Reformation inevitably meant a sharp break between Calvinism and German Protestantism, marked especially by Calvin's rapprochement with the Zwinglians in the *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549).⁷

The other confession published before the Peace of Augsburg (1555) was the *Confessio Doctrinae Saxonicarum Ecclesiarum Synodo Tridentinae*

5. See Kusakawa, "Melanchthon," 65.

6. Muller, "John Calvin," 135.

7. Calvin was originally very close to the German Lutherans, but the dispute between Melanchthon and Luther's direct followers, the Gnesio-Lutherans, as well as Calvin's increasing agreement with the Zwinglians led to a renewed dispute about communion, and eventually to bitter enmity. See Heussi, *Kompendium*, 315.

PART ONE: Schleiermacher's Conception of Election

Oblata, or *Saxon Confession*, of 1551. It was drawn up by Melanchthon for the Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1545–1563) as a repetition and exposition of the *Confessio Augustana*. In effect, it represented an adaptation of the *Augsburg Confession* accounting for the changed state of affairs: unlike twenty years earlier, there was no hope of a reunion with the Catholic Church any more. At Melanchthon's suggestion, the *Saxon Confession* was signed by theologians rather than secular princes. The original manuscript, entitled 'Repetitio Confessionis Augustanae' is dated 1551. It was first published in Basel in 1552.

THE LATER SIXTEENTH CENTURY

In 1555, Emperor Karl V called a new Imperial Diet to Augsburg in order to settle the differences between Catholics and Protestants politically. The so-called Religious Peace of Augsburg, which was negotiated at that Diet, meant that all Protestants who signed the *Confessio Augustana* would be placed under imperial protection so as to enjoy freedom from religious persecution. Sacramentarians, especially Zwingli's followers, and more extreme Protestant groups such as the Anabaptists and Anti-trinitarians could not bring themselves to subscribe to the Lutheran *Augsburg Confession*. Calvinists adhered at least to Melanchthon's 1540 *Variata* version and claimed inclusion in the Peace, but their status remained precarious for nearly a century until the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648 and the attendant Treaty of Westphalia.

The Peace of Augsburg also introduced the *ius reformandi*, the right of each sovereign to determine the confession (Catholic or Lutheran) of his territory, thereby abolishing the old law of heretics. The principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* stipulated that the territorial sovereign determined the denomination of his subjects, and it allowed subjects who belonged to a different confession from that of their sovereign to emigrate without any damage to their honor or to their possessions.⁸ The reasons behind

8. Developments in Electoral Palatinate can serve to illustrate the power of this principle. Elector Friedrich III (r. 1559–1576) turned the Palatinate into a Calvinist territory in 1560. His eldest son and successor Ludwig IV (r. 1576–1583) reinstated Lutheranism and withdrew favor from Reformed clerics and academics, thus forcing them to emigrate or to take refuge in the small Reformed enclave of Neustadt. Neustadt was ruled by Ludwig's younger brother, Count Johann Casimir, who, in turn, was an enthusiastic Calvinist. After Ludwig's death, Johann Casimir ruled for his underage nephew, Ludwig's son Friedrich. When the latter became Elector Friedrich IV (r. 1583–1610), he enabled Johann Casimir as principle regent to extend the Reformed faith throughout the entire Electoral Palatinate. The returning ministers marked their

this principle were not of a purely political nature, however. The drive of nearly all European sovereigns to permit only one denomination in their territory was partly informed by the conviction that no territory could have a permanent basis if truth and untruth, true worship and idolatry were allowed to exist side by side. The mutual assurance of Catholics and Lutherans that they would not wage war against an imperial estate because of its confession lasted for more than six decades until the onset of the Thirty-Years War in 1618. It is important to note, nevertheless, that the Religious Peace of 1555 guaranteed the religious unity of individual territories, but it dissolved the religious unity of the Empire. The confessional era had begun in earnest.

The French and Dutch Reformed statements of confession were mainly a result of Roman Catholic oppression. The *Confessio Gallicana* or *Huguenot Confession* of 1559 was occasioned by persecutions, heretics' courts, and executions of Protestants under King Henri II of France (r. 1547–1559). In May 1559 a national synod of French Reformed Churches met secretly in Paris in order both to strengthen their confessional identity and to reach a consensus on some doctrinal differences, one of which concerned the doctrine of election. The moderator of the synod was François Morel, a pupil of Calvin. Calvin learned about the Synod very late. Fearing that its theological resolutions would not go far enough, he sent three delegates of the Geneva Church Council to Paris, who conveyed thirty-five articles of faith to the Synod. This draft confession had been prepared by Calvin and his pupil Antoine de la Roche Chandieu (1534–1591), and the Paris Synod approved it with only minor revisions. It was finally declared the binding confession of French Protestantism at the National Synod of La Rochelle in 1571. The *Confessio Gallicana* was disseminated throughout Germany by the Huguenot congregations living in Prussia.

Three more Protestant confessions followed in short succession: the *Scots Confession* in 1560, the *Confessio Belgica* in 1561, and the Anglican *Thirty-nine Articles* in 1563. The first two stood in the Geneva tradition and, together with the *Huguenot Confession*, formed “a trilogy of Calvinian theology.”⁹ The *Scots Confession* was commissioned by the Scottish Parliament as a summary of the articles of faith that the Protestant faction adhered to. It was drafted by six theologians including John Knox

celebrations with an iconoclastic campaign, much to the annoyance of the general populace.

9. Plasger and Freudenberg, *Reformierte Bekenntnisschriften*, 124.

PART ONE: Schleiermacher's Conception of Election

(1510–1572) within four days, and passed by Parliament along with three other Acts to constitute Scotland as a Protestant nation.

The *Confessio Belgica* was composed by Guy de Bres (1522–1567) for the Reformed Churches in Flanders and the Netherlands on the basis of the *Huguenot Confession*. Its ratification by the Synod of Antwerp in 1566 marked the final acceptance of Calvinism in the Low Countries, and it made the *Confessio Belgica* the confessional standard for the Reformed Church in the Netherlands.

The *Thirty-nine Articles* of the Anglican Church in England do not represent a statement of confession as such, but a summary of doctrinal formulations. First issued in 1563 and accepted by the Church of England, the *Thirty-nine Articles* were a revision of the original *Forty-two Articles* of 1552. They moved away from the Calvinist tendency expressed in the *Forty-two Articles* and were passed by the Westminster Parliament in 1571.

The statement of faith that was to become the most important symbolic book for the German Reformed Church for centuries to come was the *Heidelberg Catechism* of 1563. Moderately Calvinistic, it was intended to serve as a kind of unionist confession in Electoral Palatinate, then the largest territory in the Holy Roman Empire. It strove to satisfy both Melanchthon's sympathizers, the Philippists, and the Reformed theology of western Europe.¹⁰ In 1556, under Elector Ottheinrich (r. 1556–1559), the Palatinate had become Lutheran. Melanchthon, himself a native of Electoral Palatinate, had acted as chief counselor, impressing a moderate Lutheranism friendly to Calvinism upon the territory. The Lutheran *Augsburg Confession* was adopted as the doctrinal basis, whereas worship was remodeled after Reformed principles. Elector Ottheinrich also granted Calvinist refugees asylum in the Palatinate. Heidelberg, its capital city and university town, began to attract Protestant scholars of all denominations. As a result, it became a battleground where Lutheran, Philippist, Calvinist, and Zwinglian views collided. To settle some of the differences, Ottheinrich's successor Elector Friedrich III (r. 1559–1576), called The Pious, arranged a public disputation for June 1560 on the doctrine of communion. When the different Protestant groups subsequently demanded of him to unequivocally embrace one confession, he decided in favor of Calvinism, thus turning the Palatinate into the first German Reformed territory in 1561.¹¹ Elector Friedrich III commissioned the divinity professor and

10. See MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 254.

11. Calvinism was subsequently introduced in Bremen (1580), Nassau (1586), Anhalt (1596), Hesse-Kassel (1605) and Brandenburg (1614).

Melanchthon pupil Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583), according to MacCulloch “the most prominent theologian of the Palatinate,”¹² probably along with the more Calvinist Kaspar Olevian (1536–1587) and other theologians, to draft a statement of the doctrines befitting this new orientation. As far as possible, this statement would bring together the divergent Reformed trends. The resultant *Heidelberg Catechism* deliberately included points that would unite Zwinglians, Calvinists, and Philippists. The doctrine of the sacraments hovered between Zwinglianism and Calvinism, and any discussion of predestination was deliberately omitted. After its adoption, the *Heidelberg Catechism* was read out in church over the course of each year, with one passage being treated each Sunday. It also served as an elementary text for the religious instruction of the youth, as the doctrinal norm next to Scripture for ministers, and as edification for families.¹³ The Elector also ordered the *Heidelberg Catechism* to be incorporated in the Palatine Church Order. Soon after its publication, this “most catholic and popular of all the Reformed symbols”¹⁴ spread throughout Germany and to the Netherlands, even superseding Calvin’s *Catechismus Genevensis* of 1545. Not surprisingly, it was violently attacked by Lutherans for its alleged Zwinglian and Calvinist heresies, and the Palatinate was threatened with exclusion from the protection of the Peace of Augsburg. At the Synod of Dort in the Low Countries, which took place from 1618 to 1619, the *Heidelberg Catechism* attained the status of a Reformed symbolic book. Soon after its publication, it was introduced in Brandenburg, and it was still used for the instruction of the Hohenzollern princes, the Royal House of Prussia, in the late nineteenth century.¹⁵

The *Confessio Helvetica Posterior* or *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566) was the most important confession of the German Swiss Reformation. It was originally drafted in 1561 by Heinrich Bullinger, Huldrych Zwingli’s successor in Zürich, as his private confession. He had intended it to be presented on his death to the Town Council of Zürich, but in 1566 it was printed and put into the public domain. The reasons for this were mainly political in nature. The introduction of the Reformed faith and of the *Heidelberg Catechism* in the Palatinate had attracted strong criticism from some Lutheran princes, because some parts of the *Catechism*, in particular its doctrine of communion, contradicted the *Augsburg Confession*. Strictly

12. MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 355.

13. See Plasger and Freudenberg, *Reformierte Bekenntnisschriften*, 153.

14. Schaff, *Creeeds* I, 540.

15. See *ibid.*, 548.

PART ONE: Schleiermacher's Conception of Election

speaking, therefore, the Palatinate was in violation of imperial law. So, in 1566 the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II (r. 1564–1576) called an Imperial Diet, again to Augsburg. The Diet threatened Elector Friedrich III with exclusion from the protection of the Peace of Augsburg. In his defense statement, the Elector emphasized the agreement of the Palatinate Church with the Protestant Churches abroad. He had been aware of Heinrich Bullinger's private confession of 1561, which Bullinger had previously circulated within the Swiss Reformed cities. Friedrich III had it translated into German in order to present it at the Diet. Bullinger's confession then found broad acceptance in the Palatinate. It is not clear whether it was actually read out at the Diet, but the Elector's arguments and obvious piety ensured the Palatinate's further protection by the Peace of Augsburg, and secured further the unity among the German Protestant princes.

Bullinger's confession of faith did not attain the status of a symbolic book in the Palatinate, but it was signed by the Protestant cities in Switzerland. All Reformed German-speaking Swiss cities apart from, initially, Lutheran Basel, accepted Bullinger's confession, now entitled *Confessio Helvetica Posterior*. It was also given official recognition by the Reformed Churches of France, Scotland, Poland, Hungary, and the Netherlands, and it signified the final separation of the Reformed from the Lutheran Church. By the late 1560s, the Reformed tradition had, as Muller notes, "a well-defined doctrinal codification"¹⁶ in the shape of national and regional confessional statements.

In 1577, the Lutheran church produced the *Formula of Concord* as its final statement of confession. This step was deemed necessary in the face of the competing positions that different Lutheran territorial churches had taken. After Luther's death in 1546, two distinct groups of his followers had begun to emerge: the Philippists, who followed Philipp Melancthon and identified with his desire to unite Lutherans and Calvinists, and the Gnesio-Lutherans, or "Lutheran ultras,"¹⁷ who remained faithful to Martin Luther's teaching.¹⁸ Melancthon himself had gradually diverged from Luther with regard to the doctrines of election, original sin, good works, christology, and communion, and he had gone public with his new convictions in the 1540 *Variata*. Certainly with respect to communion, the Philippists now approached the Calvinist understanding of the presence of

16. Muller, "John Calvin," 134.

17. MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 349.

18. The Gnesio-Lutherans upheld Luther's understanding of passive righteousness, God's grace, and human sinfulness. See Kolb, "Confessional Lutheran Theology," 71.

Christ at communion, and the Gnesio-Lutherans were not entirely wrong in regarding them as Crypto-Calvinists. It is also noteworthy that the German Reformed approached the Philippist understanding of a synergism of God's act and human cooperation, and that they never did accept the strict Calvinist interpretation of predestination as a double decree.

The sharp distinction between the two Lutheran factions was particularly visible in Saxony. Electoral Saxony, under Elector Albrecht and with the University of Wittenberg as its theological center was Philippist, whereas the Saxon Duchy, under Duke Ernst and with the University of Jena slowly advancing as its theological center was Gnesio-Lutheran.¹⁹ In 1559, the Gnesio-Lutherans under their leader Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575), still a personal disciple of Luther, drafted the *Weimar Book of Confutation*. The Philippists responded to that a year later with the publication of the *Corpus Doctrinae Christianae*, which contained the three Early Church confessions and some of Melancthon's writings. Initially a private collection of confessional statements, this work quickly gained respect. In 1567 it was officially accepted in Electoral Saxony.

LUTHERAN CONSOLIDATION

The *Augsburg Confession*, according to Hillerbrand the “most ecumenical of Lutheran confessional statements,”²⁰ had been designed to demonstrate the Reformers' agreement in many points with the Catholic tradition. Clearly, though, it was not suited to settle the disputes between Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans. These disputes set the agenda for the *Formula of Concord*,²¹ which strictly delimited the genuine Lutheran understanding from the Reformed one. According to its full title, the *Formula of Concord* represented “the general, true, correct and ultimate reiteration and explanation of several articles of the *Confessio Augustana*” that had been debated since its initial publication. It excluded more extreme statements of both parties, among them the *Variata* of the *Augsburg Confession* as an

19. See Heussi, *Kompendium*, 346.

20. Hillerbrand, “Legacy,” 237.

21. The evolution of the text of the *Formula of Concord* is rather complex. It was based on the *Swabian Concord* of 1574, which was revised by Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586) and others to become the *Swabian-Saxon Concord* (1575). After more editorial work, the *Formula of Maulbronn* was drafted, and the following year a theological colloquy at Torgau produced the *Torgau Book* based on the *Swabian-Saxon Concord* and the *Formula of Maulbronn*. Eventually, the *Torgau Book* itself was revised and turned into the *Formula of Concord*. See Hägglund, *Geschichte der Theologie*, 215–16.

PART ONE: Schleiermacher's Conception of Election

independent interpretation. Most notably, it played down the doctrine of predestination while affirming the real presence of Christ in communion. However, the dissociation both from Calvinism and from the Philippists is even sharper in the *Formula of Concord* than that from the Gnesio-Lutherans. As the result of numerous endeavors to produce a unitary confession for the territorial churches that had emerged as a result of the Lutheran Reformation, the *Formula of Concord*, compiled in 1577, did put a provisional end to intra-Lutheran disputes and set the standard for the teaching of orthodox Lutheranism. It was accepted by 213 of the Imperial estates, which also adhered to the original or *Invariata* version of the *Confessio Augustana* of 1530.

Three years later, in 1580, the *Book of Concord* was collated. It concluded the process of confessional development in Lutheranism and marked the end of Lutheran pluralism by bringing together all those statements of confession which the Lutheran Church had acknowledged as symbolic books: The *Nicene*, *Apostles'* and *Athanasian Creeds*, Luther's *Small* and *Large Catechisms*, the *Confessio Augustana (Invariata)* with its *Apologia*, the *Schmalkald Articles*, Melancthon's 1537 tract *De Potestate et Primatu Papae* concerning the power and sovereignty of the Pope, and the *Formula of Concord* itself. It was signed by eighty-six imperial estates and by 8,000 to 9,000 theologians²² and accepted by the majority of Lutheran territories in Germany. Lutheran ministers pledged allegiance to it in their ordination vows. A small number of territories (Holstein, Pomerania, the Archbishopric of Bremen, Braunschweig, Nuremberg, Anhalt, and Hesse) refused to accept the *Book of Concord* but retained their Lutheran identity nonetheless.

There were also a small number of territorial churches in which Philippism had dominated, that now turned toward Calvinism. Although the *Book of Concord* stabilized German Lutheranism internally, German Protestantism as a whole was weakened, for the *Book of Concord* guaranteed that the prospect of a union between Lutherans and Reformed would be out of the question. Regarded as the only valid interpretation, the *Book of Concord* offered a particularly anti-Calvinist interpretation and repudiated Melancthon's 1540 *Variata*. Thus, whereas the thrust of pro-Reformed Philippist confessions (including the *Variata*, the *Wittenberg Concord* and the *Saxon Confession*) were developed out of disputes with the Gnesio-Lutherans, the *Book of Concord* emerged in the context of the struggle against Calvinism. It has remained the valid collection

22. See Heussi, *Kompendium*, 349.

of Lutheran symbolic books to this day and has never been amended or superseded.

On the Reformed side, a definitive collection of officially recognized statements of confession was never achieved. The *Harmony of Confessions of Faith of the Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, published in Geneva in 1581, served a specifically unionist purpose. Its intention was to demonstrate the agreement between the Reformed Churches and genuine Lutheranism, and to this end it included, among others, two of Melancthon's confessions, the *Variata* and the *Saxon Confession*. It was extended in 1612 and again in 1654. Yet, despite its unionist intention, it entirely ignored the Zwinglian confessions as well as the German Reformed confessional tradition.

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In 1607, Reformed theologians in Heidelberg, which Christopher Clark has aptly called "the powerhouse of early seventeenth-century German Calvinism,"²³ drew up a confession summarizing what the German Reformed Churches believed. Although it achieved an almost normative authority in Reformed Germany, it did not gain official recognition. Nevertheless, it did become crucial for the history of confessions in Brandenburg and Prussia, and therefore ultimately for Schleiermacher.

In May 1614, on the advice of the Heidelberg professor Abraham Scultetus (1566–1625), Elector Johann Sigismund of Brandenburg (r. 1608–1619) published the *Confession of the Reformed Churches of Germany*. It contained a preface by Scultetus and a reprint of the 1562 *Confession of Heidelberg Divines*. The preface explained that a new edition of the confession of those whose teachings had become suspicious to the common people under the hateful term Calvinist had become necessary. It was intended to counter the general slandering of the Brandenburg Church reform for the purpose that Elector Johann Sigismund's subjects would understand his conversion to the Reformed faith and indeed grasp hold of the Reformed faith themselves. In order both to pacify his opponents and to explain that some of their perceptions of Calvinism were misleading, the Elector subsequently issued a private statement of faith, the *Sigismund Confession* (1614). Along with the *Heidelberg Catechism*, the *Sigismund Confession* has remained the decisive confession of faith within the German Reformed Church. Rather than endeavoring a re-statement of the

23. Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 115.

PART ONE: Schleiermacher's Conception of Election

whole Reformed faith, it dealt in detail with four articles of doctrine that formed the bones of contention for Lutherans: the person of Christ, baptism, communion, and predestination.²⁴

Commissioned by the Elector as a commentary on the general *Reformed (Brandenburg) Confession*, the *Sigismund Confession* was drafted by Martin Füssel (1571–1626), the former Reformed superintendent of Zerbst in Anhalt and one of the Elector's court preachers. This *Sigismund Confession* declared the Elector's adherence to Scripture as the true master over all texts, and to the Ecumenical Creeds. It further acknowledged the *Variata* version of the *Augsburg Confession*, but it repudiated the *Formula of Concord*. Calvin and Zwingli were not named in the confession. The *Confession of Sigismund* was not understood as a statement of faith through which the sovereign exercised his *ius reformandi*, but as a private document in which the Elector attested to his conversion.

From 1618 to 1619, the assembly of the Dutch Reformed Church at Dort (Dordrecht) in the Low Countries took place. Convened by the States-General, it was the first and only super-national synod of older Calvinism. It was intended to bring the conflict between Calvinists and Arminians to an end. Besides the Low Countries, England, Scotland, and Switzerland; most German Reformed territories were also represented at Dort. The Huguenots did not send any representatives, and, referring to his private confession, Elector Sigismund, too, declined to take part in the Synod: he had taken a clear stance against the Calvinist doctrine of election. The Synod condemned the heresy of Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) and his followers, the so-called Remonstrants.²⁵ They held that human beings had the choice to come to faith, and that this human choice preceded God's election. God therefore elected those to salvation of whom he foreknew that in time they would accept the gift of grace. At Dort, the doctrine of predestination as an absolute double decree was elevated to a binding Calvinist dogma. A tangible result of the deliberations there was the publication of the *Canons of Dort* (1619). They restated the Reformed faith based on Calvin's *Institutio*, but they actually went beyond it in their logical pursuit of ultimate consequences of a number of doctrines, in particular that of predestination. The Synod also confirmed the *Confessio Belgica* (1561) and the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563) as valid confessional statements of the Reformed Church of the Low Countries. Interestingly

24. See below p. 79.

25. So called because they represented an admonition or remonstrance to the Dutch Reformed Church.

enough, the *Confessio Belgica* strongly supported the doctrine of double predestination, while the *Heidelberg Catechism* was silent on the matter.

ATTEMPTS AT UNIFICATION

During the Thirty-Years' War (1618–1648), efforts were made to reunite the Christian faiths and to put an end to religiously motivated bloodshed. In 1631 Elector Johann Georg of Saxony (r. 1611–1656) invited around 160 Estates and several imperial cities to a Convention at Leipzig. As part of that Convention, Johann Bergius (1587–1658), chaplain of Elector Christian Wilhelm of Brandenburg, was able to arrange a theological colloquy. Its Reformed representatives included himself, Elector Christian Wilhelm, Landgrave Wilhelm of Hesse, and two Calvinist theologians. The Lutheran faction consisted of three divines and the Elector Johann Georg of Saxony.

Both parties to this Colloquy were propelled by their common fear of pressure from Rome. The Reformed party agreed to continue teaching the *Augsburg Confession* in their schools and churches but urged the retention of the *Variata* as well. The *Confessio Augustana* with Melancthon's *Apologia* formed the basis of the Colloquy's deliberations. Both parties reached an agreement on twenty-six out of its twenty-eight articles, but they did not see eye to eye with regard to the doctrines of Christ and of communion. Although predestination had not featured in the *Augsburg Confession*, it formed part of the discussions at the Colloquy. Here it emerged that some of the Reformed party, in particular Johann Bergius, had more or less arrived at the Philippist understanding of the doctrine. In the event, however, the more strictly Calvinist view of Johannes Crocius (1590–1659) came to prevail and found its way into the final theological document, the *Relation*. The *Relation* was signed by the six divines but not by the Electors. The parties continued to disagree regarding the omnipotence of Christ's human nature and therefore communion, and on election. The Lutheran doctrine of *fides praevisa*, or foreknown faith, remained the stumbling block for the Reformed faction. While the Reformed party was willing to make common cause with the Lutherans against the Catholics, the Lutherans would go no farther than taking into serious consideration the Reformed party's proposal to treat them as brethren.

What turned out to be the most memorable statement to be passed at the Colloquy at Leipzig was the classical union phrase "in necessary

PART ONE: Schleiermacher's Conception of Election

matters unity, in doubtful matters liberty, in all matters charity.”²⁶ In the *Leipzig Manifesto*, the political document that emerged from the Convention, the Protestant estates pledged to form a defensive alliance against Catholic aggression. The theological colloquy had provided the ideological basis for this agreement.

Another union conference, itself ultimately fruitless, was held after more than a quarter of a century of religious warfare, in Thorn in 1645. Thorn an der Weichsel, a town in modern-day Poland, had embraced Lutheranism in 1557. The Colloquy had been instigated by the Catholic King Wladislaus IV of Poland (r. 1632–1648) in order to bring the Polish Protestants back into the fold of the Catholic Church. It brought together twenty-six Catholic, twenty-eight Lutheran, and twenty-four Reformed representatives. Since the Protestant aristocracy had pushed through a *pax dissidentium*, or general religious peace, in 1573, Lutherans, Reformed, and Moravian Brethrens had officially enjoyed political and constitutional equality in Poland. However, the Catholic monarchy had largely ignored this peace and was now trying to return the country as a whole to Catholicism. Dissent among the Lutheran party and also between Lutherans and Reformed at this Colloquy only served to strengthened the Catholic faction.²⁷ Each party met in a separate room of the town hall and only negotiated with the others through deputies or by exchanging written documents. Only four out of twenty-six meetings were public. Each party kept minutes of their meetings, but they would only be printed some eighteen months after the publication of the official *Acta Conventus Thoruniensis* (1648). The first item of business was the preparation of a statement of faith by each faction. The resultant Catholic confession, which repeated the teachings of the Council of Trent, was read out in the first public meeting and was received among the official acts. The Reformed confession, the *Declaratio Thoruniensis*, managed to be heard but was omitted from the official acts, because the presiding chairman declared it to be a defamatory invective against the Catholic Church. The Lutheran confession was ready four days later. It essentially repeated the *Augsburg Confession* of 1530, a fact that incensed the Catholic party to such an extent that they they did not even allow the document to be read out in the public meeting.

The Colloquy of Thorn closed without accomplishing any kind of union and it succeeded only in emphasizing the existing differences. Still, as Philip Schaff points out, the Reformed statement of confession

26. Schaff, *Creeeds* I, 558.

27. For the following see Tschackert, “Thorn,” 747–48.

formulated at Thorn, the *Declaratio Thoruniensis*, remains “one of the most careful statements of the Reformed creed.”²⁸ It accepts the 1540 *Variata*, the *Consensus of Sendomir* (1570), and the three Ecumenical Creeds.

Both the Lutheran and the Reformed confessions produced at Thorn were excluded from the official edition of the *Acta Conventus Thorniensis Celebrati a 1645*, even though it was signed by nobles and clergymen from Poland, Lithuania, and Brandenburg. Nevertheless, the *Declaration of Thorn* was adopted among the *Brandenburg Confessions*, also known as *Confessiones Marchicae*, which also comprise the *Confession of Sigismund* (1614) and the *Relation of the Colloquy at Leipzig* (1631). These confessions were only moderately Calvinistic, and the Canons of Dort “were respectfully received but never adopted by the Brandenburg divines.”²⁹ The *Brandenburg Confessions* enjoyed a certain symbolic authority in Prussia until the Prussian Church Union of 1817.

The *Helvetic Consensus Formula* of 1675 was the last major Reformed statement of faith formulated in the seventeenth century. Drawn up by Johann Heinrich Heidegger of Zürich (1633–1699) to defend Calvinism against the doctrine of universalism propagated by the Saumurian School, it was characterized by its strict version of the doctrines of predestination and of verbal inspiration. It was added, as an appendix and exposition, to the *Second Helvetic Confession* of 1566 and introduced in the Reformed Church across Switzerland. However, it was generally recognized only until 1722, and in Basel only until 1686.

CONCLUSION

The Reformed faith in Germany approached Philippism and was therefore different from the Western European Calvinism of the Low Countries, Switzerland, France, and Scotland. Although the writings of Calvin and Bullinger rather than those of Melancthon became the doctrinal norm, in terms of a church constitution Lutheranism made itself felt, for the German Reformed Church lacked a synodal constitution. This Lutheran influence first became obvious when Elector Friedrich III of the Palatinate, rather than a synod, ordered the *Heidelberg Catechism* to be incorporated with the Palatine Church Order. In matters of doctrine, the German Reformed doctrines differed from those of their Lutheran counterparts mainly with regard to communion but explicitly not with regard

28. Schaff, *Creeds* I, 562.

29. *Ibid.*, 555.

PART ONE: Schleiermacher's Conception of Election

to predestination. Also, Reformed and Lutheran attitudes to doctrinal statements generally diverged markedly. While the Reformed insisted that Martin Luther's words must not be canonized into a rigid dogmatic system—something Luther had never produced himself—Lutherans did exactly that. As a corollary, there has never been such a clearly defined collection of Reformed confessional statements as is presented in the Lutheran *Book of Concord*. Indeed, there has been no ultimate agreement about the very criteria that should be applied to qualify a text as a symbolic book.³⁰ The large number of Reformed confessions in tandem with the lack of universal validity of any of them reflect their geographical and chronological limitations. Although both the *Heidelberg Confession* and the *Second Helvetic Confession* gained validity across national borders, some other confessions such as the *Canons of Dort* were in time superseded or replaced. In the Reformed Churches there has never even been a consensus on the question whether or not one uniform confession is desirable. Moreover, as a matter of principle, the Reformed hold that their statements of confession can be revised. This is borne out by the underlying contention that better insights into Scripture can make new confessions necessary. In the course of the Enlightenment, confessional statements often collapsed under new criticism. Lutheran Churches reacted to this development by reiterating the ultimate validity of the *Book of Concord*, whereas the Reformed Churches adjusted themselves, as Jan Rohls observed, “by either totally abandoning their confessions, reworking them, or formulating new ones.”³¹

The Reformed understanding that a faith community is not established through one common doctrine clearly underpins and indeed reflects Schleiermacher's attitude and argumentation in the debates about his essay on election. His Lutheran counterparts, like their sixteenth-century predecessors, did not share the Reformed openness for new confessions. The 1580 *Book of Concord* is still the binding doctrinal norm for the Lutheran Churches 430 years after its creation.

30. See Plasger and Freudenberg, *Reformierte Bekenntnisschriften*, 8.

31. Rohls, *Reformed Confessions*, tr. Hoffmeyer, 5.