

## DIES IST MEIN LEIB: A CELEBRATED DEBATE.

BY PROF. JOHN ALFRED FAULKNER, *D.D.*,  
DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

There were few men less diplomatic, less statesman-like, than Luther. He believed that God would take care of His own truth, and that that care was no concern of his except to believe and defend it. He had none of the typical churchman's anxiety to stand in well with the mighty men, and spoke to them often with blunt frankness. If rulers succeeded to the authority of bishops in Reformation territories and became sponsors for the movement, that was not due to Luther's obsequiousness to them, but simply to historical circumstances, to the necessities of the situation. It was either that or anarchy, Luther thought. The real statesman among the German princes was Philip, the Landgrave of Hesse, though strange to say—how inconsistent are human affairs!—he did the most impolitic thing, the one most calculated to wreck the movement, in his bigamous marriage in 1540 to Margaret von der Saal. Philip felt that for the success of the Reformation, it was necessary to bring together the two sections, the Lutheran and Reformed (the latter springing from Zwingli, the Reformer of German Switzerland, representing both Switzerland and parts of southern Germany), and have them come to moral, if not legal, agreement. It was a noble aim. But in a day when man thought both differently and strongly on religious things, when discrimination between essential and unessential was practically unknown, and if occasionally recognized was never carried out in practice, the union of Christians was a Herculean task. It took the presence of some dreadful common foe like the Turks to cause Christians to think of their common interests.

In 1529 things looked dark for the Protestants. On the strength of the Catholic Otto von Pack's wily and

contemptible forgery, a federation for defense had been entered into against the pretended Catholic League; a course which allowed Catholic states to say that they had been threatened by armed force. So at the next diet (Speier 1529) the Catholics were united and determined, annulled the Speier recess of 1526 (a *modus vivendi* which gave some rights to Lutherans), said that the Edict of Worms excommunicating Luther should be executed in all Catholic districts, that no further innovation should take place in Protestant territories, that all parties hostile to the sacrament should be rooted out, and that no clerical order should be deprived of its authority, property and profits. This virtually restored the bishops and was a decision so one-sided that the Protestant authorities put in a formal protest (whence the name Protestants). This protest the Emperor not only rejected, but when the deputies appealed to a free Christian Council even threatened them with imprisonment. Things looked dark. The Catholics were emphasizing the division between Zwinglians and Lutherans and it seemed a counsel of prudence to bring to a common understanding the Protestants of the south and north.

Philip of Hesse approached Melanchthon at Speier with a proposition for a meeting of the theologians of the two parties and won him over so far at least that Melanchthon on April 8, 1529, wrote to Oecolampadius, the distinguished reformer of Basel and Zwingli's right-hand man, recommending such a conference. The Landgrave Philip wrote also to Zwingli himself, hoping that he would help the project, "Where one could," says Philip, "compare the articles of faith in dispute with Scripture in order to come to a common Christian understanding; for if this once happens we can easily reach effective counsel over the Papists and their knavish works."\*

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\*The letter of Melanchthon to Oecolampadius is in Corp. Ref. 1-1050; that of Philip to Zwingli in Zwingli. Opera. ed. Schuler Schultheiss 8-287.

Zwingli with a true statesman's instinct was willing and ready. But Melanchthon was shy. He was discerning enough to see that no real doctrinal union on the Supper could be made between Zwingli and Luther, and was dreading lest the strife should become more lively and lest Catholics might get the impression that Protestants were not in earnest as to the presence of the body of Christ in the sacrament. He also feared the political plans of the Landgrave. In any case he would exclude Zwingli in favor of men like Oecolampadius, and would invite "learned and reasonable Papists" as arbitrators. This last idea was, of course, preposterous from any point of view. When Melanchthon got back to Wittenberg he found Luther also disinclined to the conference, and wrote to his prince his doubts, among others his fear that the Landgrave had more inclination to the Zwinglians than was good, and yet at the same time his embarrassment lest Luther's refusal would cause him (the Landgrave) to lean even more to the Zwinglian side; so that he thought perhaps the best way out was for his prince to simply deny to Luther and himself the permission for the journey (CR 1-1064ff).

John Frederick was personally willing to do this, but he did not feel able to withstand the earnest wish of his confederate, Philip of Hesse. He therefore gave permission to Philip to invite Luther and Melanchthon with Oecolampadius and his party to Marburg in Michaelmas, 1529. Philip then wrote to Luther, who replied, June 23rd, that because he thought that the Landgrave was in earnest and well intentioned in doing away with the strife between the two parties, he was willing to meet half-way this Christian design, though such service on his and Melanchthon's part was in vain and probably dangerous. He wanted to say what he thought, viz., that his opponents wanted only to get praise for themselves that they had moved such a great prince (toward peace), that they had failed in nothing for this, and as though he

(Luther) and his had no pleasure for peace. Philip might better find out beforehand whether the Zwinglians were inclined to deviate from their opinions; for if both were determined not to give in, the meeting would be in vain and the evil would be worse. "I can expect nothing good from the devil, however nicely he places himself."\* On July 8th, he gave his consent with Melancthon to go, adding "May the Father of all mercy and unity give his Spirit that we come together not in vain, but with usefulness and not with harm." To his friends, however, he continued to speak his suspicions. He complained of the "unshamed importunity" with which the Landgrave had won his consent. He advised Brentz, pastor in Halle in Suabia and leader of the Reformation there and a very able man, who was invited, not to go on account of the danger, though he would gladly see him.†

Even Zwingli had his fears, especially on account of the place of meeting. The journey, said Zwingli, is more dangerous for me than for the Wittenbergers, because I have to go through the lands of inimical Catholic lords, and would much prefer Strassburg. But the Strassburgers assured Zwingli that everything depended on his consent, and that once he got that far there would be no further danger to Marburg. It is interesting as to the different attitudes of the two men to this conference that Zwingli, fearing the city council of Zurich would not give their permission for his departure, left in the darkness of the night and sent back later an excuse. The Wittenbergers did not know that Zwingli was invited, Philip writing to them only of Oecolampadius and certain followers. Among others invited were Councillors Frey of Basel and Sturm of Strassburg and pastors Butzer and Hedio of Strassburg (Reformed side), and Melancthon, Osiander, the courageous reformer at Nuremberg (Nürnberg), and Brentz (Lutheran side). Besides these there

\*De Wette, Luther's Briefe, 3. 473-4, and esp. 6. 102-3.

†De Wette 6. 104-5.

came for the latter from Wittenberg Justus Jonas, provost of the city and an intimate friend of Luther, Prof. Caspar Cruciger, Luther's private secretary or *famulus* Veit Dietrich and deacon Rorer. At Gotha, Pastor Myconius joined the company, at Eisenach Menius, and the electoral chief Eberhard von der Thann. Luther went with reluctance, for a mission of theological compromise was not to his taste. When he reached Philip's territories he waited for a letter of safe conduct from him, not that he needed it, but for delay, hoping something would happen to side-track the affair.

Zwingli and his party remained ten days in Strassburg. There he heard of the peace between the Emperor and Pope concluded at Barcelona, which obligated the former to fight against the heretics. This news strengthened Zwingli in his ambition to save the Reformation by political unions. Here he sent exhortations to the Council in Zurich, to the Venetians, who with the Swiss were excluded from the peace, urging a strong line of opposition to the Emperor, and where possible impeding or delaying his journey over the mountains. The Zwinglians arrived in Marburg, September 27th, (1529), were lodged in the castle of Philip, with whom they had many conversations. Zwingli most favorably impressed him with his statesmanlike plans. Kolde says that Zwingli's magnificent political projects, which filled his vision at this time, were in accord with Philip's own ideas,—viz., a union of all evangelical territories, beginning with common civic rights (*Burgrechts*) with Strassburg. Zwingli was hoping that the Marburg colloquy would do away with the last hindrance to that scheme. His hopes were wrecked on one little snag,—Luther's views of the Real bodily Presence in the Supper.

The Lutherans arrived, September 30th, and were also received by the Landgrave into the castle. The Strassburgers carried a letter of introduction to Luther from his disciple Gerbel in their city and they met the Saxon

in a friendly informal way on that day. "You are a rogue," said Luther in a rough joke to Butzer, who had caused him some unpleasantness. He exchanged very friendly words with Oecolampadius. Zwingli was kept in the background.

On Friday, October 1st, took place the first meetings of this famous colloquy, though they were private preliminary ones, attended only by the Landgrave and by Duke Ulrich von Wurttemberg, who had arrived the night before, who shared Philip's views and took deep interest in church matters. The effort was to bring together those leaders who were acceptable to each other to pave the way if possible to an understanding. So Luther met Oecolampadius and Melanchthon Zwingli. We have knowledge only of what passed between the last two. There were some general theological questions in which the Germans were by no means sure of the Swiss, and these questions were discussed by these two humanistically inclined reformers; original sin, the Divinity of Christ and Trinity, the Word of God as a means of grace (it was believed that Zwingli taught the workings of the Spirit without the Word as means). Zwingli convinced his Lutheran brother that he was orthodox on these doctrines, and the only one that remained unreconciled was the Supper, and this for both of the couples in this preliminary fencing. These meetings were friendly on both sides, but without result on that one doctrine. In the evening Philip the Landgrave exhorted Melanchthon so impressively on the need of union that the latter was moved to tears.

On Saturday, October 2nd, the first public meeting took place and (as the one before) at 6 A. M. Zwingli made three requests—all turned down, that the discussion should be in Latin, that the public be admitted, and that a secretary or notary take the proceedings down. Luther opposed. He wanted the proceedings in German (in which Zwingli was not so much at home), the public

excluded, and no copier employed for fear the copy might lead to further unfruitful strife. The Landgrave decided all these in the sense of Luther, though he admitted such a large number of persons (about 50 or 60) that the assembly could not be called secret or small. Those admitted were visiting theologians, ambassadors, nobles and gentlemen of the court. The place was not the knights' hall of the castle, but a smaller room in the new eastern wing. At a special table the only disputants—two on a side—sat facing each other, Luther, Melancthon—Zwingli, Oecolampadius.

The discussion was opened by Chancellor Feige, representing the Landgrave. He thanked the speakers for appearing, and exhorted them to lay aside all inimical feelings, strive after a permanent unity, and do all in their power for the pure truth, thinking not of their own persons, but the honor of Christ. Luther was asked to lead. Turning himself to Philip he addressed him and the "high-born princes and gracious lords." He praised the good intention of the Landgrave, but said that he had consented to come not to change his view, but to defend it and lay open the error of his opponents. First, they should give account of doctrines like the Trinity, Original Sin, etc., as in the churches of Basel, Zurich and Strassburg some wrong views were taught. Here Oecolampadius and Zwingli protested that the colloquy was called especially for the Supper; that the day before had shown that they were a substantial unit on the other doctrines, and that they should take up at once the chief point in dispute. Luther consented, told the chief objections of the Swiss to his doctrine of the Supper, said that objections drawn from reason and mathematics (a body could not be in more places than one at the same time) could not be advanced, that he stood simply by the words, '*Dies ist mein Leib,*' which must be understood as they are, and to have them before the assembly as an indisputable text, he wrote them down in chalk on the table (not in Latin,

as often said, but in German,—the language of the colloquy). Oecolampadius answered that it was not for reasons of mathematics that they rejected the bodily Presence in the Sacrament, but of faith, nor could any such presence be thought of in John 6, and in the Sacrament there could be only a typical or figurative presence. To this Luther said: “It does not follow because Christ spoke of spiritual eating in John 6 that he did not afterward speak of bodily partaking. Nor do the words ‘The flesh profiteth nothing,’ of John 6, mean that we can estimate lightly that flesh to which the Word and promise of the Lord has united itself, and which is therefore no common flesh.” “But if you confess a spiritual eating,” said Zwingli, “that is enough, and an understanding can be reached.” “But it is not a mere sign or a ceremonial act,” said Luther, “but a believing reception of Divine Grace in the bodily partaking.” (To Luther [see Köstlin, *Luther* 5 Aufl. 11, 129] it was in Zwingli a denial of true Christian sentiment that the latter did not humbly and thankfully accept even the bodily gift in the Sacrament which Christ offers to us, but underestimated it and stumbled at the inconceivableness of such a divine doing. One does not also depreciate the water in baptism, because it has in it also the Word of God.) “Yes,” says Luther, “the question is not, What is said? but, Who says it? The same who recommended spiritual eating in John 6 offered his forgiveness by bodily partaking in Mark 14. If the Lord told me to eat dung, I should do it, knowing that there was a blessing for me. The slave must not search into the Lord’s will, but close his eyes.” Zwingli answered that there were passages where spiritual feeding was understood, and it was probably the case here also. God does not require anything inconceivable. As to the right of inquiry, Mary the Virgin herself asked, “How can that happen? (Luke 1:39).” Luther replied: “You beg the question. It is not whether there are figurative passages in the Bible, but whether this one is figur-



ative." Again Zwingli referred to John 6:63. "No, that does not belong here," said Luther. "Ah," said Zwingli, "that place breaks your neck off, Herr Doctor." At this Luther lost his temper and said, "Don't be so sure. Necks do not break thus. You are in Hesse, not in Switzerland." Zwingli excused himself by explaining that in Switzerland too no one's neck was broken without right, and that the expression he used was simply a common way of speaking in his land. Here the Landgrave pacified Luther and told him not to take the word so sensitively upon himself. That closed the morning session.

In the afternoon Zwingli returned to John 6. He said that his opponents had formerly held with him that John 6:63 (flesh profiteth nothing) included also the flesh of Christ. Luther rejected this. The question is not what he and Melancthon had written before, but is about the proof that Christ's body cannot be in the Supper. Then Zwingli brought up the point how offensive was the power ascribed to a priestly class and even to bad priests of turning the bread into the body of the Lord. Luther replied that priests' power had nothing to do with it, it was simply a question of Christ's institution and words of promise. "It is not done by our strength, but by divine, God speaks and it is done." Oecolampadius said that the body of Christ is in heaven. "Well, what if it is," said Luther, "why cannot it be at the same time in the Sacrament? And if you understand, 'This is my body' metaphorically, why have you not the same right to understand being in heaven metaphorically? When we say the bread is the body we mean it by synecdoche, just as we point to the sheath containing the sword and say, 'That is a sword.' Of course there is a metaphor here, but unlike yours it is not one which does away with the thing itself." Zwingli then returned to the impossibility of a body being in two places at the same time and said he founded it on the Scripture and not on mathematics. For

according to Scripture Christ has taken flesh just as ours and is in all respects just as we except sin, and therefore that flesh cannot be ubiquitous. "Not as we in all respects," replied Luther laughing, "for we have wives and Christ had none." Zwingli referred to Rom. 8:3, Phil. 2:7 and Heb. 2:7 and quoted the Greek. Read it in Latin or German, said Luther, who did not like this display of learning. Zwingli excused himself with the fact that for twelve years he had accustomed himself to the Greek text. "Besides," Zwingli went on, "an unlimited body is no body." Luther acknowledged that Christ's body was circumscribed, but that did not prevent it from being ubiquitous for the purpose of the sacrament, if God wished it, for it all depends on God. God can make spatial and not spatial at the same time. We cannot appeal to reason, but only to the Word. "But God," said Zwingli, "does not deceive us with such inconceivable things." This was an unhappy remark, wrote Melanchthon to the Elector, for there are more inconceivable articles than that, such as that God became man, and that the same person, who is also true God, died (*C R.* 2-1105). Both parties appealed to the Fathers, though Luther said that we must not depart from the simple sense of Scripture for the Fathers. "We appeal to the Fathers," said Oecolampadius, "not to prove our doctrine, but to show that it is not new." Augustine specially troubled Luther, who said that even if Augustine called the bread a sign of the body, he did not mean simply a sign. "So the whole day went by," said Osiander, "in seeking, reading and translating (he was referring here especially to citations from the Fathers), which was very wearisome to hear." Twice Luther turned to Melanchthon to help him out, "as I have grown weary," but each time he went on himself, "I left everything to him," wrote Melanchthon to Camerarius, "for outside of Luther we were all dumb persons." (2-1098.)

The discussion proceeded also on Sunday (apparently all day), with arguments for and against the ubiquitous presence, appeals to Fathers, etc., but without getting any farther (we cannot keep Saturday and Sunday perfectly apart as to the arguments used on each, as accounts differ). It all came back to this, that Luther kept to the naked statement of Christ—"This is my body," while Zwingli interpreted that statement differently, and held beside that the literal presence of the body was not necessary and was therefore not a fact, and to take it as a fact was impossible and was unworthy of Christ.

Both parties saw that further discussion was useless. Chancellor Feige urged to unity. Zwingli thanked those concerned for the friendly reception given to his party, asked pardon for any hard words, and added with tears that there was no one in France or Italy whom he would rather meet than the Wittenbergers. Luther said that further unity was impossible in their views unless the others would give honor to the Word of God and believe with him and his. The others replied that that was impossible, as their view was founded on that Word. Luther then thanked them for their polite behavior during the colloquy, asked pardon from Zwingli for any injurious word, as he (Luther) was only flesh and blood, and that finally he must let them go, and leave them to the just judgment of God. They should ask God to convert them. Oecolampadius replied in the same terms, and Zwingli closed with a solemn assurance of his desire for peace and unity, and, as said above, with tears. Then Jacob Sturm, the Mayor of Strassburg, got up and said that there were several articles besides the Supper brought into dispute, and he prayed that they would permit his minister Butzer to explain these articles. The Prince assented, and Butzer held forth on the Trinity, Original Sin, Baptism and the Person of Christ, and asked from Luther a witness to his orthodoxy. Without alleging anything unorthodox in Butzer's exposition,

**Luther** declined. His own doctrines were known to them, they did not want to learn anything from him, nor was he sure that they would not teach differently at home. They might also abuse his testimony. "You have another spirit from us" (or, as another account gives it, "Your spirit and ours do not agree"). "For that," continued Luther, "cannot be the same spirit when one at a passage of Scripture believes simply the Word of Christ and another disputes and belies it. So I leave you to the judgment of God, as I have said. You should learn how you will answer it before God."\*

The Landgrave was still most anxious for some kind of an understanding or union. And the Lutherans did give in so far as to concede that if their opponents would admit that in the Supper there was the body of Christ, without saying whether it was physical or spiritual, natural or supernatural, they would give them peace. Nothing came of this. Butzer was ready to acknowledge that the body of Christ is in the Supper, though only for the worthy, not for unbelievers. Nothing came of this either. The Swiss now proposed that each party look upon the other as brothers, and admit each to the Supper. The Lutherans declined this because they could not understand how people could look upon them as brothers when they (the Lutherans) condemned their faith and doctrine. That must mean that the Westerners did not take very earnestly their own doctrine. All the Lutherans would promise was to abstain from literary controversy. The others were very willing for union, and Kolde says this was because they depreciated the importance of the subject, that is, of the Supper, and because they honorably wished to bring about the desired union by the largest concessions. The Landgrave still pressed for some result and Luther finally consented to draw up articles of faith,

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\*Full account is given in the Lives of Luther by Köstlin, 5th Auf. 11, 121-136, and Kolde, 11 305-318, and the latter's art. in R. Encyc. f. Prot. Th. u. Kirche XII. 248-255.

which he did quickly on Monday morning, October 4th, avoiding sharpness and yet clearly condemning every possible error of which the Swiss were suspected. The articles are Lutheran enough to suit anyone. As they have never appeared in English, as far as I know, I translate them.

1. We on both sides unanimously believe and hold that there is one, true, natural God, Creator of all creatures, one in being and nature, three-fold in person, namely, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as concluded in the Council of Nicaea and sung and read in the Nicene symbol by the whole Christian Church in the world.

2. We believe that not the Father and Holy Spirit, but the Son of God the Father, natural God, became man, by the working of the Holy Spirit, without the addition of man's semen, born bodily of the pure Virgin Mary, perfect with soul and body, like every other man, without any sin.

3. That the same God and Mary's Son, unseparated Person, Jesus Christ, was crucified for us, dead and buried, arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, Lord of all creatures, in the future to judge the living and the dead.

4. We believe that original sin is born and inherited in us from Adam, and is such a sin that it damns all men; and if Jesus Christ did not come to our help with His death and life, we must have died eternally and not been able to come to God's Kingdom and blessedness.

5. We believe that we are redeemed from such sins and from all other sins, including eternal death, if we believe on such God's Son, Jesus Christ, who died for us, and outside of such faith we cannot be loosed from any sin by work, estate (*Stand*), or order, etc.

6. That such faith is a gift of God, which we can earn by no previous work or merit, nor get it by our own power, but the Holy Spirit gives and creates (*schaffet*)

the same in our hearts, as He will, when we hear the Gospel or Word of Christ.

7. That such faith is our righteousness before God, on account of which God justifies us, reckons us holy and pious, without works or merit, and thereby keeps us from sins, death and hell, takes us to grace and makes us blessed, on account of His Son, on whom we believe, and thereby enjoy and become partakers of His Son's righteousness, life and all blessings. Therefore all monastic life and vows as necessary for blessedness are condemned. (The remaining articles have titles.)

#### OF THE EXTERNAL WORD.

8. That the Holy Spirit, speaking generally, gives such faith or His gifts to no one without previous preaching, or oral Word, or Gospel of Christ, but works and furnishes faith through and with that oral Word, as and in whom He will, Rom. 10:17.

#### OF BAPTISM.

9. That holy baptism is a sacrament instituted to such faith by God and on account of God's command, "Go baptize," Matt. 28:19, and God's promise, "Who believes," Matt. 16:16, is in it, it is not simply a mere sign or watchword among Christians, but a sign and work of God, therein our faith is stirred up\*; through which we are born again. (Literal translation. I take the antecedent of "which" to be not only "faith," but also the baptism which is the expression and demand and challenge of faith.)

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\*According to Köstlin, 5 Aufl. II. 639 (Notes), Luther used the German word "gefördert" as equal to "gefördert" (stimulated or helped—*excitatur*) while others thought it had the meaning of *requiritur*, is necessary, is required. See references in Köstlin. There was a section on Infant Baptism in the Articles, but it was omitted by accident in Luther's Works.

10. That such faith, through the working of the Holy Spirit, as we thereby become and are reckoned righteous and holy, exercises by us good works, namely, love to the neighbor, prayer to God and suffering all persecution.

OF CONFESSION.

11. That confession, or seeking counsel of one's ministers or neighbors, should be free and voluntary, but still is very useful to troubled, attacked, or sin-laden consciences, or those fallen into error, especially for the sake of the absolution or consolation of the Gospel, which is the true absolution.

OF AUTHORITY.

12. That all authority and worldly law, judgment and order is a right good estate (or calling, *Stand*), and not forbidden, as certain Papists and Anabaptists teach and hold; but a Christian, called or born to it, can well be saved by the faith of Christ, just as father or mother estate, man and woman estate.

13. One should hold free and allow what is called tradition, human order, in spiritual and Church matters, where it is not plainly against God's Word, so that people with whom we associate should be kept from all unnecessary scandal, in the service of peace. That also the doctrine forbidding the marriage of ministers is devil's doctrine, I Tim. 4:1, 2.

OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST.

14. That we all believe and hold of the Supper of our dear Lord, Jesus Christ, that one should use both kinds (bread and wine) according to the Institution, that the mass is not a work of which one obtains peace for the other, living and dead; that also the Sacrament of the altar is a Sacrament of the true body and blood of Jesus

Christ, and the spiritual reception of the same body and blood is particularly necessary for every Christian. So also as to the use of the Sacrament, as the Word of God the Almighty has given and ordered, therewith weak consciences may be moved to faith and love, through the Holy Spirit.

And although we cannot at this time agree that the true body and blood of Christ are bodily in the bread and wine, yet we should show to each other Christian love, so far as each conscience can suffer it, and both parties pray diligently to God Almighty that He will confirm us by His Spirit in the right understanding.\*

Though Luther spoke out plainly his views in this creed, yet it is to his credit that he did not speak them offensively or exaggeratingly, and they were readily signed by all the ten officially invited theologians of the colloquy, viz., Luther, Melancthon, Jonas, Osiander, Brentz, Agricola, Oecolampadius, Zwingli, Butzer and Hedio. Was Luther surprised or disappointed at this unanimity? Surprised at least, for he wrote to his dear friend Hausmann, October 20th: "The articles are put forth, in which they (the Zwinglians) concede beyond hope; they have been sufficiently humble and modest."† It revealed how in the ranges of truth below these surface agitations both schools of Protestants were at one.

It showed both the greatness and littleness of Luther that, in spite of the agreement of the Swiss in all points except one element of the Supper doctrine, he refused them the right hand of fellowship;—greatness in that it revealed the tremendous earnestness of his faith, that his faith was not a cloak, as Denifle says, but the life of his life, a thing so engrossing that it mastered everything; and littleness in that he could not mount up to the vision of essentials and of the true heart and honest mind be-

\*Erl. Aug. 65 88-91.

†DeWette 3-516.



hind the belief of right or wrong.† Zwingli offered his hand with pathetic anxiety for peace. Luther refused it, and his companions stood with him. This willingness on Zwingli's part they interpreted as insincerity in holding his doctrines, or as a veiled confession that he felt himself overcome. For Zwingli and his party, however, it was only a confession that they did not consider the difference of sufficient importance to hinder union for the advance of the Reformation. Melancthon strengthened Luther in this refusal, but his chief motive was not, as Luther's, doctrinal, but the fear that a union with the Zwinglians would block reconciliation with the Kaiser and the majority of the Reichstag. A new disease—the English sweat—suddenly broke out in Marburg, and the disputants on Tuesday, October 5th, took their leave and stood not too ceremoniously on the order of their going.

On the morning of Tuesday, October 5th, Luther preached "on the great high article of the forgiveness of sins, which when rightly understood makes a right Christian. And I do so all the more willingly, because you shall see in this the agreement of our doctrine with that of your preachers," that is, as Köstlin thinks, with the Hessian preachers; as Kolde thinks, with the Swiss and Strassburgers. Luther did not touch on any controversial matters in the sermon. Zwingli seems also to have preached in Marburg, and in Luther's presence, for the latter complains years after that in the pulpit in Marburg, Zwingli used Hebrew, Greek and Latin.

In spite of the political failure of the conference, it was not entirely useless. The very coming together in peaceful discussion, which on the whole was conducted with surprising (for that time) moderation and gentlemanly tone on both sides, was a sign that Reformed and Lutheran were united by strong religious ties, and in es-

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†The best defense of Luther's refusal of the hand is Richard; long note in his article on *The Historical Development of Luther's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*, in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Jan., 1888, (v. 45), 111-113.

essential things were theological brothers. Luther's condemnation now of the Reformed views was not like the ban of the Middle Ages, nor even like the damnatory opinions of his former writings. The Marburg Articles were a tremendous achievement toward Christian union, even if born out of due time. Their sequel was the Union of 1817. They were really a Lutheran victory, for the Swiss must have given in to the utmost. I feel there is some justice in Melancthon's word that the Swiss had followed Luther's opinion (*C. R.* II 1106). Still nobody was satisfied. Zwingli, who thought that the victory was really on his side, and who interpreted the Articles in his own sense, said that the unshamed and hardnecked Luther had gone from the colloquy conquered; like an eel in the grass Luther had only wounded himself, and fell from one opinion to another. But Butzer took away the impression of failure, and Melancthon, to whom Butzer ascribed chiefly that failure, was more disinclined to the Swiss than ever. Though the Landgrave was not dissatisfied, and though Zwingli hoped to build further on what was done, yet Kolde is perhaps right in saying that the conference served to a deeper knowledge of the contrarities of the teachings of the two parties than to bridging them over.

The late Dr. Schaff says that the laymen who attended the conference were very favorably impressed by Zwingli's arguments. The Landgrave wanted Zwingli to remove to Hesse and take in hand the church organization of the country. Before his death he declared that Zwingli had convinced him of the truth of his teaching in this matter. Lambert of Avignon, who became a Professor in Philip's new University at Marburg, and later sketched a masterly scheme for the reformation and organization of Hesse, was deeply moved by what he heard at the Conference, though he had previously been a Lutheran, and had translated Luther's writings into French and Italian. "I was firmly resolved," he wrote to a

friend, "not to listen to the words of man, or to allow myself to be influenced by the favor of man, but to be like a blank paper on which the finger of God should write his truth. He wrote those doctrines on my heart which Zwingli developed out of the Word of God."\* But it is a mistake to credit the Conference as full cause of Lambert's change, as he had previously moved in the same direction. Von Ranke thinks that for the future development of religious ideas it was not to be wished that Zwingli had given up his view, which in referring the mystery to the original historically transmitted elements (Momente) of institution included an immeasurable significance for the whole conception of Christianity outside of constituted ecclesiasticism. The points which he did yield were not so certain and firm in his mind; this one of the Supper he had thought through thoroughly. For Luther the mystery lay in the signs, which he had learned to value in bitter conflicts with Satan and hell, and his opponents had not yet tested their views in similar storms of despair.† If the signs contained the real body and blood which were crucified for the salvation of my soul, that was a sensible proof to my fainting heart that God was gracious and if I had faith would grant me forgiveness in my partaking of those signs. But the partaking of the actual body and blood in and with the signs of bread and wine was, said Luther, spiritual.

NOTE: To get back to the atmosphere of that time I have translated some of the letters of Luther on this famous meeting. His letter from Marburg to his wife will be found translated in Schaff VI 645-6. The first is to the jurist Gerbel, a partisan of Luther and is in De Wette, *Briefe Luthers* III 511-2 (Latin), dated Marburg, October 4, 1529.

"To Nicolaus Gerbel, Doctor of Laws in Strassburg. Grace and Peace in Christ. How far we advanced in the concord of dogmas here at Marburg, you know, my Gerbel, as well by ear as by the paper of your legates (Sturm

\*Schaff. Ch. Hist. VI. 649.

†Von Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation*, iii 124, 7 Aufl. Leipzig, 1894. See Luther's *Briefe*, De Wette, III. 510.

and Hedio). When we defended ours sufficiently bravely, and they falling away from many of theirs, being obstinate as to that one article of the Sacrament of the altar, they were dismissed in peace. We did this lest we should draw out blood by blowing the nose too much. We owe charity and peace even to enemies. They are to be well threatened that unless they come to their senses on this one article, while we can exercise toward them a certain charity, we are not able to reckon them as brothers and members of Christ. You will judge what fruit may hence be born. Certainly not a small part of scandal will seem to be taken away from me where vehemence of writing and disputing publicly is removed, though indeed we shall not hope that we are to effect so much. Oh that that remaining scruple [of the Swiss concerning the Lutheran conception of bodily presence] might be taken away by Christ. Amen. Farewell, my brother, and pray for me. Marburg, 4 October, 1529."

In a Latin letter by Luther on the same subject to Johann Agricola, written from Jena, October 12, 1529, *De Wette* III 513-4, nothing of importance is added. He says the Swiss are awkward and unskilled in discussing, and thinks it was fear and shame which prevented them from giving in on the Supper. He says the Prince urgently seconded their desire for brotherly recognition, but our party would not, but did give them the hand of peace and charity. In future discussions it was only invective which was to be avoided, not defense and confutation. To this letter Melancthon added a postscript which shows that the feeling that Christian brotherhood is possible only between those who believe the same is not at all a nineteenth century phenomenon. "They earnestly strove that they might be called brothers by us. See their foolishness, when they condemn us they nevertheless desire to be regarded as brothers by us. We were unwilling to assent to this. So I think altogether that if the thing had been left untouched hitherto, such a tragedy would not disturb so widely."

The next letter was written the next year, after reports of Swiss boastings that they had conquered at Marburg had reached Luther. This enraged him much. It is also in Latin and is in De Wette IV 27-29, especially 28-29.

“To Jacob Probst, Lic. Theol., Minister in Bremen:

..... Furthermore what the Sacramentarians throw around, that I was conquered at Marburg, they do according to their custom. For they are not only mendacious, but mendacity itself, deceit and pretense, as Carlstadt and Zwingli testify by their very deeds and words. But you see they recalled in articles set forth at Marburg which (treat) of baptism, use of the sacraments, external Word and those other things which they have pestilently taught hitherto in their published books. [That is, in signing the Marburg Articles they really recanted their former teachings, and therefore they did not conquer as they claim. That is Luther’s thought.] We have recalled nothing. And when they were conquered on the Lord’s Supper, they were unwilling to recall this article, even though they saw themselves not to be adequate [that is, not able to support their view.] For they feared the people to whom they were not permitted to return if they recalled [their former teachings on the Supper.]

And who would not be conquered when there was one and only one argument with Zwingli, that a body cannot be without place and dimension; to which I opposed from philosophy, that heaven itself is naturally in one place as a great body, nor were they able to refute it. There was indeed one argument with Oecolampadius: the Fathers call it a sign, therefore there is not a body there. And they put forth many words and were willing to speak to us thus far that the body of Christ was truly present in the Supper, but only spiritually, that we should regard them worthy to call them brothers, and thus to simulate concord; that Zwingli openly weeping before the Landgrave and nobles was asking, saying in these words,

‘There are no people on earth with which I would rather be one than with the Wittenbergers.’ They poured forth with much zeal and vehemence that they should be seen as agreeing with us, so that they were never able to bear this language from me: ‘You have another spirit than we.’ All were inflamed as many as heard this. We conceded so far that it should be placed in the last article that we were not brothers, but they should not be deprived of our charity, which is due even to an enemy. So they were intolerably embarrassed that they could not obtain the name of brothers, but were compelled to depart as heretics, nevertheless, so that meanwhile we should have peace in our mutual writings, if perchance God would open their hearts. I write these true things that you may have something to oppose to their lies, if they are unwilling to be quiet. They bore themselves toward us with incredible humility and politeness. But all as it now appears, fictitiously, that they might carry us into feigned unity, and we make ourselves sharers and patrons of their error. O, clever Satan!—but wiser Christ, who has protected us. I have now left off from wondering, if they lie impudently. I cannot see them otherwise, and I glory in this case. You see them, Satan reigning, not now with wiles, but openly showing themselves with lies. Farewell. Dated Coburg, First day of June, in the year 1530.

MART. LUTHER.