

The Contribution of Martin Chemnitz to Our Lutheran Heritage

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Sitting in Church History Class one day at the seminary, listening to the names of the recommended historians, this essayist was a bit proud of the used history books he had bought over the previous years. They were not all at the top of the list, but most of them were on the list. There were names like Grimm, Latourette, Durant and Hausser, and most of their books specifically covered the Reformation period. There was no need to worry about resources in the church history area of my library . . . that is, until receiving the assignment for this essay on Martin Chemnitz.

There was no panic after looking in the first two books and coming up empty. However, after going through the four historians listed above, anxiety began to set in. The only notable historian left was Schaff, but in the only mention of Chemnitz name, he demeaned Chemnitz for taking ten years to respond to Trent, whereas Calvin was done in three. All those books, and there was all but nothing about Chemnitz. There was still hope. There were sure to be books on Chemnitz somewhere on the internet. And, as it turned out, there were a bunch. But all of them had the same name, *The Second Martin*. And all of them had the same author, J. A. O. Preus.

It never got any better. As a second career student at MLC and the Seminary, there was no German or Latin in the curriculum, only Greek and Hebrew. And after getting all the translated books by Chemnitz, the search for translated books (or even essays) about Chemnitz kept coming up with that same name, *The Second Martin*, by J. A. O. Preus. Needless to say, the resources for this paper left me very dependent on *The Second Martin*, by J. A. O. Preus.

To my relief though, Preus did write a thorough biography of Chemnitz. As a result of his work and a few essays available, there was more than enough information to fill in the pages. However, my hope is that you will not be offended that the biographical sketch of Chemnitz that follows is little more than a book report. My hope is that you will see on the next ten or so pages that Martin Chemnitz has left an imprint on our church that is still visible. Our heritage as confessional Lutherans is, to a sizeable degree, the result of Chemnitz efforts to bring unity and peace to the Lutheran Church by way of common confessions known as corpora doctrinae.

Because of the limited time and space, this essay will only cover Chemnitz' biography and his confessional work. So as not to needlessly clutter the essay with in-text citations, all credit for the biographical information on Chemnitz is given to *The Second Martin*, by J. A. O. Preus (only quotes and points of specific interest will be cited).

A Sketch of Chemnitz' Life

Martin Chemnitz was born to Paul and Euphemia Kemnitz on the ninth of November 1522 in the town of Treuenbrietzen in Brandenburg. He was one of three children, with a sister, Ursala, and a brother, Matthew. Luther was by that time, 38 years old, and during that year, left his seclusion at Wartburg and returned to Wittenberg, responded to Henry VIII's *Defense of the Seven Sacraments*, and published his German New Testament. Chemnitz was born at a time of great change, much of which would shape his life and his work. In his autobiography, Chemnitz

does not mention much about his childhood, except that when Martin was but eleven years old, his father passed away.

Chemnitz began his education at Wittenberg at the age of fourteen. However, because of financial challenges, his educational process would start and stop on many occasions until, at the age of 26, and after changing schools five times, Chemnitz received his Masters of Arts degree. For the following four years, he then took up his study of theology, albeit on a private level. Three of those years included his time as the librarian at the ducal library in Konigsberg.

The financial challenges were largely due to his father's death, after which the family business suffered at the hands of his brother, Matthew. After beginning his education at Wittenberg, Martin attended schools at Magdeburg, Calbe, Frankfurt on the Oder, back to Wittenberg (until Smalcald War temporarily closed it), and then to Konigsberg. During most of his schooling, Chemnitz worked his way through, usually as a tutor or teacher. One of his more interesting (as well as substantial) moneymaking endeavors, which, given his career appears almost like an aberration, was writing astrology for some wealthy, high profile people. Preus even mentions that when Chemnitz decided to leave Konigsberg, "the duke who had come to rely on his astrological works prevailed on him to stay by offering him the position of librarian at a good salary" (92). After remaining three years, which he described as a time when he "was bothered by nothing, and studied [theology] with delight" (ibid), there is no other mention of astrology.

Leaving Konigsberg and his three years of independent theological study, he returned to Wittenberg once more, but within a short period of time, found himself on the faculty instead being a student. This lasted roughly one year, upon which Chemnitz accepted a call to be coadjutor in the city of Braunschweig and pastor of Martin Church. Later Chemnitz would accept the position of superintendent in Braunschweig, a place and position at which he would remain until, at age 62, poor health forced him to retire. When he became Superintendent, the city council paid for him to travel to Rostock and get his doctorate.

Chemnitz married when he was 33 years old. He and his wife, Anna, were good Lutherans, having ten children. Six survived to adulthood, two sons and four daughters.

The Influence in Chemnitz' Life

Among the many people who had some influence in Chemnitz' life, Joachim Moerlin was, by far, the most prominent. However, some would say that by virtue of Chemnitz teaching Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* and incorporating them into his own *Loci Theologici* that Melanchthon was Chemnitz' primary influence. Looking at the end-product of Chemnitz' theological work might suggest that both were true, Moerlin (and by extension, Luther) in regards to theology and Melanchthon, in regards to methodology and expression of thought.

Early in his life, Chemnitz' relative, George Schuler (who also went by George Sabinus) seems to have been involved in Chemnitz' education, as well as employment. Sabinus' father was also Chemnitz' guardian after his father died. It was through an arrangement by Sabinus that Chemnitz was introduced to Melanchthon. Sabinus, though well educated and accomplished in his own right (a professor, rector and noted poet), was the son-in-law of Philip Melanchthon. However, rather than any theological influence, Preus notes a suggestion in an historical journal article which insists that "Chemnitz was drawn to Sabinus just because of their mutual interest in poetry" (358), which discounts any close connection to Melanchthon. Sabinus was a professor at Frankfurt during the time that Chemnitz studied there, and a professor (and rector) at Konigsberg while Chemnitz was there.

For a brief period in 1545, during his second attendance at Wittenberg, Chemnitz got to hear Luther preach and teach. Chemnitz wrote in his autobiography, “During this time I heard Luther lecturing, preaching, and for the last time leading a disputation. But as I was then intent on other studies, I did not hear him with due attention.”¹

It was at this time also, that Chemnitz and Melanchthon became acquainted. Melanchthon was impressed with Chemnitz and tried to help him get his master’s degree there at Wittenberg. However, the Smalcald War got in the way, and Chemnitz ended up at Konigsberg. When he returned to study at Wittenberg in 1553, Chemnitz boarded at Melanchthon’s house. Melanchthon thought enough of Chemnitz to not only recommend him for a faculty position at the university, he also arranged a special class in which Chemnitz lectured on the *Loci communes*. Although his lectures were popular, after only a year, Chemnitz left Wittenberg for the coadjutor position in Braunschweig. Preus convincingly suggests that Melanchthon’s influence of Chemnitz would have to be limited to methodology insofar as theological differences were behind Chemnitz’ departure (98-9).

As to theological influence (aside from the obvious influence of Luther’s writings), Joachim Moerlin seems to be the one who influenced Chemnitz the most. Chemnitz served as coadjutor under Moerlin at Braunschweig for thirteen years (1554-67). Moerlin was only eight years older than Chemnitz, but had studied under Luther. He attained his master’s degree from Wittenberg in 1537, became Luther’s chaplain in 1539, and received his doctorate in 1540 (at age 26). Moerlin and Chemnitz had met when both were refuting Osiander in Konigsberg.

After Moerlin became superintendent at Braunschweig, he arranged for Chemnitz to be his coadjutor (not to mention, arranging Chemnitz’ marriage less that a year later). They developed a friendship and worked well together throughout Moerlin’s time there. Moerlin and Chemnitz were often at the forefront of many of the controversies following the Interims, always solidly defending Luther and the true teachings of Scripture. Moerlin eventually took a call to Prussia in 1567 where he died four years later.

Chemnitz’ Contribution of Unifying the Lutheran Church

If the second Martin had not come, the first Martin would not have stood. J. A. O. Preus in his Translator’s Preface to Chemnitz’ *Loci Theologici* attributed this saying to the Romanists after Chemnitz’ publication of the Examination of the Council of Trent (*ECT*). Undoubtedly, this could not only apply to the *ECT*, but all Chemnitz’ writings. And not only could this saying apply to his writing, it is just as applicable to the work of Chemnitz in unifying the Lutheran Church in the years after the “first” Martin’s death. Writing the bulk of the Formula of Concord (*FC*) was and is a significant contribution of Chemnitz, but in many respects, this writing was the final product of a lot of good old fashion hard work as a faithful pastor, coadjutor, superintendent and respected theologian.

Chemnitz Work as Coadjutor and Superintendent

Some would see it as a small contribution to our Lutheran heritage, and maybe not even worth mentioning, that Chemnitz was a faithful pastor, a hard worker and well-organized coadjutor and superintendent. Nonetheless, this was the foundation of his overall contribution, and partly what earned the respect of leaders and other theologians. Chemnitz received over twenty prominent calls; a few to be a professor, most as a superintendent.

When Chemnitz began his work as coadjutor in the city of Braunschweig, he was an assistant to Moerlin, who had been there only about one year. The city of Braunschweig was located in the duchy of the same name. Bugenhagen had brought the reformation to the city in 1528, but the duchy of Braunschweig, under Duke Henry the Younger, remained Catholic, and would so until 1568. The city of Braunschweig was a free city, which enabled the church to remain Lutheran. No doubt though, being surrounded by Catholics kept the superintendent and coadjutor on their toes.

The position of coadjutor (assistant to the superintendent) was a new position when Chemnitz accepted the call, but Moerlin gave him plenty to do. Preus lists the following:

He preached regularly, conducted his lectures on Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* for the pastors and theological students, handed down theological opinions for other churches and faculties, and was active in the daily life of the church of Braunschweig.

Not only did Chemnitz preach and teach solid Lutheran doctrine in the midst of the surrounding Catholicism, as the years went by, also in the midst of an encroaching Calvinism.

As a matter of fact, one of the first controversies that he and Moerlin tackled after Chemnitz got to Braunschweig was part of the Crypto-Calvinistic controversy. It began with Albert Hardenberg of Bremen, whom Bente describes as "a secret, but decided Calvinist" (Bente, 180). It ended up with a confrontation of Melanchthon at Wittenberg. Moerlin, as a part of a delegation, put it to Melanchthon point blank. Melanchthon was to "show from the heart whether he held that John Calvin was an enemy of the Lord's Supper" (Preus, 110).

Melanchthon had his way that day, avoiding the question by accusing them of coming to "destroy him" (ibid). Moerlin and Chemnitz returned with written articles to which Melanchthon selectively and tacitly agreed, but nothing came of it. Additionally, with regard to the Crypto-Calvinistic controversy, both Chemnitz and Moerlin supplied opinions with which Joachim Westphal might refute Calvin's false view of the Lord's Supper (Bente, 182).

During their time together at Braunschweig, Moerlin and Chemnitz fought against most all the major controversies settled by the *FC*, and a put out a number of fires before they even got going. Though the Majoristic controversy began before either of them got to Braunschweig, as the controversy over good works being necessary for salvation dragged out, both Moerlin and Chemnitz were "chief among the theologians who opposed him" (Bente, 118).

In the Adiaphoristic controversy, Moerlin (presumably with his assistant) drew up the Eight Articles that were meant to give Melanchthon the opportunity to repent of the sins and errors of the Leipzig Interim and achieve piece between Melanchthon and Flacius. Moerlin and Chemnitz delivered these Eight Articles to Wittenberg and, with a party of other superintendents and pastors, served as mediators between Melanchthon and Flacius. They were unsuccessful as mediators (due to the opponents' belligerence), but the eight articles became a starting point for future confessional activities.

In the second Antinomistic controversy (which took place while Chemnitz and Moerlin worked together), Bente lists Moerlin as one of the "most prominent opponents" to Andrew Poach. Chemnitz would later address this rejection of the "third use" of the law very succinctly in Article IV of the *FC*. In the Flacian controversy, Bente points out that Chemnitz and Moerlin were the first to oppose Flacius' published tract (1567) about original sin being the "substance" of man. Though their response at that time was short, each of them would later write more substantial pieces against it.² In the Synergistic controversy, Moerlin is mentioned as writing a

thorough explanation of Strigel's ambiguous declaration of orthodoxy following the Weimar Disputation (1560).

In virtually all these controversies, the dynamic duo faced Lutheran theologians who claimed to be teaching Luther, but somehow had skewed one or another teaching; some intentionally, others unintentionally. How could they confront all these false teachings and not see the need for a confession that would address these new controversies? How could they wrestle with all these issues and not see that such a confession, as an addendum to the previous confessions, would need to be *corpora doctrinae*, recognized and subscribed to by all who would consider themselves to be Lutheran.

Obviously, they did see the need, but not all at once. The completed Formula of Concord wasn't hatched from a brain storming session in the middle of the night. The Formula's gestation period lasted for years. Some of its beginnings can be found in the success of the local churches having their own collection of writings they considered as standards of Christian Doctrine. This local *corpus doctrinae*, which Preus repeatedly refers to as the centerpiece or heart of the church order (*Kirchenordnung*) was implemented at the visitations of the churches during the reformation of the Braunschweig duchy (1568) after the death of the ardent Catholic Duke Henry the Younger. The city of Braunschweig, under Moerlin and Chemnitz had one in place for years.

In regards to both church orders and *corpora doctrinae*, Chemnitz' contribution to our Lutheran heritage involves him making substantial improvement on the labors that others had begun. Some of these improvements were on works begun by his contemporaries, while other improvements involved the work of those who came before him. The concept of *corpora doctrinae* is attributed to Melancthon³ (1550's - Preus, 121), and the church order in Braunschweig is attributed to Bugenhagen (1528-31 - Preus, 123). Some might add that both of these have their roots in the visitations that Luther began. Nonetheless, Chemnitz built upon their models and advanced the use of *corpora doctrinae* as the core of the church order. If the *corpora doctrinae* weren't the pavement on the road to the Formula and Book of Concord, they were at least the road markers that pointed the way.

Chemnitz' earliest work on church orders and *corpora doctrinae* occurred during his time as Moerlin's assistant. After Moerlin's departure in 1567, Chemnitz produced several others on his own. The following is a list of his more significant work:

- 1563 - Moerlin and Chemnitz revised the *corpus doctrinae* of the city of Braunschweig. This revision contained the Lüneburg Articles, a revision of Bugenhagen's church order of 1528-31, the UAC, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, Melancthon's Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, and Luther's Small and Large Catechism (Preus, 123). The Lüneburg Articles (1561) addressed and condemned the false teaching of the ongoing and recent controversies.
- 1567 - Moerlin and Chemnitz travel to Prussia to restore some order in the wake of Osiandrianism. They produced a *corpus doctrinae* for the duchy entitled the *Corpus Doctrinae Pruthenicum*. This corpus included the UAC, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and a writing of Chemnitz entitled A Repetition of the Sum and Content of the True, Universal Christian Doctrine of the Christian Church, in which Chemnitz addresses the controversies of that time and the need for a common and binding confession (Preus, 126-7).

- 1568 –The duchy of Braunschweig was the last of the German states to which the reformation came. Andreae and Selnecker assisted Chemnitz in the process. Chemnitz produced the church order for the duchy at the request of the new Duke Julius. The *corpus doctrinae* is much the same as the *corpus* of the city, including the Lüneburg Articles, a revision of Bugenhagen’s church order of 1528-31, the UAC, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, Melancthon’s Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, and Luther’s Small and Large Catechism (Preus, 157). Preus also mentions two works of Moerlin in connection with this *corpus*: the Eight Articles regarding adiaphora, and the Six Rules for Normative Doctrines (*ibid*). Because the church order was new to the duchy, it also included directives for worship, conduct of called workers, ceremonies, agendas and other church work, as well as various rites.
- 1576 – Chemnitz produced the *Corpus Doctrinae Wilhelminum* for Duke Wilhelm of Lüneburg-Celle. This *corpus* contains the Creeds, the UAC, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, Melancthon’s Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Luther’s Catechisms, Chemnitz’ *Kurzer Bericht* (of 1569) and a document entitled *Formulae Quaedam Cautae Et Citra Scandalum Loquendi . . .* (Certain Formulas for Speaking Careful and without Offense). This last document had been written by Dr. Urbanus Rhegius in 1535. Chemnitz added a lengthy appendix in 1575 with the English title, “An appendix concerning formulas for believing correctly and speaking piously, carefully, and without scandal regarding the major controversies of these times.” The original of this document as well as the appendix were written in Latin, but for the *corpus*, Chemnitz produced a German edition (Preus, 162-4).
- 1576 – Chemnitz produces the *Corpus Doctrinae Julium* for Duke Julius of Braunschweig. This *corpus* is much the same as the *Corpus Doctrinae Wilhelminum*, except that it included Chemnitz’ church order of 1569 (Preus, 165).

Preus says that “it would not be an exaggeration to say that Chemnitz was the author of more confessional statements than anyone of his age” (165). And although the confessional statements listed above are not as well known as Chemnitz’ other writings, they are nonetheless significant. Dr. Eugene Klug, in his essay about Chemnitz and the authority of Scripture, says that, “While they [the *corpora doctrinae*] may be said to cover essentially the same doctrinal matters treated in the Enchiridion, their importance was in the service they rendered as confessions or symbols for the churches for which they were prepared” (p. 33). Klug calls them “significant precursors” to the Formula of Concord (*ibid*).

Klug also quotes Dr. Theodore Mahlmann as saying that as early as 1567, ten years before the Formula, it was evident that “Chemnitz [had] clearly in mind some of the issues that needed to be addressed by the torn church, including such things as Christology (in view of what was happening on the Lord’s Supper among Crypto Calvinistic Lutherans), also the nature of sin, free will, and tangent articles, all of which came to be involved through the Philippist and Flacian controversies” (p. 35). Chemnitz’s efforts to bring unity may not have been as high profile as the doggedly determined travels of Andreae, but they were effective and seemed to

improve with each attempt. Mahlmann suggests that by 1576, Chemnitz' *Corpus Doctrinae Julium* "parallels closely the appearance of the Formula, 1577" (p. 34).

Chemnitz' *corpora doctrinae* served as the foundation of the Formula in another way as well. Not only did they serve the churches that subscribed to them, those territories became demilitarized, so to speak, real estate won in the war for Lutheran confessionality and the truth of God's Word. Preus notes the *Corpus Doctrinae Pruthenicum* "provided a significant step toward the Formula of Concord in that . . . it established the concept of a binding doctrinal standard" (127). Political peace was not the objective of these "binding doctrinal standards," although that was a beneficial consequence. Chemnitz had a more important goal. Richard Balge says that Chemnitz' "chief interest in all the union efforts was that the individual person's assurance of salvation should be safeguarded" (OGH, 415). Chemnitz knew of one sure way to safeguard that assurance: to remain faithful to God's Word.

In the *Corpus Doctrinae Pruthenicum* of 1567, Chemnitz had added a summary of the Christian faith entitled, *A Repetition of the Body of Ecclesiastical Doctrine (Repetitio)*. As he had in all his other writings, here too, Chemnitz emphasized Scripture as of first importance. Mahlmann says that it contains a "well formulated doctrine of the Holy Scripture."⁴ Preus quotes Chemnitz from his *Repetitio* as saying, "We poor, incompetent, poverty-stricken people must hold captive our shameful reason in subjection and submit our wisdom to the Word of God" (127). In his church orders for the duchy of Braunschweig in 1569, Chemnitz states, "Where a thoroughly lasting church order is to be established and set up, it is a foremost concern that there be a proper foundation or basis, in order that the teaching be pure and in perfect accord."⁵ Klug says, "Chemnitz' concern for Scripture's integrity, purity, and authority was not a mere personal fixation or arbitrary stance. He saw how all of doctrine hung from that thread. . . . The confessions which Chemnitz wrote prior to the Formula bear witness to the deep regard which he maintained always for the Scripture as the Word of God . . ." (p. 41-2). The same can be said not only of the prior confessions, but also of the Formula itself.

Chemnitz Work on the Formula of Concord

By far, the most important and distinguished confessional statement authored primarily by Chemnitz was a logical progression of his localized work, the Formula of Concord. Here again, by appearances, someone could demeaningly say that Chemnitz only improved upon the work of others. However, it is reasonable to say that Chemnitz would not have wanted the Formula of Concord to have the baggage of being anyone's personal work, least of all, his. In response to Melancthon's *Corpus Doctrinae Philippicum*, which contained the *Variata* and other writings of Melancthon, Chemnitz is quoted as saying:

. . . a *corpus doctrinae* dare not consist of private documents. But rather it must consist of documents issued in the name of the people, approved and accepted by them; they must be documents like the Augsburg Confession, its Apology, and the Smalcald Articles, among which must also be considered the Small and Large Catechisms of Luther."⁶

Consistent with this view, Chemnitz, along with David Chytraeus, encouraged Andreae not only to change the form of his Six Christian Sermons, but also to issue the new document in the name of the Tübingen faculty rather than his own name (Preus, 184).

Whether by his own design or through the request of others, Chemnitz did work with a number of others to produce the Formula of Concord. Andreae, Selnecker, Chytraeus, Musculus,

Körner,⁷ and others contributed to the various formulas that were ultimately recast by Chemnitz into the Solid Declaration. Among these “other contributors” are some of the more highly respected theologians of that day. Yet, as Bente points out, “it is Chemnitz who, more than Andreae or any other theologian, must be credited with the theological clarity and correctness which characterizes the Formula” (243).

Time and space limitations in this essay do not allow for a substantive treatment of the Formula, or for that matter, the history behind the Formula. Perhaps, a brief summary of the major events in which Chemnitz is involved will suffice. With the major controversies already listed, and the confessional work of Chemnitz dealt with, the exposure of the Crypto-Calvinist at Wittenberg (1573-4) is a convenient starting place.

At about the same time as this watershed event, Andreae produced his *Six Sermons on the Controversies within the Lutheran Church from 1548-73*, and submitted them with the hope that they could be used to bring about unity. Chemnitz, Chytraeus and Duke Julius (the latter to whom they were dedicated) approved of the content, but recommended that he use the form of theses and, as mentioned before, issue them through the Tübingen faculty rather than in his own name. Andreae followed their advice and produced the new document known as the Swabian Concord (1574). Preus says that it “followed the Braunschweig corpus doctrinae closely” (184). Balge says that it “was the ‘first draft’ of the Thorough Declaration as we know it” (OGH, 415).

The Swabian Concord was sent to Chemnitz and to Chytraeus and fellow faculty at Rostock for possible revisions. Preus comments that “Chemnitz incorporated into [his] revision many statements from official documents previously adopted by the Lower Saxons, thus giving to the Formula of Concord a historic tie with previous doctrinal endeavors” (184). Chytraeus and company also made a number of changes, even revising two of the articles. The result of the revisions was the Swabian - Saxon Formula. After the subscriptions to this Formula by the Saxons and Swabians, it was sent to Elector August of Saxony.

After the exposure of the Crypto-Calvinist, the previously-blinded Elector August sincerely wanted to right the wrong, so to speak, and commissioned two men, Lucas Osiander and Balthasar Bidembach to produce one corpus doctrinae to replace all the others. These two theologians worked under orders not to name names or quote Melancthon, but to draw support for their position only from Scripture, the UAC, the Apology, SC Articles, the catechisms and other writings by Luther. They produced a formula containing nine articles called the Maulbronn Formula, which, along with the Saxon-Swabian Formula just received, Elector August sent to Andreae. Andreae, in turn, suggested a meeting of the top theologians so that the two formulas could be made one. Elector August convened his own theologians headed by Selnecker, at Lichtenberg, who approved of Andreae’s idea. They also added their own recommendations of replacing any trace of Melancthon, his *corpus*, and any Crypto-Calvinistic errors by adopting a *corpus* consisting of the Three Ecumenical Creeds, the UAC, Apology, SC Articles, two Catechisms and Luther’s commentary on Galatians.

The meeting of the top theologians was held at Torgau in May, 1576, where they revamped the Swabian – Saxon Formula, using what they could from the Maulbronn Formula, to create one satisfactory *corpus*. They also omitted or translated all the Latin phrases. The finished product became appropriately known as the Torgau Book. According to Preus, it is “primarily the work of Chemnitz” (186). Upon completion, the meeting closed with a service of thanksgiving.

The new confession was circulated for review and reaction. The Torgau Book received widespread approval, discounting the predictable pro- and anti-Melancthon crowd. However,

along with a few suggestions for minor changes, there was a recurring criticism as to its length, which naturally brought about the suggestion for a shorter version. Consequently, in March of 1577, Chemnitz, Andreae and Selnecker met at Bergen to give the book a thorough review and make the necessary changes. They were later joined by Chytraeus, Musculus, and Körner. Andreae supplied the shorter summary version (Epitome) which, when added to the final revision of the Torgau Book made at Bergen, completed what we know as the Formula of Concord. Known initially as the Bergen Book, its overwhelming subscription by two-thirds of German Lutheranism did indeed warrant the name, Formula of Concord. It was signed by 3 electors, 20 dukes and princes, 24 counts, 4 barons, 35 imperial cities and 8000 pastors and teachers.

For Chemnitz, what had started in the city of Braunschweig as an effort to insure true unity and peace based upon a set *corpus doctrinae*, had ended with the writing of **THE** *Corpus Doctrinae* that, by the grace of God, brought true unity and peace to Lutherans all across the German territories. Dr. Jobst Ebel credits Chemnitz in this way:

In general the Saxon-Swabian Concord, therefore bears the stamp of Chemnitz' earlier efforts on behalf of unity. And since the Saxon-Swabian Concord became the basis of the Torgau Book and since the Formula of Concord was based on the Torgau Book, he must be considered the primary author of the Formula of Concord so far as its general concept and its contents are concerned.⁸

The accomplishments of Chemnitz in authoring the Formula of Concord and the local confessions beforehand can be credited to his determination as well as his theological gifts, both of which presupposes a deep and sincere faith. If Chemnitz' chief interest in his efforts for union was, as Balge concludes, the individual person's assurance of salvation, his years of dedication say a lot about how much Chemnitz treasured the assurance of salvation that he himself enjoyed.

Chemnitz' Writings

By all accounts, an essay on the contribution of Martin Chemnitz to our Lutheran heritage should include a considerable section on the theological contribution of Chemnitz' major writings. However, to do justice to any one of Chemnitz' works would be a daunting task within the scope of a complete essay, let alone covering all of them in a single section of an essay. As a result, the remainder of this essay will simply list Chemnitz' theological contributions rather than detailing the extent to which they contribute.

- 1566-73 – *Examination of the Council of Trent*

In the Exam, Chemnitz scrutinizes the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent against the Word of God and the history of the church. Volume I – Examines Sacred Scripture, Free Will, Original Sin, Justification And Good Works. Volume II – Examines the sacraments, including: Baptism, Confirmation, and The Sacrament of the Eucharist, Communion under Both Kinds, The Mass, Penance, Extreme Unction, and Holy Orders Matrimony. Volume III – Examines Virginity, Celibacy, Purgatory, And The Invocation Of Saints. Volume IV – Examines Relics Of The Saints, Images, Indulgences, Fasting, Distinction Of Foods, And Festivals.

- 1569 – *The Enchiridion (Ministry, Word and Sacraments)*

Chemnitz covers the fundamentals of pastoral theology and ministry: the call, the Word, administering the sacraments, confession and absolution, etc. Chemnitz offers a PT course using 333 question and answers.

- 1570 – *The Lord's Supper*
Chemnitz makes a comprehensive defense of the doctrine of the real presence against the sacramentarians. Roughly one third of the book defends the real presence on the basis of Scripture. In addition, Chemnitz makes use of terminology and definitions, a “witness of antiquity” and a convincing refutation of the “arguments of the adversaries.”
- 1570 – *The Two Natures in Christ*
Robert Preus says, “we find in this work a systematic and convincing presentation of the entire doctrine of Christology, a presentation that has never been surpassed and has become normative for all subsequent treatment of Christology.” Chemnitz also shows an incredible knowledge of the church fathers and makes a solid connection between their Christology and that of the Reformation.
- 1591 – *Loci Theologici* (edited and published by Leyser after Chemnitz’ death)
Taken by some to be Chemnitz’ greatest work, the LT continued to be the loci of choice among the Lutheran dogmaticians until about 1700. The LT is understood most to be the fruit of Chemnitz’ lectures on Melancthon’s Communes, but it differs in some respects and offers unique material. Robert Preus refers to it as “the most important contribution to dogmatic theology in the Lutheran Church in the 16th century.”

Other Writings:

- *Harmony of the Gospels* – Interestingly, Chemnitz’ Harmony was begun in 1570, continued after his death by Leyser, and completed by John Gerhard. According to R. Preus, this was not so much a harmony as it was an exegetical work aimed at producing a meaningful interpretation of the gospels. Preus adds, “It was very popular in the 17th century and, along with Calov’s *Biblia Illustrata*, is the outstanding exegetical contribution of the orthodox period.
- *The Lord's Prayer* – Chemnitz’ original Latin was lost, but the work showed up in English at the University of Cambridge in 1598. Its title was noticeably German, A Substantial and Godly Exposition of the Prayer Commonly Called the Lord’s Prayer.
- *Formulae Quaedam Caute Et Citra Scandalum Loquendi . . .* (Certain Formulas For Speaking Careful And Without Offense). This document had been written by Dr. Urbanus Rhegius in 1535. Chemnitz added a lengthy appendix in 1575 with the English title, “An appendix concerning formulas for believing correctly and speaking piously, carefully, and without scandal regarding the major controversies of these times.”
Though only an appendix, this may be one of Chemnitz more important writings. Dr. Rhegius, one of the signers of the Smalcald Articles and Melancthon’s *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, had written his *Formulae Caute Loquendi* to help train pastors. That Chemnitz would utilize it and improve on it with his appendix reveals an attitude on the part of Chemnitz that rejected polemics, favoring instead, a winsome tone in keeping with the Gospel he was defending. Chemnitz saw value in circumspection. Later, in his will, he reflected on this appendix as one of his best works (Preus, 163). Undoubtedly, the thousands of people who signed the Formula would agree!

Martin Chemnitz’ theological contributions to our Lutheran heritage are treasures that have stood the test of time. As mentioned before, any one of them is worthy of an essay. However, there would have been little to appreciate if the post-Reformation period had begun in

1546. Without the work of men like Chemnitz for true peace and unity among Lutherans on the basis of a common confession, instead of the WELS, we might be the W E C S, with the C standing for Calvinist or Catholic. If the second Martin had not also been a determined promoter of corpora doctrinae, the first Martin might not have prevailed.

But by the grace of God, he was that determined promoter, and by the grace of God, the first Martin has prevailed. As a result, our heritage as confessional Lutherans continues. Through the hard work of Martin Chemnitz and faithful, hardworking men like him, God's Word has been handed down to us in its truth and purity. We can be thankful to God for Martin Chemnitz; thankful to God that Chemnitz heard Paul's instruction to Timothy to, "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim 4:16) Even now, we hear it too. Thanks be to God!

¹ From seminary Church History notes.

² 1570 – Moerlin's *Themata de Imagine Dei* and Chemnitz' *Resolutio* (Bente, 149).

³ Bente merely attributes the use of the term *corpora doctrinae* to Melanchthon (6).

⁴ Quoted in Klug's *Chemnitz and Authority*

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ From Inge Mager, professor of church history at Gottingen (quoted in Preus, pg. 121).

⁷ Bente – "Comerus"

⁸ Quoted in Preus, pg. 190.

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