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VTI ILLA INTER SE SIBI  
respondent.**

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Attendas Lector, Capita seu Articuli ad diuersas Sectiones, aut in totum, aut ex parte pertinentes, a nobis notari per numeros paragraphorum, seu sectionum, quibus singuli Art. in suis Confessionibus distinguuntur: ut illis nulli notentur numeris.

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# Z W I N G L I A N A

BEITRÄGE ZUR GESCHICHTE ZWINGLIS  
DER REFORMATION UND DES PROTESTANTISMUS  
IN DER SCHWEIZ

HERAUSGEGEBEN VOM ZWINGLIVEREIN

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## Freedom in reformed confessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century

(The "Harmonia confessionum fidei" of 1581)\*

by FRITZ BÜSSER

### I.

To introduce my subject, let me make some personal remarks with regard to the topic of my lecture. The proposal for a paper on the subject of "Freedom in reformed confessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century" which I submitted to the Preparatory Committee, was the result of a simple consideration: If "the freedom of a Christian" is the main theme of Reformation, then this must also be manifest in the reformed confessions. Studying the sources and the rather sparse secondary literature – sparse in comparison for instance with the "superabundantia" of the efforts concerning the "Confessio Augustana" and the "Book of Concord" –, I made soon a discovery which fascinated me more and more. All my scholarly efforts, all my roads did not lead me to Rome, but to a book, which was published at Geneva in August 1581: Salvard's "Harmonia confessionum fidei".

I found the first reference to this work in Philip Schaff's survey of "The Creeds of the Evangelical reformed Churches":

"This (harmonia) is the first attempt at comparative Dogmatics or Symbolics. It grew out of a desire for one common Creed, which was modified into the idea of a selected harmony. In this shape it was proposed by the Protestants of Zurich and Geneva, entrusted to Beza, Daneau, and Salnar (or Salnard, or Salvart, minister of the Church of Castres), and chiefly executed by the last

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of the three. It was intended as a defense of Protestant, and particularly Reformed, doctrine against the constant attacks of Romanists and Lutherans.”<sup>1</sup>

Schaff informs us that the work was printed shortly afterwards in English, namely at Cambridge in 1586, at London in 1643, and with an altered title again at London in 1842. His bibliography adds to these an older French and a more recent German translation.<sup>2</sup>

Starting from the available indications concerning the nature of the “*Harmonia*”, its historical context, and the composer’s intention, I soon discovered that most major church histories and histories of doctrine did not mention this work at all; yet it has not been completely forgotten and on occasion some aspects of it have been the object of special notice.

This is true first with regard to the nature of the “*Harmonia*”. Besides Schaff, all the major collections of reformed confessions have given short descriptions of the “*Harmonia*”: Augusti, Niemeyer, E. F. Karl Müller and Cochrane.<sup>3</sup> The most recent was Otto Weber who, in his “*Vorerwägungen zu einer neuen Ausgabe reformierter Bekenntnisschriften*” which are still good today, sees in it “a kind of reply to the ‘Book of Concord’”, though it remained like the “*Syntagma*” of 1595/1612<sup>4</sup> a purely private enterprise in that it did not “gain the support of either the Churches or the political authorities”.<sup>5</sup> This fact, as Weber rightly observed, is the product of the nature of the reformed Churches: “there is *no such thing* as a reformed corpus doctrinae”.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Philipp Schaff*, *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, 3 vols, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, New York and London 1933, I, p. 354; III, p. 195f (Facsimile of the title page and first page of the Preface). Hereafter cited as Schaff.

<sup>2</sup> The French national Synod of Vitry 1583 dealt with a French edition. See “Tous les Synodes nationaux des Eglises réformées de France”, *Jean Aymon* (Ed.), La Haye 1710, vol. 1, 131, 167. The German translation was published by *August Ebrard*, Barmen 1887, under the title of “*Salnar’s Harmonia confessionum fidei*”.

<sup>3</sup> *Jo. Christ. Guil. Augusti*, *Corpus librorum Symbolicorum*. Elberfeldi 1827, p. 606–610. *H. A. Niemeyer*, *Collectio confessionum in ecclesiis reformatis publicatorum*, Lipsiae 1840, (Praefatio) p. V–VIII. *E. F. Karl Müller*, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche. In authentischen Texten mit geschichtlicher Einleitung und Register*, Leipzig 1903, (Einleitung) p. XIII. Hereafter cited as Müller. *Arthur C. Cochrane*, *Reformed Confessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century*, Philadelphia 1966, p. 12f. passim. Hereafter cited as Cochrane. The *Bibliographia Irenica*, by *Axel Hilmar Swinne*, Hildesheim 1977, knows the “*Harmonia*” (Nr. 755) and the English version of 1842 (Nr. 744) but does not name *Salvard*.

<sup>4</sup> *Corpus et syntagma Confessionvm fidei*. See title page and first page in *Schaff* III, 193f.

<sup>5</sup> *Otto Weber*, *Vorerwägungen zu einer neuen Ausgabe reformierter Bekenntnisschriften*; in: *Hören und Handeln*, Festschrift für Ernst Wolf zum 60. Geburtstag, herausgegeben von *Helmut Gollwitzer* und *Hellmut Traub*, München 1962, p. 388–398, especially p. 389f. Hereafter cited as Weber.

<sup>6</sup> *Weber*, p. 390.

Secondly, it is necessary to consider the historical context of the "Harmonia". It belongs to the latter part of the so-called Second Reformation; this means specifically that it was the product of the endeavours, also supported by England, to unify all the Protestants against Rome, which were made during the middle of the 1570s. They were involved with the controversy over the Lord's Supper, the formation of the "Book of Concorde", the change of authority and religious allegiance in the Palatinate, and must be understood against the background of the political and confessional troubles in France and the Netherlands. As Heppe, Gillet, von Bezold and Cuno<sup>7</sup> indicated a 100 years ago, and J. N. Bakhuizen van den Brink has done with even greater thoroughness in an essay<sup>8</sup> published in 1941 which unfortunately is hardly known, these endeavours reached their culmination, in the politico-ecclesiastical realm as well as in the spiritual-intellectual one, at the so-called Frankfurt Convent of the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September 1577. Its lasting result was: the "Harmonia confessionum fidei".

And thus, thirdly, the real *intention* of the "Harmonia" is revealed: it belongs to the history of ecumenism; it is – as I shall demonstrate – a first significant statement of that "reformed catholicism", which originated during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century primarily in Zurich and Geneva and could give most valuable impulses to today's ecumenical movement. John T. McNeill has written in 1930 in his fascinating book, "Unitive Protestantism": "The emergence of Protestant unionism constitutes a challenge to the student of Reformation history ... The motives, ideals, and objectives which give real character to a movement are in this case often obscured. Because schism and disruption followed in the wake of the Reformation, it is often assumed that they were its conscious objectives. It is high time that investigators devoted some attention to the problem of ascertaining in what degree the Reformation cherished the principle of unity and sought its realization".<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *J. F. A. Gillet*, Crato von Crafftheim und seine Freunde, 2 Theile, Frankfurt a. M. 1860, 2. Theil, Vier und zwanzigstes Kapitel, p. 168–205, especially p. 186f. Hereafter cited as Gillet. *H(einrich) Heppe*, Geschichte des deutschen Protestantismus in den Jahren 1555–1581, 4. Bd.: 1577–83, Frankfurt a. M. 1865, § 1 Die Werbung der Königin Elisabeth von England bei den deutschen Fürsten, p. 1f., especially p. 6f. and notes 1 and 2; § 2 Pfalzgraf Johann Casimir und der reformierte Convent zu Frankfurt a. M., p. 16–29.

Briefe des Pfalzgrafen Johann Casimir mit verwandten Schriftstücken gesammelt und bearbeitet von *Friedrich von Bezold*, 1. Bd.: 1576–1582, München 1882. *F. W. Cuno*, Daniel Tossanus der Ältere, Professor der Theologie und Pastor (1541–1602), 1. Teil, Amsterdam 1898, p. 109f.

<sup>8</sup> *J. N. Bakhuizen van den Brink*, Het Convent te Frankfort 27–28 September 1577 en de Harmonia Confessionum, in: *Nederl. archief voor kerkgesch.*, 32, 1941, p. 235–280. Hereafter cited as Bakhuizen.

<sup>9</sup> *John T. McNeill*, Unitive Protestantism. A study in our Religious Resources, New York–Cincinnati–Chicago 1930, p. 15f. The same author deals with the "Unitive Protestantism" as well in the following works:

Finally, valuable indications about the pursuit of unity which the “Harmonia” represented can be obtained from the biographies of the authors of the “Harmonia” which have been already mentioned by Schaff and others. I refer here only to the two most important ones. Geisendorf has observed in his biography of Theodore Beza, that the study of the correspondence of Calvin’s successor “permet d’affirmer ici que sa collaboration à l’*‘Harmonie’* fut très active et probablement prépondérante”.<sup>10</sup> Olivier Labarthe has referred to the “Harmonia” and its proper editor in volume IV of the “*Régistres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève*”,<sup>11</sup> and finally in 1979 in an essay entitled “Jean-François Salvard. Ministre de l’Evangile (1530–1585)”, in which he published 36 letters written by Salvard, and among them is also a copy of the dedicatory preface to the “Harmonia”.<sup>12</sup>

- The History and Charakter of Calvinism, New York 1954.
- The Reformed Churches and the Ecumenical Movement, in: The Presbyterian World, vol. XXII, Nrs. 7–8, 1954, p. 327–333.
- The Ecumenical Idea and Efforts to Realize it, 1517–1618. In: A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517–1948. Ed. by Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill, Philadelphia 1954, p. 27–67, especially p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> Paul F. Geisendorf, Théodore de Bèze, Genève, 1949, p. 337–339. Hereafter cited as Geisendorf.

<sup>11</sup> *Régistres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève*, Tome IV, 1575–1582, publiés sous la direction des Archives d’État de Genève par Olivier Labarthe et Bernard Lescaze, Genève 1974, p. XLII: “Parmi les lettres reçues ou échangées par la Compagnie, certaines forment de véritables dossiers permettant de suivre une affaire durant plusieurs mois, ce qui accroît encore leur intérêt. Les difficultés rencontrées par les Calvinistes en Allemagne, notamment après le décès de l’Electeur palatin Frédéric III, les tentatives faites par son fils pour rassembler les calvinistes allemands et les multiples tractations qui aboutirent à la publication de l’*Harmonia Confessionum fidei* constituent l’une des parties essentielles de cette correspondance.” See as well p. 362–365, letter of Salvard to Gwalther – 23. 3. 1581, p. 366–371, Bèze, on behalf of the Compagnie, writes to pastors of Zürich – 24. 3. 1581, p. 380–385, Bèze and Rotan, on behalf of the Compagnie, write to the Calvinist refugees of Nüremberg – (28. 3. 1581), p. 386–389, Gwalther, on behalf of the pastors of Zurich, writes to the Compagnie – 4. 4. 1581, p. 390–392, Amport, on behalf of the pastors of Berne, writes to the Compagnie – 19. 5. 1581, p. 395–400, the pastors of Neustadt write to the Compagnie – 27. 6. 1581.

<sup>12</sup> Olivier Labarthe, Jean François Salvard, Ministre de l’Evangile (1530–1585). Vie, œuvre et correspondance; in: *Polémiques religieuses. Etudes et Textes*, Société d’histoire et d’archéologie de Genève, (Mémoires et documents t. XLVIII) Genève–Paris 1979, p. 345f. Hereafter cited as Labarthe. Among the 36 documents – and those pointed to in note 11 –, more letters connected with the edition of the “Harmonia”, besides the above mentioned prologue, are to be found. Their publication is important, but it is as necessary to underline that the edited letters represent only a little fraction of all correspondence dealing with the “Harmonia”. The most relevant are those of Beza, Gwalther, Johann Casimir, Zanchi, Tossanus. A provisional sighting of the correspondence between Beza and Gwalther, respectively between the Churches of Geneva and Zurich, produces thirty letters for the period 1577–1581.

## II.

In order to save time, I shall reduce my remarks with regard to the author and the historical context of the "Harmonia" to a minimum; further details may be taken from the contributions already mentioned by Labarthe<sup>13</sup> and Bakhuizen van den Brink<sup>14</sup> who refer to the earlier sources and literature on the subject.

Jean-François Salvard came from the Aosta Valley and studied theology and law in Geneva (eventually also in Zurich), later on he was, with interruptions, the minister of various Churches in France and the Western part of Switzerland. He also served as minister of the renowned congregation of French refugees in Frankfurt, between 1571 and 1576. Because of his connections, knowledge and experience with "toute l'Europe", he was a committed advocate not only of the Reformed Churches, but of the concerns of Protestantism on the whole. In this commitment lies the real importance, according to Labarthe; and the visible expression of this commitment is the "Harmonia".

With regard to the historical context of the "Harmonia", i.e. the desire to achieve the union of all the Protestants against Rome, I have already mentioned the Frankfurt Convent of 1577, where representatives of nearly all the European Reformed Churches assembled: theologians and councillors from the Palatinate, theologians and lay advisers from the French, Hungarian, Polish and Dutch Churches, as well as from England and Navarra. The Swiss Churches were not represented, but they supported the whole enterprise from afar. It was a kind of European General Synod; the Convent decided to coordinate various plans of action: on the one hand, to take up contacts with the Lutheran authorities (in order to prevent, if possible, the publication of the "Book of Concord" with its condemnations of the Reformed Churches), on the other hand, to compose a new confession which would be binding for all the Reformed Churches. Both projects served the same purpose, but they did not work out. A deputation consisting of the English ambassador, Robert Beale, and the Dutch lawyer Paulus Knibbuis to the Lutheran princes was doomed from the start, and Beale was led on his return to make the following, scarcely flattering report:

"... how little the Germans understand how to take advantage of the right moment and how incapable they are of looking beyond the narrow standpoint of their lower middle class existence and the interests of their small territorial states in order to act for the benefit of a general and greater cause; that there is such a dogmatism in this country that it makes men willing, in order to save just one comma of Luther's teaching, to sit by and watch the

<sup>13</sup> *Labarthe*, p. 352f. (Vie et œuvre). See as well some notes on Salvard in "Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire du Protestantisme Français" 36, 1887, p. 387-389, 498-503, 623f.

<sup>14</sup> *Bakhuizen*, p. 257f. (III. Het Convent); p. 271f. (IV. De Harmonia Confessionum [1581] en het Corpus et Syntagma [1612]).

Church collapse in ruins without doing anything about it; a dogmatism which does not respect that tolerance possessed by the true Church of the Reformation which believes that the congregation of Christ on earth is founded upon faith and love and does not consider Dogmatics as the rock of its foundation.”<sup>15</sup>

Because of ideas, which were first developed by Salvard and the Landgrave of Hesse and then strongly supported by the Churches of Zurich and Geneva, the plans for a new and unified reformed confession were subsequently dropped in favour of the “*Harmonia*”. Zanchi published in 1585 another “*Confessio*” which was to serve as the basis for a common confession in accordance with the first wishes, but he did so privately<sup>16</sup>. However, the “*Harmonia*” had the support of the international Reformed Churches. It had been printed in 1581. The title-page reads as follows:

“*Harmonia confessionum fidei orthodoxarum et reformatorum ecclesiarum, quae in praecipuis quibusque Europae regnis, nationibus et prouinciis sacram euangelii doctrinam pure profitentur: quarum catalogum et ordinem sequentes paginae indicabunt. Additae sunt ad calcem breuissimae observationes: quibus tum illustantur obscura, tum, quae in speciem pugnare inter se videri possunt, perspicue atque modestissime conciliantur: et, si quae adhuc controuersa manent, syncere indicantur. Quae omnia ecclesiarum Gallicarum et Belgicarum nomine subiiciuntur libero et prudenti reliquarum omnium iudicio. Genevae, apud Petrum Santandream 1581.*”

We finally reach our subject-matter. The first question with which we must deal is the fact that the official editors, the French and Dutch Churches, left the “*Harmonia*” to the free judgement of the Reformed Churches. It was not to be a binding confession for the faithful. As you may draw from the “*Apodixis capitum*”,<sup>17</sup> the “*Harmonia*” takes into account 11 confessions and deals with 19 Loci. A small “*Catalogus confessionum*” introduces these in the order of their formation, giving some indication about their most important circumstances: *Confessio Augustana*, *Suevica* (Tetrapolitana), *Basiliensis*, *Helvetica I*, *Saxonica*, *Wirtembergensis*, *Gallica*, *Anglica*, *Helvetica II*, *Belgica*, *Bohemica*.<sup>18</sup> The syste-

<sup>15</sup> *Bakhuizen*, p. 237 referring to Gillet. Equally pointed formulated Languet his opinion to the ambassador Philip Sydney: “*Germania pacata esset, nisi eam sua ambitione et arrogantia turbarent theologi*” (quoted following *Bakhuizen*, p. 269, with note 2).

<sup>16</sup> *De religione christiana fides*, Neustadt 1585.

<sup>17</sup> *Apodixis capitum, seu articulorum singularum Confessionum Harmoniae, uti illa inter se sibi respondent*. See Facsimile.

<sup>18</sup> This “*Catalogus confessionum*” (p. 17–20) offers some information about the origins and importance of the confessions. Here some examples: p. 17, I. “*Augustana, Anno 1530 Carola V. imperatori ab illustrissimis aliquot Germaniae principibus aliisque*

matic arrangement of the “*Harmonia*” follows the “*Confessio Helvetica Posterior*”, as this confession had been already accepted by the majority of the Reformed Churches. Its 19 sections deal with the Holy Scriptures, God, eternal providence and creation, fall and sin, predestination, Jesus-Christ, law and gospel, repentance and conversion, justification by faith, the Church catholic and its servants, true and false sacraments (baptism and the Lord’s supper in particular), public worship and liturgical practices, marriage and celibacy, the temporal power.<sup>19</sup>

The general survey and the “*breussimae obseruationes*” on the title-page, as well as the very impressive preface, discuss the function and meaning of the “*Harmonia*”. The preface begins with the request that, as a matter of principle, differences of opinions between churches should be settled by peaceful means:

“Magnificently says Ambrosius somewhere: ‘There shall not be discord but concord among the servants of Christ.’ Since such an indolence, especially in godly matters, reigns in the human heart, that we do not understand things, which are by the way completely clear, it is not possible to deny, that we may gain a great deal of light on the basis of joint inquiry and of amicable and brotherly deliberation. And above all, that seems useful and necessary, that the sense of each other may be sharpened, in order that (the gifts) given by the Lord to particular members of the Church, shall be communicated for the best of the whole body, and that all bad passion shall be put aside in order to listen to Christ, who is the Wisdom of the Father, as the only master and doctor of the Church, in order that he, being the prince of peace, shall unite our hearts through his spirit, so as to, if possible, we all share in the Lord one and the same mind.”<sup>20</sup>

sacri Imperii ordinibus (quos Protestantes vocant) Germanice primum Agustae Vindellicorum exhibita, deinde eo ipso anno cum praefatione et subscriptione auctorum Latine emendatio in quibusdam articulis Wittembergae edita et publicata”. p. 19, IX. “*Heluetica posterior*, a Tigurinis pastoribus anno 1566 conscripta et non modo a Tigurinis ipsis confoederatisque Bernensibus, Scaphusianis, Sangallensibus, Rheticis, Mylusianis et Biennensibus sed et a Geneuensibus, ac Sabaudicis omnibus, Polonicis item et Hungaricis ac Scoticis Ecclesiis approbata et subscripta.” It is interesting that the Confessions appear in an other order on the “*Apodixis*”. First the *Confessio Heluetica Posterior*, because it had been accepted by nearly all reformed churches, soon after its publication in 1566. See *Joachim Staedtke* (Ed.), *Glauben und Bekennen. Vierhundert Jahre Confessio Helvetica Posterior. Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte und Theologie*, Zürich 1966, p. 54–204.

<sup>19</sup> For details see *Apodixis*.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted following *Labarthe*, p. 440. – The first sentence has to be read as follows: “*Praeclare quodam loco dicit Ambrosius: ‘Inter seruos Christi contentio non debet esse, sed collatio.’*” (See *Ambrosiaster* in: 2 Tim. 2, 15, ed. *H. I. Vogels*, *Corp. script. eccl. Lat.* LXXXI/3, Vienna 1969, p. 306, 9f.: *Conlatio ergo inter dei seruos esse debet, non altercatio*).



If we keep in mind the position of the Ancient Church, and remember also that the true Church is invisible, we have to admit that the plurality of confessions is natural. The “plurality” is explained by the fact, that the Christian faith cannot be summarized once and for all, but it must be done each time anew, out of a different practical situation.

The preface continues:

“If everybody is told to confess his faith as often as it is necessary to glorify God and to edify the Church, how can it be surprising that cities, provinces and even kingdoms published their own confession of faith?”<sup>21</sup>

The “*Harmonia*’s” preface goes on to explain that: In order to refute the Roman Catholic accusation of heresy, such a confession, a rendering of account, could not be done in any other way by the European Reformed Churches.

“If therefore kingdoms, cities and even provinces have confessed their faith separately, that happened, because so far the circumstances of the time did not permit them to hold a general synod of all those who confess the reformed faith”.<sup>22</sup>

It is true, the preface states, one uniform confession would be desirable. Yet the multiplicity of confessions is not caused by disagreement, but rather witnesses in its own way to the *unity* of the truth. The various confessions state clearly their differences from Rome, and their reservations about the fictitious “Book of Concord” of the Lutherans. An impressive number of active advocates of the reformed matter can prove that they

“do not debate in the twilight and waste their time with futile things, but have suffered for many years for the sake of the truth of God a great many of trouble which have also included the shedding of blood. But we do know that this truth does not come from men, nor has won its strength from men. It is simple and it wants to be presented and taught in simplicity.”<sup>23</sup>

Undoubtedly, the “*Harmonia*” intends to refute defamation. Yet its declared main objective is and remains to end all divisions. For the sake of this goal, even confessions which were not reformed were included on purpose in the “*Harmonia*”: the sound of all Protestant voices should be heard. In particular, the preface makes clear, “*illa de Coena Domini controuersia*” is not a sufficient reason for division among Christians.

“Concerning the divergence of opinion on the Lord’s Supper, there is in it-

<sup>21</sup> *Labarthe*, p. 441.

<sup>22</sup> *Labarthe*, p. 441f.

<sup>23</sup> *Labarthe*, p. 444.

self, in this matter as such, no controversy; concerning some accessory questions and circumstances we do think differently upon. On the essential matter itself, I say, unity prevails; nevertheless, since the gifts of God are of different kind, some formulate with more clarity, others with less clarity and, perhaps, less skill, what their opinion is.”

And: “Divergences of opinions (only) exist on how we participate (in the true Body and Blood of Jesus-Christ).”<sup>24</sup>

Making these assumptions, the “*Harmonia*” is able to present itself as the literary anticipation of a General European Synod of Protestants – as a true “*harmonia*” –, because it reproduces briefly and clearly the most important original texts, and deliberately does not obscure for apologetical reasons the differences, which remain, but rather clarifies them.

The preface goes on to make the “*Harmonia*’s” aim clear:

“There is no reason forcing anyone to believe that I wanted to blend these many opinions to make, so to speak, a mixture of diverging qualities, following the example of some mediators, of which a great number existed not so long ago. I have left all unchanged, so that everybody may recognize his words and compare them with the words of others. Thus he will see that nothing has been added, or subtracted, or appended, or distorted. Finally, if anyone observes the form and object of this work more thoroughly, he will, not without reason, judge it a reliable summary of the Christian teaching, consisting of the writings of the pious churches of almost all Europe, and so to speak compiled and accepted by a common Synod.”<sup>25</sup>

Salvard links a warm appeal for Christian humility and charity to these words:

“If they practise the ‘I belong to Paul’, ‘I belong to Kephas’, the words should also be heard: ‘I belong to Christ, I belong to the Church’. If some things are not acceptable, there is an overwhelming number of things to which one can easily agree. The basis of the faith remains the same, therefore, also the love shall remain the same, and no one should be discouraged to recognize those as brethren, whom God does not refuse as his sons; as for us, we will not hold of little account those for the sake of whom Christ held himself of little value.”<sup>26</sup>

After that, the preface concludes with exhortations to forgivingness, and pointing to the ineffectiveness of narrow-minded quarrelling and the variety of opinions already expressed in the New Testament.

<sup>24</sup> *Labarthe*, p. 445.

<sup>25</sup> *Labarthe*, p. 446.

<sup>26</sup> *Labarthe*, p. 446, see also p. 448.

### III.

We now arrive at the main issue: What does *freedom* mean in the Reformed Confessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century? The "Harmonia" itself gives one answer which at first glance may seem superficial. It refers to the freedom which Reformed Christians had, on the one hand, to free themselves from "the Babylonian captivity of the Church" of Rome, and on the other hand, to understand themselves as linked together in a new, pluralist community of churches. It is necessary to pay attention to both aspects of this first concept of freedom.

With regard to the separation from Rome, it was clear and comprehensive, yet not final in principle. It comprehended all aspects of church life, law and power, doctrine and piety, and their impact upon the political, economic and social problems of everyday life. In nearly all of the 19 sections of the "Harmonia", we find damnations of the false doctrines of the *Roman Catholic*.

But the second aspect is more important for us. We have already heard that the "Harmonia" understood itself to represent, so to speak, a General Synod: a Synod based on freedom, not in the sense of delimiting, but on the contrary, in the sense of a joining together, of a readiness to relativize one's own statement of faith, to listen to other churches and confessions, to talk together and to make comparisons. The "Harmonia" anticipates with this, in my opinion, the basic thrust of the ecumenical movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Cochrane remarked, not without reason:

"The specific local or national church makes its confession of faith: the church of Berne, of Basel, of Bremen, or Bentheim, of France or of Scotland. Each looks for his direction first in direct appeal to the Bible. They greet one another, back and forth, as from one island to another, from Basel to Strassburg, from Geneva to Zurich, rejoicing over every possibility of mutual understanding."<sup>27</sup>

With this profession of pluralism, the "Harmonia" pleads not only for a modern, but also for a genuinely reformed concern. Historically speaking: the very contribution of the reformed churches to the ecumenical movement<sup>28</sup> has come from their commitment to the free hearing of the Word of God and their pursuit of a continuous reformation of the church on the basis of the Gospel.

<sup>27</sup> *Arthur C. Cochrane* (Ed.). *Reformed Confessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century*, Philadelphia 1952, p. 17, n. 12. Hereafter cited as Cochrane.

<sup>28</sup> *T. F. Torrance*, *Our witness through Doctrine*. In: *The Presbyterian World*, Vol. XXII, Geneva 1954, p. 318; "We in this Alliance must therefore engage in the World Council of Churches as the *Ecclesia semper reformanda*, in order to let the Word of God speak to us in the context of the joint study of the Holy Scriptures, in order that we may be more and more reformed by it and in this continuous reforming be shaped and armed for the great mission of Christ, the mission of reconciliation, in which we are engaged as servants."

Salvard shared this concern and demonstrated it by his sharp rebuttal of Rome's reproaches:

"They say that we abandoned the Catholic Church, in order to follow all kinds of human fantasies, they call us heretics, schismatics and sectarians, and, mockingly, call us again and again confessionalists and accuse us of not agreeing with each other, either among ourselves, or with others who refuse the authority of the Roman pope, and of having as many religions as confessions of faith."<sup>29</sup>

According to Salvard, the truth is exactly on the reverse, because, as Hilary had long ago remarked:

"In many ways, ... the truth was acquired from the advice and opinions of the bishops, and proper understanding is expounded through the recorded confessions of faith.' And somewhat later: 'You should not be astonished, dear brethren, that the faith has been explained so often: this is a need brought about by the madness of the heretics.'"<sup>30</sup>

And later, Salvard says:

"They should now stop mocking us as confessionalists, except if they wish that we should say, that it is far better to be named after one's confession of faith, than after the negation of the truth. For, as from one single source many brooks can flow, so several confessions of faith may flow from the one truth of the faith."<sup>31</sup>

I said that Salvard pleads with his profession of allegiance to pluralism a genuine reformed cause. In fact, the "Harmonia" is a testimony of the unity of the church, professed by all the reformed fathers: above all, Zwingli, Bullinger and Calvin and their successors Beza and Gwalther. Without giving too many details, let me remind you first of all of Calvin, respectively of the extraordinarily careful and valuable contributions by Otto Weber<sup>32</sup> and Willem Nijenhuis<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Harmonia Confessionum*, Praefatio: *Labarthe* p.440f.

<sup>30</sup> *Harmonia Confessionum*, Praefatio: *Labarthe* p.441 (see *Hilary of Poitiers*, Liber de synodis seu de fide Orientalium 27, 62f., Patr. Lat. X, col. 522: Multifarie ... episcoporum consilii atque sententiis quaesita ueritas est, et intelligentiae ratio exposita est per singulas scriptae fidei professiones ... – Nihil autem mirum uideri nobis debet, fratres charissimi, quod tam frequenter exponi fides coeptae sunt: necessitatem hanc furor haereticus imponit).

<sup>31</sup> *Harmonia Confessionum*, Praefatio: *Labarthe* p.442.

<sup>32</sup> *Otto Weber*, Die Einheit der Kirche bei Calvin. In: Calvin-Studien 1959, ed. Jürgen Moltmann, Neukirchen/Moers 1960, p. 130f.

<sup>33</sup> *Willem Nijenhuis*, Calvinus oecumenicus. Calvijn en de eenheid der kerk in het licht van zijn briefwisseling (with a summary), 's-Gravenhage 1959, and: Die Aufgabe der reformierten Kirche in der ökumenischen Bewegung. In: Calvin-Studien 1959. Ed. Jürgen Moltmann, 1960, p. 62–83. Both contributions offer a wide range of bibliography.

to the theme “Calvinus oecumenicus”, which were printed on the occasion of the Calvin anniversary in 1959 and really opened the way for Rome’s discovery of Calvin.<sup>34</sup> Emphasizing the “reformed catholicity” of Calvinism, Nijenhuis describes exactly what Calvin as a reformer of the church had been searching for his life long. This is expressed in the titles of Book IV of “The Institutes” in the following way: “De externis mediis uel adminiculis, quibus Deus in Christi societatem nos inuitat et in ea retinet” and “De uera ecclesia, cum qua nobis colenda est unitas, quia piorum omnium mater est”. Finally, Calvin’s desire for continuity and comprehensiveness is manifested in the following remarkable passage:

“As for us, we certainly do not contest that the Church of God has always been in the world. For we hear, what God promises about the everlasting seed of Christ. In the same way as we do not deny that there was a continuous succession of the church since the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel until our times, in the same way are we strongly persuaded that it will last until the end of the world.”<sup>35</sup>

Because of this fundamental approach, Calvin was able as early as the 1540s to agree with the “Confessio Augustana” without hesitation. Yet Bullinger, thanks to his many experiences with Luther and the Lutherans, was much more reserved in this respect. “Confessio Augustana non est euangelium”, Bullinger wrote on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 1557 to Geneva.<sup>36</sup> But this was not an absolute rejection: as we know by André Bouvier, Bullinger too was basically “réformateur et conseiller œcuménique”.<sup>37</sup> In a letter of the 15<sup>th</sup> December 1557, the Zurich ministers wrote to Beza:

“And we do not reject the holy unity with those who confess the same Christ as we do, be they Saxons or Swabians. For Christ has joined us all together into one body and has honoured us with his highly holy name, not demanding from us anything more urgently but mutual love and holy concord. Yet we do not aim at just any kind of concord, but a concord, well-considered, moderate, which does not oppose in any point the pure truth confessed until now, which does not throw darkness nor doubt on the clear light

<sup>34</sup> See *Benno Gassmann*, *Ecclesia reformata*. Die Kirche in den reformierten Bekenntnisschriften, Freiburg–Basel–Wien 1968.

<sup>35</sup> *Opera Calvini* (hereafter cited as OC), vol. VII, Brunsvigae 1868, column 610 (*Vera christianae pacificationis et ecclesiae reformandae ratio*).

<sup>36</sup> OC, vol. XVI, Brunsvigae 1877, column 484.

<sup>37</sup> *André Bouvier*, *Henri Bullinger, Réformateur et conseiller œcuménique*. Zürich 1940. On page 160 see facsimile of the “*Conciliatio Calvinica*” (French translation is provided). The background of this document has not yet been clarified. See as well: 400 Jahre Zweites Helvetisches Bekenntnis. Geschichte und ökumenische Bedeutung, Zürich 1966.

and the intelligible doctrine, a concord, which ought to be common and precious to all pious people because of its purity, which also ought to be firm and lasting, not spreading any new occasions for fresh divergencies.”<sup>38</sup>

The small difference between Calvin and Bullinger concerning pluralism and unity of the church, especially with regard to the “*Confessio Augustana*”, is in my opinion also reflected in the attitudes of Beza and Gwalther towards the “*Harmonia*”. Continuing his ecumenical enterprises of 1557 and 1558, and his book “*De pace christianarum ecclesiarum*” of 1566, Beza proudly emphasized his personal commitment and his cooperation in the framing of the “*Harmonia*”.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, after his first reading of the “*Harmonia*”, Gwalther immediately remembered the past difficulties with the Lutherans. In the name of the Zurich ministers, he requested on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1581, that the preface be amended as follows:

“We think that the contents of the prologue and the arrangement of the work will not be disadvantageous, if we, in the beginning, declare that our teachers and we ourselves never did condemn other churches recklessly, but constantly sought peace and concord. This is clearly supported firstly by the history of the Marburg Colloquy and later by the events of 1536 and subsequently...”<sup>40</sup>

And: “Therefore we planned the compilation of the present ‘*Harmonia*’ through which all, educated and uneducated, princes as well as commoners, could see as in a mirror or on a stage, how cruel and flagrant an injustice we suffer from our opponents.”<sup>41</sup>

Concluding my remarks on the genuineness of reformed pluralism and its visible expression in the “*Harmonia*”, I wish to remind you of a short statement by Ernst Käsemann:

<sup>38</sup> Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze, recueillie par *Hippolyte Aubert*, publiée par *F. Aubert, H. Meylan et A. Dufour*, tome II (1556–1558), Genève 1962, p. 146.

<sup>39</sup> See *Geisendorf*, p. 338f. As well as: *F. Gardy – A. Dufour*, *Bibliographie des œuvres théologiques, littéraires, historiques et juridiques de Théodore de Bèze*, Genève 1960, (THR 41), Nr. 227, and *Tadataka Maruyama*, *The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza. The Reform of the True Church*, Genève 1978, (THR 146), p. 67f. and 134f.

<sup>40</sup> “*Praefationis argumentum et ordinem hunc non incommodum fore putamus, si principio protestemur praeceptores nostros et nos ipsos exteras Ecclesias nunquam temere damnauisse, sed pacis atque concordiae semper fuisse studiosos. Id quod Marpurgensis Colloquii historia primum, deinde quae anno 1536 et deinceps aliquandiu acta sunt, abunde testantur.*” Letter by Rudolf Gwalther on behalf of the Zurich Pastors, to Theodore Beza, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1581. Gotha Ducal Library A 405, fol. 701. Quoted following transcription by *Labarthe*.

<sup>41</sup> “*Ideo de hac Harmonia concinnanda nos consilium iniuisse, in quo ceu in speculo siue theatro publico omnes, tam docti quam indocti, principes item uiri et plebei, uidere possint quam atrox et notoria iniuria nobis fiat ab aduersariis.*” Ibidem.

"The variations of the Kerygma in the New Testament are an expression of the fact that already in Primitive Christianity there was a variety of different Confessions which existed together. They also succeeded each other, fused with each other and limited each other."<sup>42</sup>

Should the reformers have been more biblical than the Bible?

#### IV.

What about the details of the "Harmonia"? We intend to examine the "freedom in faith", with reference to the "locus classicus" of the reformed theology, that is with reference to ecclesiology. In order to give you an idea of Salvard's methods, I shall begin with the "analytica distributio" of section 10: "de sancta ecclesia catholica", which makes a distinction between "partes uerae doctrinae" and "partes contrariae doctrinae". False doctrines appear – in the following order – with the Donatists, Papists, Anabaptists, and in general with all schismatics, hypocrites, and the contumacious. He rejected the Papistes, because they attribute to the church a double head, Christ and the Pope, false marks, and follow the doctrine and morals of the Antichrist, and also because they confine the church to distinguished persons and places.

On the other hand, his consideration of "Ecclesiae christianae ac uere catholicae" deals with no less than 23 questions, among others with the definition of the church, the forms of the church ("ecclesia militans, triumphans, uisibilis et inuisibilis"), with the unity, head and foundation, functions, freedom, constitution, discipline of the church, with its members and the presbyters.

What characterizes this catalogus of questions on the whole, is confirmed, if we look at the details. Both the historical framework in which the ecclesiology is presented and the way in which the doctrine of the church is systematically integrated into the different Creeds, reveal an astonishing ecumenical flexibility and freedom. Here, I am forced to be brief: I shall consider texts drawn only from 4 of the 11 cited confessions in the "Harmonia", from the "Confessio Augustana", "Gallica", "Anglica" and "Helvetica Posterior". I shall make a *brief* comparison, and in order to compare them, I shall make some remarks only upon the nature, the unity and freedom of the church.

1. In referring to the nature of the church, these four confessions link elements of the mediaeval tradition with those of the newly begun Reformation. As in the mediaeval tradition, the church is called the "coetus" or "congregatio

<sup>42</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Begründet der neutestamentliche Kanon die Einheit der Kirche?* In: *Exegetische Versuche I*, p. 214–223, Göttingen 1970.

sanctorum". Thanks to the research of Jungmann and de Lubac,<sup>43</sup> it is generally accepted today, that the terms "coetus" and "congregatio sanctorum" originally had two meanings: an objective, neutral and a personal one: "congregatio sanctorum" means on the one hand the participation in the "sancta", i.e. the sacraments, on the other hand the community of saints, sanctified by the "sancta". The Reformation adopted this understanding not only in "Confessio Augustana" 7<sup>44</sup> and "Anglica" 19<sup>45</sup>, but also in typically reformed confessions. You know the famous article 7 of the "Confessio Augustana": "the church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is purely preached and the sacraments rightly administered".

For example, we read in the "Gallica", which was influenced by the experience of persecution: "We say, then, according to the Word of God, that it (the true Church) is the company of the faithful, who agree to follow his Word, and the pure religion which it teaches; who advance in it all their lives, growing and becoming more confirmed in the fear of God according as they feel the want of growing and pressing onward. Even although they strive continually, they can have no hope save in the remission of their sins."<sup>46</sup>

The "Helvetica Posterior" calls the "communio sanctorum" "a communion ... of all saints ... who truly know and rightly worship and serve the true God in Christ the Saviour, by the Word and the Holy Spirit, and who by faith are partakers of all benefits which are freely offered through Christ."<sup>47</sup> In all these definitions, the essential difference between the ecclesiology of the Mediaeval Church and that of the Reformation is clear: the central point of Reformation ecclesiology is, that the Gospel of Jesus-Christ forms the constitutive element in the gathering of the church. I just mentioned the "Confessio Augustana" article 7.<sup>48</sup> The "Anglica" 19 reads:

"The visible church ... is a congregation of faithfull men in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacramentes be duly ministered."<sup>49</sup>

<sup>43</sup> J. A. Jungmann, *Die Gnadenlehre im Apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnis*. In: *Gewordene Liturgie*, Innsbruck–Leipzig 1941, p. 173–189. Henri de Lubac, *L'Eucharistie et l'Eglise au Moyen Age*, Paris 1944 (*Corpus Mysticum. Kirche und Eucharistie im Mittelalter*, Einsiedeln 1969). *Catholicisme. Les aspects sociaux du dogme* (*Unam Sanctam* vol. 3), Paris 1952 (*Glauben aus der Liebe*, Einsiedeln 1970). *Credo ... Sanctorum Communem*. In: *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift* 1 (1972), p. 18–32.

<sup>44</sup> Item docent, quod una Sancta Ecclesia perpetuo mansura sit. *Schaff* III, p. 11, Art. VII.

<sup>45</sup> Ecclesia Christi uisibilis est coetus fidelium, in quo uerbum Dei purum praedicatur, et sacramenta, quo ad ea quae necessario exiguntur, iuxta Christi institutum recte administrantur. *Schaff* III, p. 499, Art. XIX.

<sup>46</sup> *Cochrane*, p. 153f. Art. XXVII.

<sup>47</sup> *Cochrane*, p. 261, Art. XVII.

<sup>48</sup> See note 44.

<sup>49</sup> See note 45.



It is worth mentioning that in all these Confessions the Gospel is not understood as historical news, but as a liberating and existential truth.

2. Let us examine briefly the “Harmonia’s” position on the problem of the unity and freedom of the Protestant Churches. Concerning this problem, there had been a far-reaching agreement on the principles, but great differences in matters of detail. The “Harmonia” shows both sides. The *unity in the multiplicity* can be seen insofar as, theoretically and practically, the famous “Satis est” of “Confessio Augustana” 7 is present in all confessions:

“And unto the true unity of the Church, it is sufficient to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by men should be alike everywhere.”<sup>50</sup>

The “Harmonia” makes manifest, that this agreement in matters of principle was not sufficient. There must also be a *multiplicity in the unity*. In dealing with this ecclesiological pluralism, I cannot consider all the important questions arising from the New Testament (the work of the Holy Spirit, the church as spiritual organism, the common priesthood of all believers), but I shall deal with those questions which originated in the historical situation of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and demanded immediate answers. Let me cite 3 examples: with reference to the primacy of the Pope, the “Anglica” is comparatively neutral, the “Gallica” hard, the “Helvetica” moderate. The “Anglica” speaks of errors,<sup>51</sup> the “Gallica” condemns “the papal assemblies, because the pure Word of God is banished from them”,<sup>52</sup> the “Helvetica” does not “approve of the doctrine of the Roman clergy, who make their Pope at Rome the universal shepherd and supreme head”.<sup>53</sup>

“The Helvetica Posterior” is also moderate in dealing with other questions. Regarding the number of sacraments, it

“acknowledges that repentance, the ordination of ministers ... and matrimony are profitable ordinances of God, but not *sacraments*”<sup>54</sup> “The saints

<sup>50</sup> *Schaff* III, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> “As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred, ... not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.” *Schaff* III, p. 499, Art. XIX.

<sup>52</sup> “Therefore we condemn the papal assemblies as the pure Word of God is banished from them, their sacraments are corrupted, or falsified, or destroyed, and all superstitions and idolatries are in them. We hold, then, that all who take part in this acts, and commune in that Church, separate and cut themselves off from the body of Christ.” *Cochrane*, p. 154, Art. XXVIII.

<sup>53</sup> *Cochrane*, p. 263, Art. XVII (Marg.: Christ the Sole Head of the Church).

<sup>54</sup> *Cochrane*, p. 277, Art. XIX (Marg.: The Number of Sacraments of the New People).

are not to be adored, worshipped or invoked", but are acknowledged as "living members of Christ and friends of God."<sup>55</sup>

## V.

We started with the assumption, that "freedom in faith" was the "call, mark and sign" of the Reformation. If the assumption is correct, the idea of "freedom in faith" has to be manifest too in the "Harmonia". In the definition of "libertas christiana" which he formulated in 1520, Luther said:

"Ein Christenmensch ist ein freier Herr über alle Dinge und niemand untertan. Ein Christenmensch ist ein dienstbarer Knecht aller Dinge und jedermann untertan."<sup>56</sup>

Without any doubt, we find here the deepest kind of freedom, the root of the freedom of faith and conscience and with it the basis for all human rights. This concept of freedom with all its implications (*servum arbitrium, sola gratia, solus Christus*, etc.), also played a central role in the theology of the reformed fathers. Calvin wrote in the first edition of the "Institutio", which appeared in 1536, a long chapter concerning "de libertate christiana" which he retained with few modifications in all the later editions of "The Institutes".<sup>57</sup> Bullinger devoted the 29<sup>th</sup> sermon of his "Decades" to the subject. In the first London edition of 1577, the sermon was entitled: "Of Christian libertie, and of offences. Of good works and the reward there of."<sup>58</sup>

What about the "libertas christiana" in the "Harmonia"? It deals with this theme first in section VI "de reparatione sev liberatione hominis a lapsu per vnicum Jesum Christum",<sup>59</sup> and then again in section IX "de iustificatione per fidem deque bonis operibus et eorum praemiis".<sup>60</sup> That "libertas christiana" occupies a central position in the "Harmonia", may be seen in the way in which it is considered; in contrast to most other sections, here all 11 confessions are taken into account, and section IX is particularly comprehensive, devoting 60 pages to the subject.

That the "libertas christiana" is the central concern of the "Harmonia", is demonstrated also by the *contents* of these two sections. In the Christology of section VI, the term "libertas" is rather rare. Instead of it, one finds in the title

<sup>55</sup> *Cochrane*, p. 231, Art. V.

<sup>56</sup> WA 7, 21, 1-4.

<sup>57</sup> J. Calvin, OS I, p. 223-283.

<sup>58</sup> H. Bullinger, *Fiftie godlie and learned Sermons*. London 1577. See *J. Staedtke*, Heinrich Bullinger, *Bibliographie*, I, Zürich 1972, Nr. 218.

<sup>59</sup> "Harmonia", p. 97.

<sup>60</sup> "Harmonia", p. 165.

the term “*liberatio*”. The whole section deals primarily with the “*causa efficiens*”, respectively the “*medium seu materia*” of the “*liberatio*”, which means: our Lord Jesus-Christ. In connection with this theme it deals with the predestination, the person and the work of Jesus-Christ, including his spiritual presence and the Last Judgement. In all expositions drawn from various confessions, there is a broad agreement, not the least, because the “*Harmonia*”, particularly in considering this portion of doctrine, relies on the traditional Creeds of the Church. As one reads in the “*Helvetica Posterior*”:

“And, to say many things with a few words, with a sincere heart we believe, and freely confess with open mouth, whatever things are defined from the Holy Scriptures concerning the mystery of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus-Christ, and are summed up in the Creeds and decrees of the first four most excellent synods convened at Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon – together with the Creed of blessed Athanasius, and all similar symbols; and we condemn everything contrary to these.”<sup>61</sup>

Just as we find damnations in the Creeds of the Ecumenical Councils, the “*Harmonia*” contains condemnations of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century heretics, i.e. of Servetus, the Anabaptists, Schwenckfeld and sometimes of the “*Ubiquitarians*”. Furthermore, the reformed confessions of the “*Harmonia*” emphasize the offices of Christ. In article 11 “Concerning Christ the Lord, and What We Have Through Him”, the “*Helvetica Prior*” of 1536 states in its conclusion:

“As this Lord Jesus is our only Mediator, Advocate, Sacrifice, High Priest, Lord and King, we acknowledge him alone and believe with all our hearts that He only is our reconciliation, our redemption, sanctification, payment, wisdom, defense and deliverance.”<sup>62</sup>

That the “*Harmonia*” grants the “*libertas christiana*” a central place is proved by the lengthy consideration of the problem of the justification by faith. As the “*analytica distributio*”<sup>63</sup> of section 9 demonstrates, there are three main problems: the character of justifying grace, the definition of true justifying faith and its relationship to good works as well as to the problem of the true obedience of the faithful. Nothing could show more clearly that the “*Harmonia*” corresponds exactly to the stress laid upon “*libertas christiana*” in the works of Luther, Calvin and Bullinger.

What does this mean? According to Hans Vorster, this emphasis rests upon the presupposition, that

“erstens die Daseins- und Selbstverstehensweise des Menschen, die ihn be-

<sup>61</sup> *Cochrane*, p. 247, Art. XI.

<sup>62</sup> *Cochrane*, p. 104, Art. XI.

<sup>63</sup> “*Harmonia*”, p. 98.

sonders charakterisiert, nämlich das 'esse ex operibus' an ihr Ende gekommen ist und dass zweitens das unverfügbare Dasein und Selbstverständnis des 'esse gratiae' durch Gott eröffnet ist".<sup>64</sup>

In the second place, the "Harmonia" stresses the faith, i. e. the liberating assurance, that God has taken our salvation, our human destiny into his own hands. The Christian faith is not, according to the "Helvetica Posterior",

"an opinion or human conviction, but a most firm trust and a clear and steadfast assent of the mind, and then a most certain apprehension of the truth of God presented in the Scriptures and in the Apostles' Creed".<sup>65</sup>

The character of faith as a gift is given even greater emphasis in another passage of the "Helvetica Posterior":

"Therefore, because faith receives Christ our righteousness and attributes everything to the grace of God in Christ, on that account justification is attributed to faith, chiefly because of Christ and not therefore because it is our work. For it is the gift of God ... Moreover, the Lord abundantly shows that we receive Christ by faith in John, ch. 6, where he puts eating for believing, and believing for eating. For as we receive food by eating, so we participate in Christ by believing."<sup>66</sup>

In the third place, the "Harmonia" deals with the good works as fruits of faith. It would lead us too far, to show in detail the full consequences of the "libertas christiana" for the Christian life: they are considered in all the confessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Then as now the Christian life begins with spontaneous willing, and joyous service; and is characterized by an inner freedom in every "Sitz im Leben". This life shows both regard for the weak and a willingness to avow our own weakness.

Let me conclude by once again drawing your attention to the fact that the discussion of freedom in the reformed confessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, especially in the "Harmonia confessionum fidei", sought to achieve a double goal. It was my desire, as a historian, to acquaint you with this interesting effort on the part of the reformed churches, to attempt to assemble all the churches of the Reformation in a difficult time. It is of course possible to say, that this effort was only an illusion. I do not share this opinion.

Salvard and his helpers and friends were not Utopians, but rather realists. They were not theorists of a sterile orthodoxy, but practitioners of brotherly love. Their desire was to progress from the experience of freedom to the postu-

<sup>64</sup> Hans Vorster, *Das Freiheitsverständnis bei Thomas von Aquin und Luther*, Göttingen 1963, p. 393.

<sup>65</sup> *Cochrane*, p. 257, Art. XVI.

<sup>66</sup> *Cochrane*, p. 256, Art. XV.

lates of truth. They shared with many contemporaries the view of the Apostle Paul: "our knowledge now is partial" (1 Cor. 13, 12). Therefore, they did not seek to damn others, but to find harmony among believers. Of course it is possible to accuse them of neglecting the real issues which divided the churches of the Reformation by putting together a series of carefully selected sections of their confessions: One can argue that an interpretation should have been added to this compilation. Yet I imagine that they were fully aware of the tension between spirit and letter, not only in the Gospel, but all the more with regard to human confessions.

It is not just by chance that the reformed French, Dutch and Swiss supported the framing of the "Harmonia": they lived in countries where the battle for political and spiritual freedom was being fought; and they stood in a tradition which had come to know that all kinds of freedom were interrelated.

As a theologian, I hope that my paper will aid in continuing the ecumenical dialogue. Should this dialogue really make progress, it cannot be limited to the Lutherans, Anglicans, Orthodox and Rome. As in the days of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the Reformed Churches still have an important contribution to make: it is genuine reformed catholicity.

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