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# Calvin's Letter to Luther

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ON JANUARY 20, 1545, Calvin wrote his first and only letter to Luther. He wrote as an agent of a group of French Protestants who desired to have Luther's mind on the problem of how Protestants ought to conduct themselves in Roman Catholic districts, and in the face of threatened persecution. Calvin himself had already expressed his mind in two pamphlets in which he had adopted a rigorist position. French Protestants, feeling that Luther's attitude in this matter might be milder and more practical, asked Calvin to consult personally with Luther. This apparently he was unable to do for financial and other reasons.<sup>1</sup> Instead he wrote a letter to Luther and on the same day one to Philip Melancthon. Both letters were sent by a reliable messenger to Melancthon. In his letter to Melancthon, Calvin asked him to use his discretion in giving Luther his letter. Melancthon decided not to deliver the letter to Luther but sent instead his own reflections on the matter at issue. "I have not," he replied, "given your letter to Doctor Martin: he looks at things with suspicion and does not like to have his sentiments on such questions as you ask published abroad."<sup>2</sup>

Calvin's letter to Luther, as well as that to Melancthon, shows that he was aware how touchy Luther was at the time. He knew in part at least the reason for Luther's irritation. For some years the controversy between the Zwinglians and the Lutherans had remained dormant. Latterly, it had once more burst into flame. In 1536 Bullinger had published Zwingli's *Christianae Fidei Expositio ad Christianum*. This writing struck Luther as being contradictory to the position Zwingli had set forth at Marburg in 1529. He also had heard that he was not very well spoken of among the Swiss. The receipt of some books and an edition of Leo Jud's Latin Bible from the printing house of Froschauer in 1542 caused Luther to break forth in violent invectives against the Swiss. In a letter to Froschauer, written on August 31, 1543, he told him never to send him anything published by the Swiss ministers. "I will be no party to their perdition and their blasphemous teaching, but remain guiltless and pray and teach against them to the end of my days. God deliver the poor Church from such seducers."<sup>3</sup> Several encounters with the teachings of Schwenckfeld and Franck had not sweetened Luther's spirit or made him more receptive towards the teachings of Zwingli and his followers, for Luther was convinced that Zwingli was basically an Anabaptist.

1. *Corpus Reformatorum*, XII, *Calvinus Incerto* (Brunsvigae, 1874), p. 25.

2. *Ibid.*, XII, p. 61. Engl. trans. by Paul Henry, *The Life and Times of John Calvin, Great Reformer* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1854).

3. Quoted from James MacKinnon, *Luther and the Reformation* (London: Longman's, 1930), IV, p. 180.

The situation was not helped by an obvious inclination on the part of Melancthon to favour the persons, and often the positions, of the Swiss. Relations between Luther and Melancthon became severely strained by an incident in the summer of 1544. Conjointly with Martin Bucer, Melancthon had prepared a plan of reform for the Church at Cologne at the request of Archbishop Hermann. The section on the Lord's Supper had been written by Bucer and its language apparently satisfied Melancthon. When the plan, which became known as Herman's *Consultation*, was published, a copy was sent by the Archbishop to the Elector of Saxony. He in turn sent it to Amsdorf for his comment. Amsdorf was very critical of the sections on Will and The Lord's Supper and sent his criticisms on to Luther. Although Luther had not seen the *Consultation*, he approved of what Amsdorf had said, and added his own criticism to the effect that it was to be condemned because "it says not a word against the fanatics" and does not mention "the oral reception of the true body and blood."<sup>4</sup> He openly and privately attacked Bucer for his part in the document but failed to mention Melancthon. Nevertheless, Melancthon was terrified all that summer that Luther would attack him. On August 4 he wrote to Bucer, "I am calm and will not hesitate to withdraw from this penitentiary should he attack me."<sup>5</sup>

During the same summer Luther quarrelled with the Law Faculty of the University over the interpretation of the marriage law. So angry and distressed did he become over this matter and the moral conditions of the city that at one point he left Wittenberg vowing never to return.

In this context Luther wrote his *Annotations on Genesis*, in which he severely denounced the Sacramentarians, and his *A Short Confession on the Holy Sacrament Against the Fanatics*. In it Zwingli and Oecolampadius, although both dead, were labelled as heretics and murderers of souls. In violent and ill-tempered language he described those of the Reformed who do not hold with his position on the Sacrament as "*eingeteufelte, durchteufelte, ueberteufelte laesterlich Herzen und Lugenmauler.*" No one is named, however. The *Short Confession* is addressed to those who saw the abolition of the elevation of the host in the sacramental celebration as a serious modification of Luther's sacramental teaching. Luther made crystal clear in this document that such had not happened:

I, who am about to descend to the grave, will bring this testimony and this glory with me to the judgment seat of my dear Lord and God, Jesus Christ, that I have in all earnestness condemned and shunned the fanatics and enemies of the sacrament—Carlstadt, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Stenckfeld [an obvious attempt to cast a slur on Schwenckfeld by misspelling his name] and their disciples at Zurich, or wherever they are to be found in accordance with the command, "A man that is heretical after a first and second admonition refuse."<sup>6</sup>

Luther's violence disturbed and distressed all those who were concerned

4. Quoted from J. W. Richard, *Philip Melancthon* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1898), p. 300.

5. *Corpus Reformatorum*, V, p. 474.

6. MacKinnon, *Luther and the Reformation*, p. 188.

for the unity of the Church.<sup>7</sup> Particularly painful was this outburst to Philip Melancthon, who had made it a life's work to seek to bring peace to the Church, sometimes it must be said, at the price of serious compromise. Soon afterwards Melancthon wrote to Bullinger warning him about the forthcoming "atrocious publication" in which Luther "revives the war on the subject of the Lord's Supper. Cease therefore, to hope for the peace of the churches."<sup>8</sup>

Many were inclined to feel that the Zurichers should reply in kind but those of sounder judgment were strongly opposed to any vindictiveness. Calvin was prompted to write to Henry Bullinger advising, in the face of great provocation, moderation and restraint:

I hear that Luther has at length broken forth in fierce invectives, not so much against you as against the whole of us. On the present occasion, I dare scarce venture to ask you to keep silence, because it is neither just that innocent persons should be thus harassed, nor that they should be denied the opportunity of clearing themselves; neither on the other hand, is it easy to determine whether it would be prudent for them to do so. But this I earnestly desire to put you in mind, in the first place, that you consider how eminent a man Luther is, and the excellent endowments wherewith he is gifted, with what strength of mind and resolute constancy, with how great skill, with what efficiency and power of doctrinal statement, he hath hitherto devoted his whole energy to the overthrow of the reign of Anti-Christ, and at the same time to diffuse far and near the doctrine of salvation. Often I have been wont to declare, that even although he were to call me a devil I should still not the less hold him in such honour that I must acknowledge him to be an illustrious servant of God.<sup>9</sup>

Luther himself at this time was tired, ill, and weary of life. As early as 1541 he wrote to Justus Jonas, "I am ill and almost beside myself with the weariness of life and the misery of my maladies. Would that God would call me to Himself. I have seen and suffered evils enough."<sup>10</sup> In June, 1545, he wrote: "I am good for nothing today. I wish I were dead."<sup>11</sup> He confessed to Amsdorf in August, 1543, that he was no longer in touch with the times but living in a world which was a stranger to him and which he considered ready for the last trump. "Either I have never seen the world, or while I sleep a new world is daily born. The earth is full of iniquity."<sup>12</sup> Thus it was to a sick, aged, depressed, weary, and disappointed old man that Calvin actually addressed his letter. In this context the tone of Calvin's letter must be understood and also the almost unforgivable action of Melancthon in not delivering Calvin's letter.

7. Calvin wrote in a letter to Melancthon on June 28, 1545: "Your Pericles allows himself to be carried beyond all due bounds with his love of thunder, especially seeing his own case is by no means the better of the two"—*Letters of John Calvin*, ed. Jules Bonnet, tr. D. Constable (Edinburgh: Thos. Constable and Co., 1855), Vol. I, p. 466.

8. *Corpus Reformatorum*, V, p. 475.

9. *Letters of John Calvin*, Vol. I, November 25, 1544.

10. MacKinnon, *Luther and the Reformation*, p. 206.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

12. *Ibid.*

TRANSLATED TEXT OF CALVIN'S LETTER TO LUTHER<sup>13</sup>

To the very excellent pastor of the Christian Church, Dr. M. Luther, my much respected father,<sup>14</sup>

When I saw that my French fellow-countrymen, as many of them had been brought out from darkness of the Papacy to soundness of the faith, had altered nothing as to their public profession, and that they continued to defile themselves with the sacrilegious worship of the Papists, as if they had never tasted the savour of true doctrine, I was altogether unable to restrain myself from reproving so great sloth and negligence, in the way I thought it deserved.<sup>15</sup> How, indeed, can this faith, which lies buried in the heart within, do otherwise than break forth in the confession of faith?<sup>16</sup> What kind of religion can that be, which lies submerged under seeming idolatry?<sup>17</sup> I do not undertake however, to handle the argument here, because I have done so at large already in two little tractates,<sup>18</sup> wherein, if it shall not be troublesome to you to

13. The text of Calvin's letter to Luther is in *Corpus Reformatorum*, XII, p. 7. The text of Melancthon's reply is in the same volume, p. 61. The English translation used is from Jules Bonnet, *Letters of John Calvin*, p. 416. Another translation of these two letters may be found in Paul Henry, *The Life and Times of John Calvin*, Vol. II, pp. 11 and 13.

14. This is more than a polite greeting. It enshrines the deep respect that Calvin has for Luther and for his work in challenging the Papacy and laying the foundations of the purified faith of the Church. In his *Defensio adversus Pighium* Luther is described as "a distinguished apostle of Christ by whose ministry the light of the Gospel has shone" (*Corpus Reformatorum*, VI, p. 250).

15. Beza says in his *Life of John Calvin*: "At this time also there were some persons in France who, having fallen away at first from fear of persecution, had afterwards begun to be so satisfied with their conduct as to deny that there was any sin in giving bodily attendance to Popish rites, provided their minds were devoted to true religion. This most pernicious error, which had been condemned of old by the Fathers, Calvin refuted with the greatest clearness, though, as they alleged, with too much severity"—T. Beza, *Life of John Calvin* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1909), p. 43.

16. Calvin was convinced that a Christian ought to make public profession of faith. Because he insisted on requiring every citizen in Geneva to subscribe publicly to a Confession of Faith prepared for this purpose, he raised considerable resentment against himself and Farel, which was one of the factors contributing to their expulsion.

17. Participation in the Mass which involved the adoration of the host was considered by Calvin and other reformers as a form of idolatry.

18. *Petit traicte monstrant que c'est que doit faire un homme fidele, cognoissant la verite de l'Evangile quand il est entre les papistes*, 1543, and *L'Excuse de Jehan Calvin à Messieurs les Nicodemites, sur la complaincte qu'il font de sa trop grand rigueur*, 1544.

These two documents were translated into Latin for Luther's perusal. Later they were combined into one publication entitled *De vitandis superstitionibus quae cum sincera fidei confessione pugnant*. Appended to this document, which was printed in 1549, 1550, and 1551, were opinions of Melancthon, Bucer, and Peter Martyr on the same subject. Beza in his *Life of John Calvin* apparently confuses this later document with the first two as though the latter document was the one which had been prepared originally for the French Protestants. These tracts are to be found in *Corpus Reformatorum*, VI, pp. 537-644.

In the first of these little tracts Calvin is trying to impress on his readers the necessity of choosing between God and Baal. If it is impossible to worship according to the true faith, he tells them, then they ought to leave the country. If they cannot do this then they should absent themselves from church services and worship God according to his Word at home. They must not compromise their faith, he warns them, even though it might mean death.

This first tract elicits the criticism that he is too harsh in his judgments and the suggestion is made that he himself is criticizing from a position of safety. In defence of their action the French compromisers point to Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night. This example suggested a nickname for these people, Nicodemites. Thus he writes his second tract against the Nicodemites.

Calvin describes four classes of Nicodemites. First, there are those preachers who attract large congregations and who preach some elements of the gospel but who will

glance over them, you will more clearly perceive both what I think, and the reasons which compelled me to form that opinion. By reading of them, indeed, some of our people, while hitherto they were fast asleep in a false security, having been awakened, have begun to consider what they ought to do. But because it is difficult either casting aside all consideration of self to expose their lives to danger, or having roused the displeasure of mankind to encounter the hatred of the world, or having abandoned their prospects at home in their native land, to enter upon a life of voluntary exile, they are withheld or kept back by these difficulties from coming to a settled determination. They put forth other reasons, however, and those somewhat specious,<sup>19</sup> whereby one may perceive that they only seek to find some sort of pretext or other. In these circumstances, because they hang somehow in suspense, they are desirous to hear your opinion,<sup>20</sup> which as they do deservedly hold in reverence, so it shall serve greatly to confirm them. They have therefore requested me,<sup>21</sup> that I would undertake to send a trusty messenger<sup>22</sup> to you, who might report your answer to us upon this question. And because I thought it was of very great consequence<sup>23</sup> for them to have the benefit of your authority, that they might not

not go all the way in their preaching to the declaration of a pure Evangel. It is quite possible that Calvin has in mind at this point Gerald Roussel, a favourite preacher of Margaret of Navarre, sister of King Francis I and the protectress of Faber Stapulensis. Second, the fastidious reverend gentlemen, that is high ecclesiastical dignitaries "who are quite content to have the gospel and to chat about it happily and merrily with the ladies, provided that does not prevent them living as they see fit." Third, those who are of the philosophic bent of mind who believe that the truth of God can be separated from religious practice, which is, in itself, an indifferent thing. Fourth, merchants and common people, who only want to be left alone to pursue their ordinary occupations.

In answer to the criticism that he was speaking from a place of safety and hence does not really appreciate the problem of the compromisers, Calvin denies that this is the case. Further, he adds that they should not govern themselves by what he would do but by what they *ought* to do!

19. Such as the argument based on Nicodemus' coming to Jesus by night.

20. Undoubtedly the French Protestants were under the impression that the opinion of Luther would be much milder than that expressed by Calvin. Calvin writes in his letter to Melancthon: "And indeed, I am rather afraid that they consult you on this account because they expect that you will be more indulgent to them than I" (*Letters of John Calvin*, Vol. I, p. 411). Their insistence upon consulting Luther is also indicative of the high regard in which Luther is still held in France. The French Protestants had not forgotten how Luther influenced the reform movement in the early days when it was still associated with the Humanist group in Paris and elsewhere. For example, Nicolas Cop, in his famous rectorial address delivered on All Saints Day, 1533, at the University of Paris, drew heavily on a sermon preached by Martin Luther on All Saints Day, 1522. Further, Luther's Little Catechism, published in German in 1529, was adapted and published in French between the years 1529 and 1531. See Jacques Pannier, *Recherches Sur La Formation Intellectuelle De Calvin* (Paris: Librairie Alcan, 1531), p. 59.

21. Actually, Calvin had been requested to go himself and interview Luther on this matter. In a letter to an unknown friend (perhaps Francis Daniel or Louis de Chemin) Calvin excuses himself by saying that he has not the money, or the time, to go. Besides, the journey would prove difficult because of linguistic limitations. Further, he questions whether it is an appropriate time to interview Luther since his spirit is probably still too hot from his recent controversies with the Sacramentarians to discuss the matter calmly. "Huc accedebat quod iam dixi, tempus consulendi Lutheri esse adhuc alienum quia animus vixdum bene a contentione fervore resedisset" (*Corpus Reformatorum*, XII, p. 26).

22. Calvin informs Viret in a letter written February 2, 1545, that it was Claude de Seneclarens. He belonged to a noble Savoyard family which settled in the Pays de Vaud after having embraced the Reformation.

23. In the letter to Viret, mentioned above, Calvin seems to play down the importance of the affair. He writes, "for at the request of some friends I have asked of Luther, of Melancthon, and of Bucer, that they would write us their opinion upon that treatise of mine which treats of a similar question to that upon which you have written (*Deux Discours adressés aux Fidèles qui sont parmi les Papistes*) not so much because I was very much set upon consulting them, or that there was any hope of its being successful. But when the Frenchmen had once got that into their heads, I know that they would

fluctuate thus continually, and I myself stood besides in need of it, I was unwilling to refuse what they required. Now therefore, much respected father in the Lord,<sup>24</sup> I beseech you by Christ, that you will not grudge to take the trouble for their sake and mine, first that you would peruse the epistle written in their name, and my little books,<sup>25</sup> cursorily and at leisure hours, or that you would request someone to take the trouble of reading, and report the substance of them to you.<sup>26</sup> Lastly, that you would write back your opinions in a few words. Indeed, I am unwilling to give you this trouble in the midst of so many weighty and various employments; but such is your sense of justice, that you cannot suppose me to have done this unless compelled by the necessity of the case; therefore, I trust that you will pardon me. Would that I could fly to you, that I might even for a few hours enjoy the happiness of your society; for I would prefer, and it would be far better, not only upon this question, but also about others, to converse personally with your self<sup>27</sup>; but seeing that it is not granted to us on earth I hope that it will come to pass in the kingdom of God.<sup>28</sup> Adieu, most renowned sir, most distinguished minister of Christ, and my ever honoured father. The Lord himself rule and direct you by his own Spirit, that you may persevere even unto the end, for the common benefit and good of His Church. Yours, John Calvin.<sup>29</sup>

#### MELANCTHON'S LETTER TO CALVIN

To the very renowned doctor John Calvin, distinguished by learning and virtue, minister of the church at Geneva, his pious and true and very dear

never rest till they had got it done. I therefore preferred that they should form a judgement with the evidence before them rather than without a hearing of the cause" (*Letters of John Calvin*, Vol. I, p. 424).

24. Pannier claims that "a Bourges, Wolmar a pu aussi faire lire à Calvin les articles de Marbourg en 1529, et la Confession d'Augsbourg en 1530 . . ." (*op. cit.*, p. 61). It is important to observe that the first edition of the *Institutes* in the first four of the six chapters resembles the *Small Catechism* of Luther. Also, a certain verbal conformity may be noticed between the *Institutes* and the *Small Catechism* and other writings of Luther (cf. W. Niesel, "Calvin und Luther," in *Ref. Kirchenzeitung*, 81, 1931, pp. 195f.). And in 1543, while addressing the Emperor Charles V, princes and deputies at the Diet of Speir, he recalled that Luther and others had been the initiators and the animators who had passed on to their disciples the flame of truth. "Deus initio Lutherum et alios excitabit, qui nobis facem ad reperiendam salutis viam praetulerant, et quorum ministerio fundamentae et institutae nostrae ecclesiae" (*Corpus Reformatorum*, VI, p. 459).

25. See note 18. "My two treatises I have translated word for word into Latin, which have been sent along with my letters, that so they might be able to form an opinion" (*Letters of John Calvin*, Vol. I. "Letter to An Unknown Personage," p. 422).

26. Calvin is aware of Luther's physical and mental condition, apparently, and does not want to put undue pressure upon him. He is also aware of the burden of responsibility which a reformer of Luther's stature must carry, from his own personal experience as a leader of French Protestantism. He also knows how difficult and touchy Luther is. He writes to Melancthon on the same date as his letter to Luther, "With regard to Dr. Martin there will be somewhat more difficulty. For so far as I could understand by report and by letters from different persons, the scarcely pacified temper of the man might, on very slight occasion, break out into a sore" (letter to Melancthon, January 20, 1545, *Letters of John Calvin*, Vol. 1, p. 412).

27. Calvin seems to feel that he and Luther are kindred spirits and that face-to-face discussion would perhaps iron out some of the difficulties confronting the Church. Calvin already knows that Luther approves of his *Reply to Sadoletto* and may even have heard of Luther's opinion of his little *Tract on the Lord's Supper* which he perused in the bookshop. In his disputes with Hehusian and Westphal, Calvin indicates that he thinks things would be different if Luther were still alive; in other words he thinks that Luther was closer to his position than to that espoused by his Lutheran critics.

28. Calvin was never to meet Luther. Luther died February 18, 1546, at Eisleben.

29. Calvin persists, in spite of his awareness of Luther's grave faults, in affirming the positive contribution that Luther had made and is still making to the Church of Christ.

friend, Melancthon sends greeting.<sup>30</sup> Thankful should I be, my beloved friend Calvin, to receive from you on my own account, some good advice.<sup>31</sup> The strife from which at an earlier period I escaped, is now increasing here.<sup>32</sup> Having ever considered that one must strive to uphold the peace of the church in these wild and terrible lands, and having always expressed myself accordingly in the most temperate language, something more difficult is now demanded of me.<sup>33</sup> Therefore I beseech you to commend me to God in your pious prayers. I have not given your letter to Doctor Martin<sup>34</sup>: he looks at things with suspicion,<sup>35</sup> and does not like to have his sentiments on such questions as you ask, published abroad.<sup>36</sup> I have answered them as well as I could,<sup>37</sup> and do not set my judgment higher than your own, or that of other pious men. It is a satisfaction for me to know that I have lived without seeking to indulge in theological disputes<sup>38</sup> but that I have laboured, not unprofitably, to disentangle,

30. Calvin and Melancthon became personally and intimately acquainted with each other while attending the Colloquies at Frankfort, Worms, and Ratisbon in 1539, 1540, and 1541 between leading theologians of the various divisions of the Church with a view to reunion or at least some workable compromise. From his acquaintance with Calvin here Melancthon nicknamed Calvin "The Theologian." Not only did Melancthon respect Calvin's theological acumen but he coveted his friendship and companionship. On one occasion he expressed the desire to die in Calvin's arms. In a letter written May 11, 1544, he addresses Calvin as "ornatissime vir, fidelissime Christi minister, et amice mihi semper honorande, Dominus te semper spiritu suo regat, diuque nobis et ecclesiae suae incolumen conservet."

31. Relations between Luther and Melancthon are strained at this time and Melancthon probably feels the need of a confidant. On other occasions also, Calvin had been a tower of strength to him.

32. Luther has renewed the controversy with the Sacramentarians and in his *Short Confession* has attacked them in the most immoderate and violent language. Rumour is abroad to the effect that Luther will attack Melancthon. Calvin even has heard the rumours of strife, for he writes, "but what may have been the contentions which have exercised you there and what may have been the result of them, I have never been able to learn with certainty, except that I hear an atrocious libel has gone forth which would prove like a lighted torch to kindle a new conflagration" (*Letters of John Calvin*, January 20, 1545, Vol. I, p. 413). Melancthon, who has shown real sympathy for the theological position of Calvin on the Holy Supper, is caught between the opposing sides. Some of his colleagues, more Lutheran than Luther, have already begun to criticize him. Melancthon has left himself open to criticism by his tampering in 1540 with the Augsburg Confession to make it more amenable to the Swiss, and also by his acquiescence in Bucer's article on the Lord's Supper in Hermann's *Consultation*.

33. Melancthon apparently senses that it will no longer be possible to halt between two opinions. He may be forced to suffer the consequences of his friendliness with the Swiss and of his temporizing policies. He may even have in mind that he might have to break off relations with Luther in the interests of what he now considers to be the true position regarding the sacraments and because of Luther's bitter and uncharitable attitudes towards those who differ from him.

34. In some texts "Pericles" stands in place of "Doctor Martin." Calvin had said, "You may proceed as you think advisable, that nothing may be attempted therein either rashly or unadvisedly which may hereafter have unpleasant consequences" (*Letters of John Calvin*, January 21, 1545, Vol. I, 436).

35. Luther's state of mind was such that he looked upon everyone and everything with suspicion. He was inclined to see the devil lurking around every corner to trap him.

36. Luther does not seem to want to associate his name in any way with the reformed cause for fear it might be construed as favouring the Zwinglians whom he had come to regard as devil-possessed.

37. Melancthon generally agreed with Calvin in his reply. He affirms that it is the duty of Christians to worship God alone; to flee from idols; to profess Christ openly before men. He took, however, a milder view than Calvin concerning compliance with certain ceremonies which he was inclined to regard as non-essentials. Melancthon's reply was appended to Calvin's two tracts which were republished in Geneva under the title *De Vitandis Superstitionibus*. (See note 18.)

38. Claude Manschreck describes him as "the quiet reformer." See his book, *Melancthon, the Quiet Reformer* (New York and Nashville: Abington, 1958).

and explain many difficult subjects. Notwithstanding this, I now expect banishment and other sorrows.<sup>39</sup> Farewell.—The day when 3846 years ago,<sup>40</sup> Noah entered the ark and God intended to show us, by his example, that He would never forsake his church, however it might be tossed about on the stormy waves of the world.

39. In a letter to Myconius dated October 10, 1544, Melancthon wrote that he had had conversation with Luther and during the conversation he had explained that he had always believed in a union of Christ with bread and wine and further that he believed that when bread and wine are taken, Christ is received by the communicant. He went on to say in his letter that he thought Luther was satisfied, but that if he was not, Melancthon would have to think of leaving Wittenberg. The thought of being separated from Luther with whom he had shared so many joyful and profound experiences was almost unbearable to Melancthon. So serious did the threat of a breach between the two men become after Bullinger's reply to Luther's *Short Confession* appeared that the Elector went so far as to order Luther not to attack Melancthon (*Corpus Reformatorum*, V, p. 746).

40. April 17, 1545. This is rather a cryptic way of dating the letter. Genesis 7:11 tells us that Noah entered the Ark on the seventeenth day of the second month in the six-hundredth year of his life. The first month of the year being March, then according to this kind of reckoning, Noah entered the Ark on the seventeenth of April. Melancthon would have at his disposal some sort of chronology or calendar which would show that Noah entered the Ark in 2301 b.c. Calvin in his letter of January 20 probably suggested the image of Noah. After commenting on the irresponsible attack of Osiander on the Zwinglians and the present misfortunes of the Church he says, "in the meantime, let us cheer up our spirits with this hope, that to whatsoever extent we may be oppressed and harassed we cannot utterly be overwhelmed among the great sea billows." Since the Ark was a type of the Church in Mediaeval thought it is very plausible to consider that Melancthon is taking courage from Calvin's remarks by reflecting on how God spared Noah and his family in the days of the flood.