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Wilno 1585 Colloquium — Lutheran and Reformed Discord over Sacramental Theology in Lithuania

On June 14, 1585, Duke Krzysztof Radziwiłł („Piorun”) (1547–1603), Palatine of Wilno (Vilnius) and Hetman of Lithuania, convoked an important meeting of theologians representing the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Lithuania to discuss the theological understanding of the Lord’s Supper, which had become an occasion of disagreement and an obstacle to further collaboration between them. The aim of the meeting was to effect a reconciliation of the parties which had agreed to and signed the *Sandomierz Consensus* in 1570, and to address concerns raised by the Lutherans in their Wilno convocation of 1578 because of which they had renounced the terms of the *Consensus*. The future of united Protestantism lay in the balance. The outcome of this meeting was to have a strong bearing on future relations between the Reformed and Lutheran Churches and the course of Protestantism in Lithuania.

Historians have usually passed over this meeting with little or no comment. Prussian theologian and church historian Georg Colbe (1594–1670), in his *Episcopo-presbyterologia Prussico-Regiomontana* of 1657, reports simply that the meeting was convoked by Prince Radziwiłł and that Dr. Paul Weiss of the Königsberg Faculty participated. Colbe seems not to have had the protocol before him, because he errs in stating that the meeting was held on June 13th instead of June 14th. Another short report of the colloquium is given by Prussian Historian Christoph Hartknoch (1644–1687) in his *Preußische Kirchenhistoria* of 1686. He notes that Radziwiłł called the colloquium to determine what were the differences between the Reformed and Lutheran doctrines of the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper and which of the two parties was more correct. He mentions also the names of the official participants from both parties and states that Weiss and Dr. Andrzej Wolan (Andreas Volanus, 1530–1610) were the principal speakers. He also notes that no fruitful conclusion was reached. It appears that Hartknoch may have had access to the protocol, because although he gives little information concerning the conduct of the meeting he gives a very complete list of participants and the outcome on the deliberations. Almost a full century after Hartknoch church historian Christian Gottlieb von Friese, Chairman of the Lutheran Consistory in Warszawa (Warsaw), in his *Beyträge zu der Reformationgeschichte in Polen und Litthauen*, published in 1786, gives a so-

mewhat fuller report which includes the proceedings of the colloquium, liberal quotations from the arguments presented by the speakers and the results of the meeting along with the official response formulated by the Lutheran participants. No subsequent writers quote directly from the protocol. It seems to have been lost. Reformed Historian Valerian Krasin̄ski in his *Historical Sketch of the Rise, Progress, And Decline of the Reformation in Poland*, published in 1840, based his work on that of Frieſe and provides an English translation of a few of the arguments presented. Józef Łukasze-wicz in *Geschichte der reformierten Kirchen in Litauen*, published in 1848, mentions the colloquium but adds no new information. Other historians say little or nothing about this meeting.

Thanks to efforts of Dr. Jolanta Gelumbeckaitė of the University of Wilno, we now have access to the original protocol, which she found in the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel, Germany. Now for the first time since 1786 we are able to study in detail the course of the meeting and its conclusion as they were recorded at the time.

The aim of the present study is to thoroughly examine the protocol from the historical and theological perspective and note the emerging sacramental consciousness of the Reformed and Lutheran parties and the theological differences between them which here came to light. Further, we will take note of the ramifications of the meeting for the future of Protestantism in Lithuania.

1. Historical Circumstances of the Colloquium

The signing of the *Sandomierz Consensus* on April 14, 1570 was the occasion of great rejoicing among the Protestant communities in both Poland and Lithuania. The event was especially celebrated in the Reformed community, for it was the Reformed Church which had first proposed that non-Roman Catholic Christians in the Kingdom should by their formal declaration publicly demonstrate to the King and people that the Protestants were a united force in both lands, and that all internal dissention among and within the Protestant confessions had now been laid to rest. Of course this was an overly ambitious claim; it did not represent the true state of affairs. True enough a document of *Consensus*, in which Polish and Lithuanian Reformed, Lutherans, and Bohemian Brethren formally acknowledged that all three confessions were true Christian churches which would work together for the establishment of a united church, had been formally agreed at Sandomierz. Included in the document was a declaration in which Lutherans and Reformed stated that they were of a common mind with regard to all major Christian doctrines, including the Lord's Supper and would work together toward a common liturgical praxis which would outwardly indicate their common position¹. In truth, however, the Lutherans at Sandomierz still had many reservations concerning the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper and called for further meetings to be held to inquire more deeply into the matter. They proposed, and all

¹ *Akta synodów różnowierczych w Polsce*, t. II (1560–1570), ed. M. Sipayłto, Warszawa 1972, pp. 295–296.

agreed, that the first such meeting should be held in Warszawa on the feast of the Holy Trinity, 1570². This meeting was never held.

The Lutherans departed from Sandomierz with the conviction that they had entered into a political alliance, the theological ramifications of which still needed to be adjudicated. For them the *Consensus* was a strictly political document, regulating the relationship between the churches on the basis of further discussions. The Reformed, however, believed that final and complete unity between the churches had now been achieved, and on this basis they presented before the King and parliament, and the peoples of both lands their official interpretation of the theological position of the new alliance, in a document entitled *Confession of Sandomierz*³. This confession can be accurately described as a collection of quotations from Heinrich Bullinger's (1504–1575) *Second Helvetic Confession* of 1566 with minor changes in terminology added to make the document more palatable to the Lutherans. Lutheran reaction, however, was swift and sure. The Lutherans protested that the confession was in no way representative of their confession, and that the Reformed had duplicitously presented it as representing the unanimous testimony of the churches. The Bohemian Brethren sought to placate the Lutherans by reminding them that all three churches were free to maintain their own confessional positions, and that the confession merely represented the Reformed reading of the *Consensus*⁴. This quieted Lutheran protests for a time.

The longed-for recognition from King and parliament was not forthcoming. The Roman Catholic bishops quickly pointed out that the *Consensus* could in no way be regarded as an accurate statement of the doctrinal positions of the Protestant churches. Stanisław Hozjusz, Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, said as much in his letter of August 31, 1570, to Jakób Uchański, Archbishop of Gniezno, in which he stated that it would not be possible to persuade all the parties to come to common consent concerning the Lord's Supper⁵. The Catholics immediately perceived the *Consensus* for what it was — a political declaration without real substance. This further strengthened the resolve of the parliament that the Protestants should not be given official recognition as a church separate from the Roman See.

The motive of the Protestants in formulating the *Consensus* had been called into question. In general synods they insisted that the *Consensus* was their true and abiding confession. In this way they sought to strengthen and unify their forces and demonstrate to King and country that they were indeed united. However, during this same period the Lutherans were beginning to find their voice. Most particularly, the faculty at Jena expressed strong criticism against the *Consensus*, while the faculty of theology

² *Ibidem*, p. 291.

³ CONFESSIA. Wyznanie wiary powszechnej Kościołów Krześcijańskich POLSKICH Krotko á prostemi słowy zámknione / wedle podania Apostolskiego y stharych Doktorow... W Kráakowie Drukował Máciej Wirzbięta / Typograph Krolá Jego M. 1570 (critical edition and reprint: K. Długosz–Kuczarbowa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, Warszawa 1995).

⁴ *Akta synodów*, t. II, pp. 315–316.

⁵ Portions of this letter are printed in Н. Любoвич, *Начало католической реакции и упадок реформации в Польше*, Варшава 1890, p. 191.

at Leipzig was at best lukewarm⁶. The Prussian Lutherans were also critical of the work. They saw that many necessary points had been passed over without mention and condemned the *Consensus* as inadequate⁷. Only the faculty at Wittenberg was willing to give the document its unreserved blessing⁸. There was within Lutheranism in Germany an evident tension between the extreme and more moderate disciples of Philip Melancthon. The more extreme, led by Wittenberg Professors Paul Eber (1511–1568), George Major (1502–1574), and Caspar Peucer (1525–1602), Melancthon's son-in-law, had been labeled 'crypto-Calvinists' by the more moderate students of Melancthon and the 'gnesisio-Lutherans,' whose leader Matthias Illyricus Flacius (1520–1575) adopted extreme positions against the Melancthonians⁹. Through the efforts of Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586), Melancthon's most learned pupil, together with David Chytraeus (1530–1600), Jakob Andreae (1528–1590), a resolution of this conflict was achieved through a series of papers and colloquiums. The final resolution of the controversy came with the publication of the results of their efforts in the *Formula of Concord* (1577). The *Formula* consists in an *Epitome* of controverted articles, based on Andreae's six Christian sermons of 1573, and the *Solid Declaration* of the same articles by Chemnitz¹⁰. Among the problems addressed were questions concerning the doctrine of the Sacrament of the Altar which spoke to the very problems with which the Polish and Lithuanian Lutherans were struggling. Now agreement has been reached between those who had originally supported the *Sandomierz Consensus* and those who have leveled criticisms against it. No longer could Polish and Lithuanian Lutherans look to Wittenberg for justification in following the course previously approved. They no longer had sufficient support for maintaining the position to which they had previously agreed. Lutheranism was following another path.

At a general synod in Piotrków held on June 1, 1578, the Polish Protestants had agreed once again to the definitions set down in the *Consensus* and issued a recommendation to the Germans to form a common confession on the model of *Sandomierz Consensus* and proceeded to give illustrations showing how the Poles had been able to resolve practical issues¹¹.

The Calvinists and Bohemian Brethren entertained the comforting hope that the Lutherans in Lithuania and Poland would not follow the path taken by their German confreres. It was with shocked surprise that only 24 days later, on June 25, 1578, the 48th anniversary of the presentation of the *Augsburg Confession*, the Lutherans in their convocation with the Reformed

⁶ *Akta Synodów różnowierczych w Polsce*, t. III (Małopolska 1571–1632), ed. M. Sipaytlo, Warszawa 1983, p. 128.

⁷ I. Lukšaitė, *Reformacija Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje ir Mažojoje Lietuvoje. XVI a. trečias dešimtmetis — XVII a. pirmas dešimtmetis*, Vilnius 1999, p. 388; Любович 1890, p. 193.

⁸ *Akta Synodów*, t. III, p. 128.

⁹ J. Pelikan, *The Consensus of Sandomierz. A Chapter from the Polish Reformation*, in „*Concordia Theological Monthly*” 18 (N° 11:325–37) 1947, p. 836.

¹⁰ *The Book of Concord: The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*, ed. T. Tappert, Fortress Press 1959.

¹¹ *Akta synodów*, t. III, pp. 39–41.

in Wilno publicly repudiated the terms of the *Consensus*. While they were meeting in Duke Krzysztof Radziwiłł's palace they formulated a statement entitled *Concordia Vilnensis* which expressed their dissatisfaction with the terminology in which the *Consensus* had described the nature and purpose of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper. The Lutherans were represented by Maciej Dambrowski and Job Sommer, pastors of the Wilno Lutheran parish, Mikołaj Talwosz, Castellan of Samogitia, and others. Included among the Reformed participants were Mikołaj Kantz a Skala, Pastor Stanisław Sudrowski of Wilno Reformed Parish, Superintendent Caspar Tarasowski of the Reformed Church, Stanisław Martianus and Reformed Pastor Dziewałtowski (Deovalte). It is noteworthy that among those present in the convocation was Mikołaj Pac, the former Roman Catholic bishop of Kiev, who begun to incline toward the Lutheran Church after his earlier allegiance to the Reformed¹². The Polish Reformed consoled themselves that this was most likely only a local uprising of no real significance for the larger church. In this they were sadly mistaken. Later in the same year something of the nature of the dissatisfaction with the *Consensus* was made public at the general synod in Poznań¹³. A further blow against the *Consensus* was struck in 1582 when Paweł Gericius, Lutheran pastor at Poznań, and his associate Jan Enoch, openly denounced the Eucharistic theology of the *Consensus* and repudiated the entire document¹⁴.

Although in Poland efforts were made to cover over the growing dissention and in the General Synod at Włodzisław in 1583 the *Consensus* was reaffirmed over the objections of the Lutheran confessionists¹⁵, the situation was clearly deteriorating. In Lithuania no attempts appear to have been made to silence the growing dissatisfaction.

In the early 1580's both Lutherans and Reformed were feeling the heavy hand of Roman Catholic reaction and the growing strength of the counter-Reformation. In 1569 the Jesuits have arrived from Rome, organized as an army to do battle against all Protestants of whatever confession. Their goal was that Poland and Lithuania might remain loyal. At first they restricted themselves largely to public theological debates and denunciation of Protestantism as the source of Antitrinitarianism and other heresies. Determined efforts were made to win back the magnates. Here their greatest success was the reconversion to the Roman Church of Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł the Orphan („Sierotka”) (1549–1616), son of Mikołaj Radziwiłł the Black („Czarny”) (1515–1565), the second most powerful man after the King in Lithuania, who had used all power at his disposal to promote Protestantism. His son did not hesitate to use his power to promote the papacy at Protestant expense, and in 1583 Rome rewarded him by making his younger brother Jerzy Radziwiłł (1556–1600) a cardinal¹⁶. The

¹² Danielis Ernesti Jablonski, *Historia Consensus Sandomirtensis*, Berlin 1731, pp. 81–86; A. F. Adamowicz, *Kościół augsburski w Wilnie*, Wilno 1855, p. 54; Andreae Wengerscii *Libri quattuor Slavoniae Reformatae*, Amstelodami 1679, p. 94.

¹³ *Akta Synodów różnowierczych w Polsce*, t. IV (Wielkopolska 1569–1632), ed. M. Sipayłło, Warszawa 1997, p. 49.

¹⁴ *Akta synodów*, t. IV, p. 73.

¹⁵ *Akta synodów*, t. III, p. 79.

¹⁶ Lukšaitė, pp. 406–407.

Jesuits determined that they must carry on their battle against the Protestants on all fronts. In 1581 the time was ripe for them to order that in Wilno Protestant books should be gathered and publicly burned¹⁷.

In this dire situation the Reformed recognized the precariousness of the Protestant position. They determined that the future of the church was in their hands and that unity among the Protestants must be maintained in order for Protestantism to survive. In the face of increasing Lutheran rejection of the *Sandomierz Consensus*, the Reformed continued to insist that it alone offered a viable and acceptable instrument around which all Protestants should unite. At the 1578 meeting the Lutherans stated clearly their objection that two contrary doctrines could not exist side by side in one church and that they for their part had no intention of departing from Lutheran doctrine, especially with reference to teachings and practices associated with the Sacrament of the Altar. This forced the Reformed to address themselves to theological questions which they had successfully sidestepped at Sandomierz. If they were to engage in further discussions with the Lutherans these discussions would have to address controverted theological issues since Lutherans had stated that unity concerning the Lord's Supper was for them an essential prerequisite to ecclesiastical unity.

During the seven years which immediately followed the Wilno meeting it had also become evident that the aristocracy could no longer demand the compliance of the people or curtail the onslaught of the Jesuits and rioters. Society was changing and their authoritative position in matters of religion was rapidly waning. Because of further defections to Rome, the aristocracy and nobility could no longer speak with one voice in these matters. In this situation Duke Krzysztof Radziwiłł („Piorun”) attempted to reconcile the Lutherans and Reformed under his rule. He convoked a colloquium on his estate in Wilno, on June 14, 1585 with the purpose that all should return to a positive appreciation of the gains won at Sandomierz and to make the *Consensus* once again an effective basis of Protestant unity¹⁸. His timing was good. Intolerance towards the Protestants was on the rise and it would soon be exhibited by the burning of the Wilno Reformed church in 1591 by a mob incited by the Jesuits¹⁹.

Present at the meeting were distinguished members of the Reformed aristocracy as well leading theologians and pastors from the Lutheran and Reformed churches. Among the aristocrats present, all representing the Reformed church, were in addition to Radziwiłł himself Stanisław Naruszewicz, Castellan of Mińsk, Jan Abramowicz († 1602), Starosta of Lida, and Andreas Zawisza, the assessor of the court. Representing the Reformed church itself were Andrzej Wolan, eminent Reformed theologian and royal secretary, Stanisław Sudrowski (Sudrovius, c. 1550–1600), Senior of Wilno District, who would later serve as editor of 1600 Reformed Catechism, Johann Ulricus (Ulrich) from Saxony, Pastor Andrzej Chrzęstowski (Andreas Chronsdovius, c. 1555–1618), and Mathias Johannides. The Lutherans

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 410.

¹⁸ J. Łukaszewicz, *Geschichte der reformierten Kirchen in Litauen*, t. I., Leipzig 1848, p. 36.

¹⁹ Lukšaitė, pp. 410–412.

were represented by Job Sommer, pastor of Wilno, Paul Oderborn (Paulus Oderbornius, c. 1555–1604), pastor of Kowno (Kaunas), the Reverend George Plotkowski (Plotkovius) from Poland, who in the early decades of the 17th century served the Lithuanian Lutheran congregation of Szawlany (Šiaulėnai)²⁰, a distinguished pharmacist Johannes Sclaeae, and rhetorician Johannes Rivius, the Notary of the Colloquium. At the request of Radziwiłł, Georg Friedrich (1539–1603), Margrave and Duke of Prussia sent Lutheran Professor Paul Weiss of the Königsberg Faculty and his chaplain and court preacher Martin Henrici. In addition, a number of nobles and land owners, and other public figures listened the debates of the colloquium²¹.

2. The Proceedings of the Colloquium

Two intensive sessions were held. The first began at 8 o'clock in the morning and the second at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The format consisted of formal declarations by the leaders of the delegations followed by extensive discussions in which all present freely participated. First place in the manuscript is given to an oration by Johannes Rivius on the manner of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, which was to become the central point of discussion²². It is followed by *Breuis et Perspicua Conclusio colloquij Instituti...* subscribed by the Lutheran delegates Weiss, Henrici, Sommer, Oderborn, and Plotkovius. In the third place is the protocol *Colloquium habitum Vilnae...* itself, which states the place and time of the meeting and lists the official Lutheran and Reformed participants, both those representing the *Augsburg Confession* and those representing the Swiss confession. Included in the protocol is a detailed description of the proceedings together with the arguments and counter-arguments presented by the major participants.

2.1. The Morning Session

The colloquium began with a short declaration by Dr. Weiss concerning the chief article under contention, the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. It concludes with a prayer that God would illuminate the minds of the participants by the Holy Spirit, and that they would submit to his truth. He stated that the fundamental contention of the Lutherans is that the body of Christ is received into the mouth. On behalf of the Reformed delegation Wolan responded that it was to be regretted that this article should have become a matter of contention which had disturbed the concord and tranquility of the church in a time of battle against the forces of the Antichrist. The present dispute ought to be settled on the basis of the early Church Fathers rather than the opinions of Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Theodore Beza, and Johannes Oecolampadius. Weiss responded that the Ancient Fathers are not wholly reliable. Even so great a writer as Augustine could err in important matters. Therefore „... we must hold only to the Word of God”²³.

²⁰ *Die Evangelische Kirchen Litauens*, Erlangen, 1998, p.180 fn.255.

²¹ *Colloquium habitum Vilnae in palatio Illustriss[imi] ac Mag[nifici] Ducis] D[omi]ni] Christophori Radiuili in Birtza et Tubinga Ducis, Palatini Vilnensi, die 14. Junij. Anno 1585.* Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelf. 11. 14 Aug. 2, p. 265.

²² *Oratio Rivii recitata in hoc conuentu tempore pomeridiano*, 1585.

²³ *Colloquium habitum Vilnae...* p. 266.

Wolan proposed three theses in which he stated that it must be determined:

1. Whether the sacraments of God are bare and empty symbols, or whether they really offer and give the divine and heavenly things which they represent.

2. Whether they locally contain the heavenly and divine things which they signify or whether they only point to gifts given by God.

3. Whether the sacraments offer the heavenly and divine things as instruments, whether the earthly elements are received by the organs of the body while the celestial and invisible heavenly things are received by faith²⁴.

By the presentation of these alternatives, Wolan sought to impose a framework upon the discussion from its beginning which was built upon his conception of the sign-nature of the sacraments. He based his thinking on a theological understanding of the sacraments according to which they are said to be earthly signs which point beyond themselves to heavenly realities, and he sought to impose this schema upon the Lutherans. Wolan believed that only acceptance of the Reformed axiom *Finitum non capax infiniti* could lead to fruitful discussions. The Lutherans were unwilling to proceed on this basis, stating that this schema was too restrictive and assumed matters not proven.

Taking another approach, Wolan stated that the united confession of the evangelical churches of England, France, Switzerland, Belgium, together with most of the German churches and the Reformation churches in Poland and Lithuania could be stated as follows:

We believe and confess that when the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is distributed to the faithful according to his institution, the bread is his body and the wine is his blood, not by the changing of the outward and the visible elements in to heavenly elements so that the heavenly are locally included in the external elements but rather the true and real body and blood of Christ are given in such a way that those who are truly faithful and penitent according to the Lord's gift receive the external elements in their mouths while at the same time receiving the body and blood of Christ by faith through spiritual participation (to the end that they receive) the certain forgiveness of their sins and eternal life which Christ alone obtained for us by his death²⁵.

Here Wolan distinguishes between bodily eating by means of the mouth, and spiritual appropriation by faith and through the gift of the Spirit. He stated that such spiritual appropriation takes place simultaneously with the bodily reception. He says nothing about the reception of Christ's body in the consecrated bread by unbelievers, but by implication he made it clear that they receive only the outward signs and not the inward reality, since they lack faith and the Spirit's gift. He avoided the use of terminology concerning the sacrament upon which the Lutherans had characteristically insisted, i.e., *substantialiter et corporaliter*, following the classical pattern set down in Bullinger's *Second Helvetic Confession* and reiterated by the Polish and Lithuanian Reformed in the *Sandomierz Confession*, their 'official' interpretation of the *Consensus*.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 267.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 267.

The Lutheran Job Sommer responded that the Lord's Supper was instituted for the whole church (*tota Ecclesia*), which in this world includes not only believers but unbelievers. Further, a distinction must be made between the efficient (*efficientem*), material (*materialem*), formal (*formalem*), and final (*finalem*) causes (*causas*) of the sacrament. These are traditional Aristotelian distinctions taken over from the Medieval schoolmen and which were to become major points of contention between the Lutherans and Reformed during the era of Protestant scholasticism. The Lutherans spoke of the Institution of the Lord's Supper in the night when he was betrayed as the efficient cause of the sacrament, the material cause being the elements: bread and wine and body and blood, the formal cause being the command of Christ: „Take, eat, ...”, and the final cause being Christ's words: „This do in remembrance of me”²⁶.

The Reformed used these Aristotelian distinctions but understood the causes differently. Wolan agreed that the efficient cause is indeed the Words of Christ concerning the Institution. The material cause is the bread and the wine which signify the body and blood. He noted that the formal cause is the fact that the external elements are received in the mouth while the body and blood are received only by faith. The efficient cause is the forgiveness of sins and the gift of life everlasting²⁷. Wolan followed this course in order to undergird the distinction between oral and spiritual reception, which was basic to his understanding of the nature of the sacrament. The significance of his argument was clear to Weiss, who responded that the real point of contention concerned the material and formal causes. The Lutherans could not agree that the formal cause involves a necessary distinction between the bodily reception of the material elements and the reception of the spiritual elements by faith. It would be more correct to say that Christ is present in the Supper in a corporeal manner, and that the eating is corporeal (*manducatio corporalis*). The term *spiritualis* does not adequately convey this and only confuses the issue.

Wolan disagreed with this definition because by logical extension what is received naturally must be eliminated naturally. However, since it cannot be said that the body of Christ can be eliminated from the human body in a material manner it is obvious that it cannot be received in a material manner, by oral eating²⁸. Weiss retorted that to speak thus would be a great insult against Christ's own Testament to use crude analogies to undercut the truth of the words by which he describes the most holy gift placed in the mouths of believers according to his command.

Wolan did not press the argument concerning the course of Christ's body through the human digestive system. He moved on to speak of the distinction between physical and sacramental eating of the sacrament. Although the Lutherans rejected this distinction, he and his associates pressed their point by positing a two-fold eating. The first kind of eating is

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 267-268.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 268.

²⁸ „Quicquid in os ingreditur, non coninquinat hominem sed per secessum ejicitur. Corpus Christi non per secessum ejicitur. Ergo non ingreditur in os, nec est corporalis manducatio”. *Ibidem*, p. 268.

natural or corporeal (*naturalem siue corporalem*), and it refers to the bread and the wine, for the bread is ground by the teeth and descends into the digestive system. The other kind is spiritual (*spiritualem*), as when the body of Christ is sacramentally received by faith and the Spirit for this is food for the soul for remission of sins and the gift of eternal life. We see here again echoes of Bullinger's *Second Helvetic Confession* and its clear distinction between physical and spiritual, earthly and heavenly. The Lutherans replied that natural eating is the physical eating (*naturalem manducationem φυσικὴν Elementorum*) of the elements of bread and wine. Corporeal eating is different. It refers to the body and blood of Christ. The third, or spiritual, eating refers to the salutary reception, the reason for which the Supper was given. This made it quite clear that Lutheran and Reformed terminology do not coincide. Weiss and his associates speak as they do in order to avoid ambiguity, because in the sacrament the physical elements which are set upon the altar are received in a natural manner. The body and blood of Christ are bestowed and received corporeally in a supernatural manner. To Wolan and his associates this interpretation introduced an unnecessary distinction²⁹.

Wolan pressed his point by drawing an analogy between Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper reminiscent of Zwingli's insistence that what is fleshly is of no avail. Here Baptism signifies the cleansing of the soul from sin by the blood of Christ, but the water itself is incapable of such cleansing. In the same way the bread and the wine signify Christ body and blood which give forgiveness from the cross. Thus the sacrament is food for the soul, not for the body.

The drawing of analogies between Baptism and the Supper was not new to the Lutherans. It was familiar to them through the arguments presented by Phillip Melanchthon and subsequently adopted by many prominent 16th century Lutheran theologians. Melanchthon based his analogy on the argument that both Baptism and the Supper are actions instituted by Christ which had saving effects. His analogy might be helpful, but not entirely appropriate, since the Lord's Supper is more than an action which produces a salutary effect. According to the Lutheran understanding of Christ's Words, the sacrament is also the occasion of the objective corporeal presence of Christ in the bread and the wine. Whereas Christ does not say of the water of Baptism „This is my blood, etc.“, in the Supper he does speak thus concerning the elements „This is my body“, „This is my blood“, the analogy is deficient. Here everything hangs on the Words of Christ. Objections to Melanchthon's methodology came from Joachim Westphal, Tileman Hesshusius (1527–1588) of Heidelberg, Joachim Mörlin (1514–1571) of Brunswick, and significantly Andreas Osiander (1498–1552), professor of Weiss's Königsberg faculty³⁰. Martin Chemnitz, one of the chief framers of the *Formula of Concord*, also makes use of an analogy between the Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar, but frames it in

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 269.

³⁰ E. F. Peters, *The Origin and Meaning of the Axiom: „Nothing has the Character of a Sacrament Outside of the Use“*, [Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Fort Wayne, Indiana, Concordia Theological Seminary 1968], pp. 91–100.

somewhat different terms from those of Melancthon. His argument is that the washing of water and the word is objectively a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, independent of the faith of the recipient, for it has its power from the Word of God. The same statement he makes concerning the Sacrament of the Altar. Thus what the sacrament is and gives is revealed in the Instituting Words of Christ, quite apart from the faith of the recipient³¹.

In response to Wolan Weiss asserted that Baptism is not simple water, but water which has been consecrated by the word of God. In the same way in Holy Communion Christ has spoken concerning the elements of bread and wine that they are his body and blood. Wolan replied with a syllogism:

The sign is the sign of the thing signified. The sacrament is a sign. Therefore it is the sign of the thing signified³².

Thus by definition the sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible grace.

The sign denotes something beyond itself, in this case the body of Christ which came down to earth, Wolan contended. The sacrament is not itself supernatural and does not contain within itself the reality toward which it points. According to its sign-nature it points beyond itself to something that is absent because it is elsewhere. Weiss replied that the fact that the sacrament is a sign does not mean that the thing which it signifies is necessarily absent. Smoke is a sign of fire but the fire is itself truly present where there is smoke. Hereupon Wolan quoted Bullinger to the effect that the body of Christ is not offered or exhibited sensibly and the body of Christ is not received by mouth. Again he insisted that natural and corporeal eating are the same thing. Weiss objected that according to his confession the elements of bread and wine are natural and included with them are supernatural elements of the body and blood of Christ which is truly and substantially present. Such a definition was unacceptable to Wolan, who refused to admit the possibility that something which is in itself natural and corporeal can at the same time be spiritual. It must instead be understood figuratively.

Unable to proceed further along this line of argumentation the discussion now turned to the question of Christ's locatedness in the Sacrament. Speaking first in Polish and then in Latin Wolan stated:

We believe that the body which hung upon the cross for us and was resuscitated, is eaten truly and substantially in the sacrament.

Weiss was uncomfortable with this wording and stated on behalf of the Lutherans:

We believe that the true and substantial body of Christ is present not only spiritually but also corporally in every place on earth where his Supper is administered³³.

Wolan likened this assertion to the notion of local inclusion which the early church rejected. Weiss replied that Lutherans do not hold a doctrine of

³¹ Peters, p. 441.

³² *Colloquium habitum Vilnae...*, p. 269.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 271.

local inclusion. They believe that Christ is truly present in his body in the whole church without descending from heaven and without being locally enclosed, so that he is truly and corporeally present in a manner which we are not able to see clearly. What is certain is that he is omnipotent as he says in Matthew 11:27, Matthew 28:18, and Ephesians 1:19. Christ has spoken his word and he is fully able to fulfill it.

Oderborn added a statement of St. Augustine concerning a threefold manner of Christ's presence. (1) His infirm presence such as when he was taken away from his disciples; (2) That presence during the 40 days after the resurrection when he was sometimes visible and sometimes invisible to them; (3) His celestial or invisible presence in his church — such is his presence in the sacrament.

Johannes of Saxony countered this statement with the logical syllogism:

A body which is in heaven is not upon the earth. The body of Christ is in heaven.
Therefore [the body of Christ] is not on earth³⁴.

The minor premise is based upon the fact that Christ has ascended into heaven. This syllogism reintroduced the Zwingli's 'mathematical' assertion at Marburg whereby he asserted that a body in heaven cannot at the same time be upon earth. It recalls Luther's statement in his 1527 treatise *That These Words of Christ, „This Is My Body”, ... Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics* that according to Zwingli Christ could not have meant his words to be taken in their natural sense and that the Supper must be considered a memorial at which the participants recall the passion and cross of Christ. Luther had rejected Zwingli's argument, saying that natural and physical laws cannot restrain the Lord from giving what he says he gives, namely, his body and blood. Zwingli rejected Luther's position and the two reformers departed from Marburg without agreeing on this central issue, agreement upon which would have made intercommunion and a united Protestant church possible. Zwingli's fundamental thesis did not die with him on the battle fields of Switzerland in 1531. It was taken up again in modified form by John Calvin who imposed upon the doctrine of communion the *signum / res signata* schema which Augustine had first suggested. When the Reformed church came to Lithuania in the late 1550's, and Duke Radziwiłł the Black determined to establish a Reformed parish in Wilno, virtually on the door step of the Lutheran congregation, he sponsored a series of debates at which the Reformed Pastor Szymon Zacjusz (1507-c. 1591) criticized Lutheran arguments concerning locatedness in the Supper³⁵. The syllogism used now by Johannes of Saxony was the very syllogism upon which Zacjusz arguments had been based.

To further establish this syllogism, Wolan stated that no article of faith could be allowed to contradict the article concerning the Ascension. Weiss

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 272.

³⁵ *Akta tho iest sprawy Zboru Krześciańskiego Wileńskiego, ktore się poszeli Roku Pańskiego 1557 Miesiąca Decembra Dnia 14. Za sprawą Księdza Simona z Prossowic, tego zboru superintendenta, Kaznodzięte Oświeconego Książęcia pana Miłkołaja Radziwiłła, Woiewody Wileńskiego etc. w Brzesciu Litewskim 1559. „Monumenta Reformatio-nis Polonicae et Lithuanicae”. Serya X, Zeszyt I. Wilno 1913, p. 15.*

would not acquiesce, stating that the discussion once again was mired in questions concerning physics which might be appropriate when one is speaking about man's natural body, but not when one is speaking of the body of Christ, which by hypostatic union has a divine as well as a human nature. He objected also that the allusion to the Ascension of Christ is inappropriate. Wolan sought to press his argument from physics. He stated:

A body which is in one place is not able to be in several places. The King of Poland, Stephanus [Bator], is in an particular place, therefore he is not in every place³⁶.

To this Weiss replied that this is certainly true of his royal highness, but Christ is not only man, he is also God, and in him the human nature and the diviner nature are hypostatically united. Wolan replied that the human and divine natures must be kept apart. This assertion is consonant with Reformed Christology, which finds the notion of the communion of characteristics (*communicatio idiomatum*) at least potentially misleading. Weiss responded by stating that he would concede that the natural properties are not to be confused, but that the properties of the divine nature must be predicated to the whole person, divine and human. This indicated the typical Lutheran understanding of *communicatio idiomatum*, which Lutherans understand to be supported by Philippians 2 and Psalm 8. Weiss noted also the agreement of the *Tome* of Pope Leo which is appended to the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. He further stated that the argument concerning the body of Christ should not be taken from words of Augustine in a place where he was not speaking about the Supper. When he is speaking of the Supper, he speaks of receiving with the mouth the true body and blood of the Lord. Wolan replied that the mouth receives the elements, but faith receives the body and blood of Christ. The elements are signs of the body and blood. Weiss noted that this was Wolan's personal interpretation, but Augustine has clearly written that what is received by mouth is the true body and blood of Christ, not the symbols thereof. Johannes of Saxony interjected that all could reasonably conclude that when speaking of the corporeal body, it is understood to be received by faith and the Spirit³⁷.

The appeal to Augustine is of course universal. He is recognized as a universal father of the church in both the East and the West and in the Western church he is quoted not only by Roman Catholic theologians but also by the Lutherans (Luther, particularly in the years up until 1521) and also among the Reformed. In this discussion appeal to him had proven unfruitful and one might say Augustine's private interpretation of the mode of Christ's presence according to *signum / res signata* schema might prove to be rather problematic, because his words might be used against the 'Catholic Augustine'.

Turning to the theological statements of Cyril of Alexandria, a prominent theologian on the last half of the 4th century and a prolific writer on

³⁶ *Colloquium habitum Vitnae* ..., p. 272.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 272-273.

the Holy Trinity and the Christological controversies, the Lutherans cited chapters 6 and 17 of his commentary on the Gospel according to St. John. Weiss noted that Cyril carefully distinguished between spiritual and corporeal manducation. Cyril had stated that Christians are all made one with Christ not only spiritually but through mystical blessing they are conjoined with him corporeally in the Lord's Supper. He further noted that this occupies a prominent point in Cyril's theology.

Cyril's position had been helpful to Luther in the development of his own sacramental understanding and Christology. Cyril had written that God and man are completely conjoined in the one Christ, although the human and divine natures never intermix or become confused. On this basis Luther understood that communicants receive in their mouths not only the bread, but also the true corporeal body of Christ. There is no Christ who is not fully and completely God and fully and completely man, and there is no Eucharist which is not fully and completely bread and fully and completely body. To look upon Christ the man is to look upon God made flesh, for there is no other Christ but the Christ who is fully and completely both God and man. To receive the sacrament in bread and wine is to receive this Christ in his body and blood. Thus the Lutheran arguments at Wilno 1585 take us back beyond the sacramental theology of Philip Melancthon, and the problems associated with it, to Luther himself. Moving beyond Melancthon means that the Lutherans are moving away from Augustine toward Cyril and the 'mature' Luther.

Johannes of Saxony and Wolan objected that in interpreting Cyril one must insist that the body of Christ is received through the Spirit and by faith. Weiss's objection is that this does injury to Cyril's own Words, because Cyril makes clear that *corporaliter* and *spiritualiter* cannot be regarded as co-terminous; they are entirely different things. Cyril says as much when he notes that we are conjoined to Christ spiritually and corporeally through the mystical benediction of the bread. Here Wolan wondered whether it is proper that Cyril should be given the final word in this controversy. Weiss replied that more important than the words of Cyril are Christ's Words of Institution:

This is my body which is given for you and we accept from the Fathers their opinion based on Christ's Words that his true body and blood are given in the Supper and received into the mouth³⁸.

It is also upon these that the Lutherans base their opinion concerning *manducatio indignorum*.

Both the Lutheran and Reformed delegations were firm in their opinion and it was evident that no further progress could be made in this session, therefore the Palatine Radziwiłł called for recess.

2.2. The Evening Session

After the exhausting morning session the parties again met at 5 o'clock to make their final summary statements. This would be the time to see if there would be any room for accommodation by either side.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 273.

It soon became clear that neither the Reformed nor the Lutherans could see any possibility of movement. The nature of signs was again discussed, but here again there was no common agreement. The Reformed were not willing to allow for any notion of physical reception of the body of Christ in the mouth. Their attempt to draw an analogy between Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper was again rebuffed by the Lutherans, as was the Reformed suggestion that the Words of Institution are best understood according to the nature of the literary form in which they are stated, the form which they termed *metanomia*. They further refused to accept the Lutheran notion that in accordance with the words of Augustine:

We receive in the bread that which hung upon the cross, we receive in the cup that which flood from the side of Christ³⁹.

Their own insistence that difficult interpretations must be resolved by the analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*) was met by the Lutheran assertion that the sacraments are unique and without analogy.

The contrast between the Reformed and the Lutherans was becoming clearer. For the Calvinists the Holy Communion is an uplifting experience, the transcendental experience which lifts the believer out of present earthly troubles for peaceful and sublime communion in the courts of the Lord. For the Lutherans Lord's Supper was instituted for the church in the midst of the earthly struggle to forgive sinners and fortify them to live in faith toward God and love toward the neighbor. The Reformed asserted that the laws of physics make it impossible for the Son of God be truly and substantially present in such a manner in the earthly church. The Lutherans responded that they had no regard for Theism or arguments of necessity which bind God. They further rejected the notion that spiritual communion is innately superior to physical communion and is a greater miracle. The arguments continued concerning the identity of Christ who gives himself in the Supper, the ubiquity of Christ's human nature, and the present locatedness of Christ. Again there was no movement on either side.

The Reformed again repeated their charge that

The Augsburg Confession approves the doctrine of Transubstantiation, as can be seen from the fact that the Romans approved this article, and they held Transubstantiation⁴⁰.

Johannes of Saxony had earlier noted that Melanchthon moved away from the position he had described in the *Augustana*. The Lutherans responded by saying that Melanchthon was right the first time and that

We disassociate ourselves from any notion that the Augsburg Confession approves the doctrine of Transubstantiation, as Luther and others have made sufficiently clear. In conclusion we state that we do not retreat from the Augsburg Confession and the Apology and from the Formula of Concord and its Apology [sic! — Epitome], because we know that the whole doctrine concerning the Supper of the Lord is rightly explicated in these books⁴¹.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 275.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 278.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 278.

After such a bold statement it was clear to Wolan that the Lutherans would continue to take a firm position on the basis of their confessional writings. In this regard their stance had clearly changed since the days of Sandomierz. There would no longer be a gentlemanly agreement to simply pass over controverted theological articles. Therefore further discussion would be fruitless. In a final effort to make light of the Lutheran confessional position, Wolan stated:

Our chief authority is the Scriptures, which are the Word of God... You conclude that your doctrine is true because it is set down in the *Confessio Augustana*, *Apology* and the *Formula of Concord*⁴².

And to underscore the statement of Wolan, Johannes of Saxony added: „This authority is a harmony of discord" (*discordis Concordiae*).

Palatine Radziwiłł too could see that the further discussion could only lead to acrimony. His attempts at reconciliation had failed. He could only ask that the Lutherans would state their position in a manner which would not be overly offensive to other Protestants. He therefore closed the colloquium with an admonition the Lutherans not use such expressions as *corporalis* and *corporaliter* in presenting their summation and conclusions. Speaking on behalf of the Reformed delegation, the Palatine concluded his remarks by saying:

We meanwhile say in departing from the deliberation of the matter that we follow our confession which we have publicly displayed today⁴³.

Thus the colloquium was concluded.

True to the wishes of the Palatine, the Lutherans did not use the expressions *corporalis* or *corporaliter* in their concluding statement. However, they made it clear that the simple avoidance of these words would not make the Lutheran confession any more acceptable to the Reformed than it would have been had these terms been employed.

We believe and confess that in the most Holy Supper which our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God and of Mary, instituted in the last night, when he was betrayed, the true, natural, and real body of Christ which was given for us is truly and substantially present and his true, natural, and substantial blood which was poured out for us on the altar of the cross is present on earth in the lawful action and distribution in such a manner that when the element of wine is distributed and received the blood of Christ is truly received in the mouth of the body in a manner which is incomprehensible and inscrutable, not only by believers and the worthy, but also by unbelievers and unworthy, for the believers it applies and seals the forgiveness of sins, but the unworthy eat and drink judgment upon themselves and are made guilty over against the body and blood of the Lord. This our doctrine we have established upon the sure, steadfast, and immutable words of Christ who instituted this Supper. For Christ is the way, truth and the life (John 14), of whom the eternal Father says: 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him' (Matthew 17)⁴⁴.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 278.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 279.

⁴⁴ *Brevis et perspicua Conclusio colloquij Instituti Vilnae ab Illustrissimo principe et M.[agnifico] D.[omino] palatino Vilnensi, die 14. Jun[i] Anno 1585.*

It was evident that no progress had been made in the effort to develop a united theological position on the Sacrament of the Altar and it was increasingly clear that this was only the tip of the iceberg. Both the Lutherans and the Reformed left the colloquium even more firmly grounded in their sacramental doctrines than they had come. Both agreed that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, but they could not agree concerning the meaning of the words of Scripture. There would be no united Protestant church in Lithuania, but instead two churches both of which must fight for their survival in the increasingly hostile counter-Reformation environment.

Conclusions

In this colloquium we have the only available record of the exhaustive sacramental discussions between the Lithuanian Reformed and the Lutherans in the 16th century. It gives us a far more complete picture of the Reformation in Lithuania. Furthermore it is the richest record of Lithuanian Lutheran sacramental theology in that period.

There was little about which the parties could wholeheartedly agree. Behind the arguments about specifics there lay a fundamental difference, the same difference between the Lutherans and Reformed which had become evident from the earliest days of the Reformation, namely, the question of the meaning of the Words of Christ in the Supper. Fundamental disagreement on this issue lay behind the evident differences concerning the manner of Christ's presence in the Supper, the doctrine of Christology, the locatedness of Christ's body, and the relationship between his divine and the human natures. The evident theological maturity of both group leaders showed that in this discussion there could be no compromise at any point. Here mature Calvinist and Lutheran theologies met head-on. Both parties maintained their positions in the face of strong opposition. The Reformed would not abandon their assertion that material elements cannot contain or convey heavenly blessing, and the Lutherans would not surrender their insistence that direct Words of Christ override all other considerations.

At Wilno the Lutherans and Reformed determined to follow paths which in the coming years would more and more diverge. It had become clear that the Protestants, who at Sandomierz had declared their unity, were in fact divided. Lithuanian Lutherans insisted that there could be no real church unity where all parties do not speak with the same voice, especially in matters regarding the doctrine of Christ and the means by which salvation is applied to sinners. They declared that there must be doctrinal unity before there can be church fellowship. What the Reformed characterized as 'minor differences' and 'varying emphases' the Lutherans regarded as fundamental theological issues.

The die was cast at Wilno in 1585, and the future course of the Lithuanian Reformation was set. While Polish Lutherans still struggled with questions concerning the meaning and application of the terms of the *Sandomierz Consensus* and would continue to do so for several decades,

we see no further hesitation among the Lithuanian Lutherans. The *Consensus* for them was no longer viable. Regardless of the fierceness of the Jesuit opponents and the beginnings of mob violence, they were unwilling to compromise their doctrinal position. Although they were few in number, the Lutherans were confident of their theological stance and would not abandon it, even in the face of the strength and determination of their opponents.

Kolokwium pomiędzy luteranami a kalwinistami w Wilnie w 1585 roku. Spór na temat teologii sakramentalnej na Litwie

Kolokwium wileńskie w 1585 roku stanowi jedyne znane źródło na temat dyskusji w kwestiach sakramentalnych prowadzonych pomiędzy Kościołem reformowanym a luteranami na Litwie.

W czasie debat wileńskich zarówno luteranie, jak i reformowani zdecydowani byli kroczyć odmiennymi drogami. Protestanci, którzy w Sandomierzu deklarowali swą jedność, byli w rzeczywistości podzieleni. Luteranie litewscy podkreślali w czasie obrad wileńskich, że nie może istnieć faktyczna jedność kościelna w sytuacji, gdy obie strony nie mówią jednym głosem w sprawach dotyczących nauki Chrystusa. Jedność doktrynalna stanowi warunek niezbędny jedności kościelnej. To, co reformowani określali mianem „pomniejszych różnic” lub „zmiennych akcentów”, luteranie traktowali jako fundamentalne kwestie teologiczne. Stąd też kolokwium wileńskie nie doprowadziło do zbliżenia stanowisk.

