

Polykarp Leyser (1552–1610): A Theological Bridge Between Chemnitz and Gerhard¹

Gaylin R. Schmeling

This year, AD 2010, is the 400th anniversary of the death of Polykarp Leyser (1552–1610). He spans the time between Chemnitz and Gerhard and was closely associated with both of them. It is said that Gerhard was third (Luther, Chemnitz, and Gerhard) in the series of Lutheran theologians and after him there was no fourth. If one were to speak of a fourth, the position would be assigned either to the Prussian theologian Abraham Calov or to Gerhard's nephew, Johann Quenstedt. Polykarp Leyser is a theological bridge between Chemnitz and Gerhard. He published a new edition of Chemnitz's *Loci Theologici* in 1592 and a number of his other works. In addition, he continued the harmony of the Gospels began by Chemnitz and finished by Gerhard, which is known as *Harmonia Evangelica*.

Education and Early Years

Chemnitz and Gerhard were Saxons like Martin Luther. Polykarp Leyser, on the other hand, was a Swabian as was the case with Johann Brenz (1499–1570), one of Luther's early associates in the Reformation. Leyser was born March 18, 1552, in Winnenden, Württemberg. His father Caspar Leyser (1527–1554), who was a native of Winnenden, was pastor and superintendent there at the time of Polykarp's birth. Shortly after the birth of Polykarp his father was called as superintendent at Nördlingen where he died in 1554.² His mother Margarete nee Entringer was from Tübingen. She was the sister-in-law of Jakob Andreae, one of the writers of the *Formula of Concord*. After the early death of her husband she married Lukas Osiander, the son of the Nürnberg reformer Andreas Osiander.³

In 1566 when he was not quite 15 years old, he began to study theology at the University of Tübingen, where he was supported by a ducal stipend. Among his teachers were his uncle Jakob Andreae, Jakob Heerbrand, Theodor Schnepf, and Johann Brenz. While studying there he developed a close friendship with Aegidius Hunnius (1550–1603), who was born two years

¹ This paper originally appeared in the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, Vol. 50, Numbers 2–3 (June–September 2010).

² Caspar Leyser, together with his brother-in-law Jakob Andreae, was incensed by the number of drunks and other reprobates who demanded admission to the Sacrament without showing any signs of genuine repentance. As a result, in a proposal to Duke Christopher of Württemberg they urged the introduction of church discipline modeled after Calvin's presbyteries, i.e., church courts for the correction of offenders. This model was more congregation-oriented in comparison to the centralized system imposed by Brenz. The duke received the proposal favorably, but Brenz and the secular councilors opposed it, and it was not carried into effect (James Martin Estes, *Christian Magistrate and State Church: The Reforming of Johannes Brenz* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982], 97–98; see also Robert Kolb, *Andreae and the Formula of Concord: Six Sermons on the Way to Lutheran Unity* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977], 12).

³ Later Andreas Osiander fled to Königsberg in East Prussia during the time of the Interim. Here he was responsible for the Osiandrian Controversy.

before him in Winnenden. These two together with Leonhard Hutter (1563-1616)⁴ were three major Swabian theologians that served as professors at the University of Wittenberg. These three graduates of Tübingen University are at times considered to be the founders of orthodoxy in Wittenberg.⁵ This, however, should not be emphasized to the point of denigrating the work of Saxons like Martin Chemnitz.

In 1573 he was ordained into the public ministry and called as pastor to Gellersdorf in Lower Austria.⁶ He was extremely gifted as a preacher. Since his parish was near Vienna, he frequently had the opportunity to preach in Vienna and soon became known to Emperor Maximilian II.⁷ While serving this parish he continued his study of theology and together with his friend Hunnius he received his doctorate at Tübingen in 1576.⁸ Shortly after this he was called to Graz in Steiermark but he declined this call.

Wittenberg Period of Leyser (1577-1587)

In the early 1570s Wittenberg was embroiled in the Crypto-Calvinistic Controversy. The controversy mainly concerned the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The Philippists led by Caspar Peucer, Melancthon's son-in-law, were moving toward views similar to that of Calvin. Melancthon in the *Variata* (altered) form of the *Augsburg Confession* had so watered down the statement on the Supper that Calvin was able to sign it. This controversy also had to do with the doctrine of Christology. The Calvinists believed that after the ascension Christ's body is in one location in heaven and therefore He is with us only as God and not as man. He is not with us as our loving brother who knows our weaknesses but only in the blazing divinity before which none may dare to stand. Following this kind of logic the Calvinists readily rejected Christ's bodily presence in the Supper. This was a rejection of the clear teaching of Scripture that Christ's body and blood are truly present in the Supper under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received.

Meanwhile Elector August finally became convinced that many of his Wittenberg theologians were Crypto-Calvinists and in 1574 he purged Electoral Saxony. Soon the Philippists were

⁴ Leonhard Hutter, the chief representative of the older generation of the period of Lutheran orthodoxy, was a professor at Wittenberg and the teacher of Johann Gerhard. His resemblance to Luther in vigor, energy, and firmness of faith gave him the title of *Lutherus redivivus*. Paul Gerhardt probably memorized the saying of the times: *Leonhardus Hutterus, redivivus Lutherus* (Gerhardt Rödding, *Warum Sollt ich mich den grämen: Paul Gerhardt Leben und Dichten in Dunkler Zeit* [Newkirchen-Vluyn: Aussaat Verlag, 2006], 29). His most important symbolical writing was his *Concordia Concors* of 1614 in which he defended the *Formula of Concord* in response to the Calvinist Hospinian. Because of his valiant defense of Lutheranism in response to the attacks of the Calvinists he was known as *Malleus Calvinistarum*—Hammer of Calvinists (Bodo Nischan, *Lutherans and Calvinists in the age of Confessionalism* [Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate Variorum, 1993], X:182). When Elector Christian II desired a theological textbook for his lands which was in strict conformity with the *Formula* he produced his *Compendium*. This text tended to use only Scripture and the Confessions in the presentation of doctrine. The book became very popular.

⁵ Eric W. Gritsch, *A History of Lutheranism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 118.

⁶ Wolfgang Sommer, *Die lutherischen Hofprediger in Dresden* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 115–116.

⁷ This is the Maximilian (1527–1576) who was open to Lutheranism.

⁸ August Tholuck, *Der Geist der lutherischen Theologen Wittenbergs im Verlaufe des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg: Frierich und Andreas Perthes, 1852), 5.

banished with their chief leaders thrown into prison. Peucer himself was confined for twelve years (1574-1586). A thanksgiving service in all the churches celebrated the rooting out of Calvinism in 1574 and the final victory of restored Lutheranism.⁹ In the aftermath of this purging of Electoral Saxony and Wittenberg, Polykarp Leyser was called as professor of theology and general superintendent of Wittenberg in 1577. His uncle, Jakob Andreae, certainly had something to do with this.

Once in Wittenberg, with the support of his uncle, he went about the task of bringing peace to church life in Electoral Saxony in the wake of the Crypto-Calvinistic Controversy. His modesty, kindness and preaching abilities soon won the respect of his congregation, the university, and the elector. His preaching was very popular among the students of the university, which at that time included Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608)¹⁰ and Johann Arndt (1555-1621).¹¹ He was active in the final editing of the *Book of Concord* of 1580 and was part of a commission, together with Andreae and Selnecker, the purpose of which was to encourage support for subscription to the *Formula* in the various parts of Electoral Saxony. He was active in the reform of the university and in a revision of Luther's translation of the Bible. In 1582 he attended the colloquy at Quedlinburg with Chemnitz and others where a revision of the Latin text of the *Book of Concord* was made. The revised edition constitutes the Latin *textus receptus* of the *Book of Concord* published at Leipzig in 1584.

During this period, Leyser began to develop a catechism manual based on Luther's catechisms with expanded doctrinal elaborations. He continually worked on this manual during his Braunschweig and Dresden periods. His manual included a bilingual production of the Small Catechism (Latin and German) and an explanation of it in homiletic form. Luther's full text was included, but it was enlarged considerably with various dogmatic supplements.

The introduction of his catechism listed three purposes for the teaching of the catechism: first, that children and simple folk who are not able to grasp the entire Scriptures will be able to have its summary and fundamentals of the entire

⁹ Johann Kurtz, *Church History*, Vol. II, trans. John MacPherson (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1894), 355-356; Robert Preus and Wilbert Rosin, eds., *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 50-51.

¹⁰ Nicolai was a Lutheran pastor, poet, and composer, best known as the author and composer of the King and Queen of chorales, "Wake, Awake" and "How Lovely Shines the Morning Star." To comfort his members he wrote the "Mirror of the Joy of Eternal Life" ("*Freudenspiegel des ewigen Lebens*"), which centers on the concept of the mystical union between Christ and the believer.

¹¹ There are some who assume that a close friendship developed at this time between Arndt and Leyser, which would agree with their later correspondence concerning baptismal exorcism (Eric Lund, "Johann Arndt and the Development of a Lutheran Spiritual Tradition" [Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1979], 91). Johann Arndt was the most influential devotional author that Lutheranism produced. One of his predominant themes is *Union and Communion with God through the life-giving Word and the blessed Sacraments*. In theology he helped to fix the place of the doctrine of the mystical union of the believer with Christ in Lutheran dogmatics. He was pastor in Badeborn, Anhalt; in Quedlinburg, where he was Johann Gerhard's pastor; in Braunschweig, the city of Chemnitz; in Eisleben; and finally superintendent in Celle. His most important work was *True Christianity (Sechs Bücher vom wahren Christentum)*. It was the first German Lutheran devotional book for the common people. Next to the *Imitation of Christ* it was the most widely circulated of devotional books.

divine teaching in the catechism; then that young people have a guiding principle for their belief so they can recognize and distinguish true doctrine from that which is false; finally, that through the faithful witness of the ancients and learned scholars who teach in accordance with the catechism they may remain steadfastly faithful to true doctrine.¹²

Polykarp endeared himself to the people of Wittenberg and became close friends with a number of its leading citizens. In fact, in 1580 he was united in marriage with Elisabeth Cranach, the daughter of Lukas Cranach the younger, who was a major Lutheran painter as was his father, and a leading citizen of the city.¹³

The battle for orthodox Lutheranism in Electoral Saxony continued even though the confessional men had the support of Elector August. This is evident from a funeral that Leyser conducted in 1586: “His account of the deathbed conversion to Lutheranism of Mattheaus von Wesenbeck, a Calvinist theologian, ... earned him the furious contradictions by the family of the deceased, and a flurry of printed treatises backing or denying his version of the events.”¹⁴ This indicates that there was still sympathy for Calvinistic ideas in the land.

The Calvinizing tendencies of the extreme Philippists again gained the upper hand in the electorate of Saxony under August’s successor Christian I (1560–1591), who had come to this position in 1586. This became known as the Second Crypto-Calvinistic Controversy (1586–1592) and was an example of an attempt at a Second Reformation.¹⁵ The chancellor of Christian I, Nicholas Krell, filled the offices of pastors and teachers with men of his own views, abolished exorcism at Baptism,¹⁶ and had even begun the publication of a Bible with a Calvinizing commentary when Christian died, in 1591. When Christian I came to power in Electoral Saxony, Leyser was slowly pushed out of the territory.

Braunschweig Period of Leyser (1587-1594)

Already in 1585, Polykarp Leyser was invited to succeed Martin Chemnitz, who was nearing the end of his tenure, as superintendent in Braunschweig. Leyser did not feel that his work was completed in Saxony at that time, and thus Johann Heydenreich was chosen as the immediate

¹² Robert Kolb, ed., *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1675* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 189.

¹³ Sommer, *Die lutherischen Hofprediger in Dresden*, 116.

¹⁴ Cornelia Niekus Moore, *Patterned Lives: The Lutheran Funeral Biography in Early Modern Germany* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 183.

¹⁵ The term “Second Reformation” is used to describe the situation in which a state that was Lutheran in confession was slowly converted to Calvinism. It is also referred to as Calvinization. The implication is that the Lutheran Reformation did not go far enough and therefore the Second Reformation was required.

¹⁶ Baptismal exorcism had taken on the significance of being a confessional stand against the Reformed. The Lutherans understood exorcism in Baptism as a confession of the scriptural doctrine of regenerative Baptism and the teaching that man was born dead in original sin. The exorcism consisted of this phrase in the baptismal liturgy: “I adjure you, you unclean spirit, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, that you come out and depart from this servant of Christ. Amen” (*Ich beschwöre dich, du unreiner Geist, bei dem Namen des Vaters, und des Sohnes, und des Heiligen Geistes, daß du ausfahrest und weichest von diesem Diener [dieser Dienerin] Jesu Christi. Amen*).

successor to Chemnitz. In the summer of 1587, with the problems facing Leyser in Wittenberg, he was offered the position of vice-superintendent in Braunschweig, which he accepted. Here he faced conflicts with Heydenreich, the superintendent who had Crypto-Calvinistic leanings. The controversy centered in the doctrine of the omnipresence of Christ's human nature by virtue of the communication of attributes as it is confessed in the *Formula of Concord*.¹⁷ The majority of the pastors and citizens of the city agreed with Leyser and the Confession. Heydenreich was deposed with the result that Leyser became superintendent in 1589.¹⁸

Leyser was considered to be the leader of the orthodox opposition to Crypto-Calvinism and the attempt at a Second Reformation in Electoral Saxony, Anhalt, and other states in Germany. When the baptismal exorcism was abolished in Anhalt, Johann Arndt looked to Leyser for support and encouragement in his battle for the Lutheran doctrine of Baptism.¹⁹

The Hoffmann Controversy

Leyser's strong support for the *Book of Concord* brought him into conflict with the Helmstadt professor, Daniel Hoffmann. He also rejected the doctrine of the omnipresence of Christ's human nature, which was found in the Confessions. Closely associated with this is what became known as the Hoffmann Controversy (1598). He opposed the use of Aristotelian philosophy in the study of theology, which was becoming common among orthodox Lutherans. No one advocated a magisterial use of reason in theology, but Aristotelian categories and causes were considered useful in organizing dogma and defining doctrine.²⁰

The Visitation Articles of 1592

All the attempts of Christian I at a Second Reformation came to naught when he died unexpectedly in 1591 in the prime of life. His young son, Christian II (1583-1611), who was surrounded by staunch Lutherans, restored confessional Lutheranism to the land. Krell was imprisoned and beheaded in 1601, the exorcism was reintroduced, and orthodox Lutherans were welcomed back into the land. A new anti-Calvinistic confession was produced, the Visitation Articles of 1592.²¹ The chief author of this confession was Leyser's friend Aegidius Hunnius,²² who shortly before this had been called to Wittenberg.

¹⁷ Wolfgang Sommer, *Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft: Studien zum Obrigkeitsverständnis Johann Arndts und lutherischer Hofprediger zur Zeit der altprotestantischen Orthodoxie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 113-114.

¹⁸ J.A.O. Preus, *The Second Martin: The Life and Theology of Martin Chemnitz* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994), 161. See also Moore, 182-185.

¹⁹ Sommer, *Die lutherischen Hofprediger in Dresden*, 117.

²⁰ Kurtz, Vol. II, 361.

²¹ The Visitation Articles are to be found in *Triglotta*, 1150-1557. They contain four articles on the Lord's Supper, the person of Christ, Holy Baptism, and the election of grace, each in 4 to 6 terse statements in substantial agreement with the *Formula of Concord*.

²² Aegidius Hunnius (1550-1603), close friend and classmate of Leyser in Tübingen, was called as professor at Marburg. He unsuccessfully tried to win the university and the church in Hesse for the *Formula of Concord*. In 1592 he became a professor at Wittenberg. With professors like Hunnius and Hutter, Wittenberg became a bulwark of orthodoxy for over a century. Hunnius and Balduin were the greatest exegetes of this period of Lutheran Orthodoxy.

The Huber Controversy

After the death of Christian I, Leyser's services were again desired in Wittenberg. At the same time, he received a request from the Nikolai Church in Leipzig. Contrary to the desire of the people of Braunschweig, he returned to Wittenberg for a short time. Here he became embroiled in what became known as the Huber Controversy (1588–1595). Samuel Huber was a Reformed pastor from the Bern area in Switzerland. He rejected the Reformed doctrine of election and entered the Lutheran Church. He became a pastor in Württemberg and later worked at Wittenberg. Here he accused his Wittenberg colleagues, Leyser and Hunnius, of Calvinism. He rejected the idea that it is only believers *alone* who are numbered among the elect for salvation. He believed that on the basis of universal atonement and universal justification all people were predestined to salvation and that man must make his universal election and calling sure by repentance and faith. According to Huber's opponents, his view had the taste of Pelagianism.²³ The conflict continued until he was removed from Wittenberg in 1595.²⁴

Dresden Period of Leyser (1594–1610)

The position of court preacher (*Hofprediger*) for one of the electors in Germany had always been one of the most important positions in the Lutheran Church hierarchy. With the reign of Christian II, who began his rule as a minor, the position of court preacher became even more predominant. In fact, during the tenure of Leyser and especially during the time of his successor, Höe von Höenegg (1580–1645),²⁵ the office of court preacher in Dresden became the most powerful and prestigious position in the Lutheran Church. Höe von Höenegg even received the title *Oberhofprediger*.

First Court Preacher in Dresden (Hofprediger)

In 1594, Leyser was called as the first court preacher in Dresden. He received this call largely because of the influence of Electress Sophia, the mother of young Christian II. Here he faithfully served the family of Christian II until his death in 1610.

In 1601, Christian II, who was only eight years old when he became elector, reached maturity and began to govern in his own right. Before this his relative, Frederick Wilhelm of Saxony-Altenburg of the Ernestine line of the Wettins, had been regent together with his mother, Electress Sophia. In a sermon for the occasion, based upon Psalm 20, Leyser gave directives for Christian government and Christian rulers: 1) The Christian prince should begin his rule with prayer. 2) He should hold fast to God's Word that is the one true religion. 3) Not only should he be pious in his own person, but also provide God-fearing and qualified teachers in the churches

²³ Kurt E. Marquart, John R. Stephenson, and Bjarne W. Teigen, eds., *Lively Legacy: Essays in Honor of Robert Preus* (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary, 1985), 56–61. See also Robert Kolb, *Bound Choice, Election, and Wittenberg Theological Method: From Martin Luther to the Formula of Concord* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 265–266.

²⁴ Kurtz, Vol. II, 361. See also Rune Söderlund, *Ex Praevisa Fide: Zum Verständnis der Prädestinationslehre in der lutherischen Orthodoxie* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1983), 59–64.

²⁵ Höe von Höenegg was not Leyser's immediate successor. He did not become court preacher until 1613. In the interim Paul Jenisch held the position.

and the schools of the land. 4) In his government, he should provide pious counselors and civil servants. This final point Leyser emphasizes in the negative. He reminds the young elector of the negative influence exerted by his father's chief counselor, Nicholas Krell.²⁶

During a state diet (*Landtag*) in 1605, Leyser gave a series of sermons that were to explain not only the duties of the Saxon ruler, but also how he viewed his responsibilities as court preacher. Leyser had been attacked by the nobility of Saxony for being too stringent in his position as court preacher and too rigid in the application of the Saxon church order. They accused him of being the Dresden pope.²⁷ These homilies were published with the title *Regentenspiegel* (Regent's Mirror).²⁸ As Luther²⁹ before him, he used Psalm 101 as the basis for the mirror. In *Regentenspiegel*, Leyser reminded the elector that he ruled alone by the grace of God and that he and his family were to be examples of a godly, Christian life. The young elector was to be concerned not only about the physical needs of his people, their food and clothing, but also about their spiritual needs, their souls' salvation. Leyser used many examples from the Bible and history to illustrate this. Then he explained that as court preacher he was the ultimate advisor in the land in areas of religion and morals. It was his responsibility to speak even when what he said was not that pleasant. These thoughts of the *Regentenspiegel* were summarized in one of the sermons that was preached by Paul Jenisch at Leyser's funeral.

A preacher who stays in the good graces of his audience and especially of his superiors must have forgotten his duties to admonish. One still finds, thank God, rulers who are willing to have themselves corrected, and remind their preachers if necessary of their duties not to abstain from giving their opinion, even when courtiers sometimes find this excessive and would love to turn a ruler against his teacher. ... But in teaching, admonishing, and caring (from which the good doctor, even if he was quiet and gentle in nature, never abstained), one can still retain the grace of God and the love and good will of all.³⁰

During his time in office, Leyser established the parameters and responsibilities of the office of court preacher. Through his diligent and faithful service, he provided the office with the authority and prestige that would be the norm for succeeding generations in the position. During his tenure, he made the office what it would become, the most prestigious in the Lutheran church. In *Regentenspiegel* the guidelines for the position of *Oberhofprediger* are clearly evident. Leyser became the model and example of the court preacher.³¹

²⁶ Sommer, *Die lutherischen Hofprediger*, 120.

²⁷ *Ich weis es gar woll daß ich ein grossen teil des Adels auff dem land darmit erzürnet und mir abgünstig gemacht habe daß ich so steiff über der Ordnung halten wöllen daß niemand zu seiner Kindstauff mehr als drey Gefattern erbitten soll da hat man mich tin Drefsnischen Papst gescholten...* (Sommer, *Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft*, 124). See also Tholuck, 12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 122–134.

²⁹ WA 51:200–264.

³⁰ Moore, 239.

³¹ Wolfgang Sommer, *Politik, Theologie und Frömmigkeit im Luthertum der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1999), 82–83.

Conflict with the Reformed and Leyser's Famous Dictum

During this period of time, the Lutherans continued to have conflict with the Roman Catholics because the Hapsburg emperor, with the help of the Jesuits, was trying to restore Catholicism in the empire. Still the greater threat came from the Reformed. The Reformed felt that the Lutheran Reformation had not gone far enough. Too many medieval customs and doctrines remained in the Lutheran Church. They wanted to "sweep the leftover papal dung completely out of the sheepfold of Christ."³²

The Reformed obviously disagreed with the Lutheran doctrine on the Lord's Supper and Baptism. At the same time, there was a movement toward a new iconoclasm among the Reformed. They rejected the Lutheran use of the high altars, the *Flügelaltar*, crucifix, and so forth. The Calvinists said that the Bible spoke of none of these things and that they were idolatry. The Lutherans responded that such things were not forbidden in Scripture and that they were good teaching tools for the people. These things were the laymen's Bible in a time when literacy was by no means universal. The altar pictures, the stained glass windows, and the crucifix portrayed the way of salvation.

Whenever the Calvinists gained control in a territory, they removed the beautiful altars and replaced them with communion tables. They threw out the altar pictures and crucifixes and whitewashed the sanctuary. They whitewashed the sanctuary as the Turks had whitewashed Hagia Sophia, so their sanctuaries looked more like a mosque than a church.

Polykarp Leyser complained that "wherever these Calvinists gain the upper hand, they remove all pictures, paintings, crucifixes from churches and altars ... as has already happened in France, the Low Countries, and other places where churches now look like horse stables."³³ The Reformed said that the altar paintings and crucifixes were nothing but papal idolatries, but how could they say that about the altars of Lucas Cranach and other evangelical painters?³⁴

If the Reformed rejected all images and signs as idolatry, how could they tolerate the money that they had in their pockets and offered in their churches which bore the images of the imperial leaders? "If our Calvinist friends really are such pure Christians with such tender consciences that they cannot tolerate any pictures in church, why do they not object to the images that are imprinted on the red gulden or silver thalers which they carry in their pockets? I have never seen them throw any of these away," noted Leyser.³⁵

³² Bodo Nischan, *Prince, People, and Confession: The Second Reformation in Brandenburg* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 117. "...die noch hinterbliebene Unsauberkeit des Bapstums aus dem Schaffstall Christi vollend außzufegen."

³³ Polycarp Leyser, *Calvinismus, Das ist: Ein Erclerung des Christichen Catechismi Herrn Doctoris Martini Lutheri/In act Predigten ...* (Leipzig: Johann Beyer, 1596), 16.

³⁴ Karin Maag and John D. Witvliet, eds., *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 103.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

Because of this violent and faith-destroying conflict with the Reformed, Leyser would say that “Lutherans have far more in common with Romanists than with Calvinists.”³⁶ Later Höe von Höenegg would say the same. This famous dictum of Leyser was the common opinion of orthodox Lutherans during the lengthy conflict with the Reformed in the early seventeenth century.

Leyser's Family

Polykarp Leyser came from a family of clergymen, and a number of his sons entered the public ministry. Seeing their father's example, they wanted to serve the Lord in this capacity. His elder son, Polykarp Leyser II (1586–1633), was a professor in Wittenberg and Leipzig and later was entrusted with high ecclesiastical positions. He wrote commentaries on Galatians, the *Augsburg Confession*, and the *Formula of Concord*. Leyser's younger son, Wilhelm Leyser (1592–1649), was superintendent at Torgau and later professor at Wittenberg. He befriended Quenstedt, Gerhard's nephew, when he came to study at Wittenberg.

Leyser spent the remainder of his life as the first court preacher in Dresden. Throughout his life, he worked relentlessly to maintain and preserve the true orthodox Lutheran confession amid assaults from both the Reformed and Rome. Because of his service to the state and the empire and because of his Austrian descent, he was raised to the rank of nobility by Emperor Rudolf II in 1590. After a prolonged illness, he was taken to be with the Lord on February 22, 1610. His funeral occurred on March 1 at the Sophienkirche in Dresden.

Leyser's Successor at Dresden

Polykarp Leyser's most important successor in Dresden was Matthias Höe von Höenegg (1580–1645). He was born in Vienna and, like Leyser, was of Austrian descent. He studied at Wittenberg where he was confirmed in orthodox Lutheranism, a loyalty which continued throughout his life. In 1603, he was called to the position of superintendent in Plauen, and later he directed the Evangelical Church in Prague in 1611.

Under Johann Georg I of Saxony, the successor and brother of Christian II, he became the Saxon court preacher in Dresden in 1613. Later he received the prestigious title which was prepared specifically for him of *Oberhofprediger* in Dresden. Possibly because of his Austrian origins and anti-Calvinistic sentiment, he influenced Johann Georg I to be pro-Habsburg during the Thirty Years War even at the time of the Edict of Restitution in 1629.

In the Rathmann Controversy, Höe von Höenegg upheld the power and efficacy of the inspired Scriptures in contradistinction to Hermann Rathmann (1585–1628) who was a pastor at Danzig and had Calvinistic tendencies.³⁷ Höe von Höenegg was one of the leading theologians

³⁶ *Eine wichtige und in diesen gefährlichen Zeiten sehr nützliche Frage: Ob wie und warum man lieber mit den Papisten [den Gefolgsleuten des Papstes, den Katholiken] Gemeinschaft haben und gleichsam mehr Vertrauen zu ihnen tragen soll denn mit und zu den Calvinisten* (Ibid., 111). See also Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, *Evangelische Enzyklopädie: Orthodoxie und Pietismus* (Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, Gütersloh, 1966), 19.

³⁷ Johannes Wallmann, *Theologie und Frömmigkeit im Zeitalter des Barock: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995), 51.

authoring the *Decisio Saxonica*, which moderated between the Giessen and Tübingen school in the Crypto-Kenotic Controversy in Christology. While he intended to avoid the extremes of both groups, he was seen as siding more with the Giessen school.³⁸ As a result of the bitter controversy with the Reformed, Höe von Höenegg is to have said as Leyser before him, "One should rather have fellowship with the Papists and likewise have more trust in them, than [have fellowship] with and [trust] in the Calvinists."³⁹

Leyser's Writings and Publications

Polykarp Leyser was a prolific writer and publisher. He wrote commentaries on Genesis, Daniel, the minor prophets, and other books of the Bible. He produced a large number of sermons, polemical treatises, and maintained a vast correspondence. His most provocative work was his polemic treatise against the Calvinists: *Ob, wie, und warum man lieber mit den Papisten Gemeinschaft haben ... soll denn mit und zu den Calvinisten*, originally an introduction to his *Christianismus, Papismus et Calvinismus, das ist drey unterschiedliche Auslegungen des Catechismi Lutheri*.⁴⁰

In addition to the publication of his own works, he published many of the works of Chemnitz, saving them for posterity. He is probably best known today for this preservation of the Second Martin's writings.

Enchiridion

While Chemnitz was superintendent in Braunschweig, he organized the regular visitation of pastors. The result of this visitation was the publication of the *Enchiridion*, which was an outline of the essential Bible teaching that a Lutheran pastor needed in order to conduct the office of the public ministry. The book was practical instruction for the Lutheran pastor.

By 1593 Leyser, as Chemnitz's successor at Braunschweig, republished the 1579 version of the *Enchiridion*. He dedicated the work to the clergy of both Braunschweig and Lüneburg and included in the publication a work by Urbanus Rhegius.

Leyser's work came to fill more than 600 pages and included besides the basic *Enchiridion* also Rhegius' *De Caute Loquendi* and Chemnitz' *Wolgegründter Bericht*, or *De Caute Sentiendi*. By the 1603 edition of this work, Chemnitz' treatise on the Jesuits had also been added. Leyser liked Chemnitz very much. Chemnitz (even back in 1569) shows his love for the use of theses and antitheses, and this practice is followed in the Formula of Concord in part at his insistence. The entire preface of Leyser is worth reading in the Poellot edition, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*.⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid., 50.

³⁹ Gustav Niemetz, *Geschichte der Sachsen vom germanischen Stamm bis zum Freistaat* (Spitzkunnersdorf: Oberlausitzer Verlag, 1999), 73.

⁴⁰ See note 35.

⁴¹ Preus, 149.

Loci Theologici

In 1592 Leyser published a new edition of Martin Chemnitz's *Loci Theologici*. Chemnitz's *Loci* consisted mainly of his lectures on *Loci Communes of Melancthon*. It was probably the most complete doctrinal study in the Lutheran church at the time. Leyser's purpose for the new edition was to make this excellent teaching tool available to the new generation.

Leyser in his prefaces to the three volumes of the *Loci Theologici* makes it clear that his purpose in 1591, five years after Chemnitz's death, in publishing this great work of the most learned and prestigious Dr. Chemnitz was to use this great man's learning and literary output to stem the doctrinal deterioration which was continuing among the Lutheran churches even after the adoption of the Book of Concord in 1580, because of the constant inroads of a resurgent papacy, a virulent and deceptive Calvinism, and a strident and disruptive Enthusiasm. At this point we are less than 30 years from the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War.⁴²

In his dedicatory letter to the *Loci*, Leyser began his remarks with a strong defense of the *loci* method of presenting Christian doctrine. He implied that the church of God from its very beginning had special articles of faith presented in summary fashion in a definite order and method. All other teachings were to be examined and tested by this norm. Such a summary of Christian doctrine was found in Genesis 3:15.

The Son of God Himself gave to our first parents in Paradise after the Fall this kind of carefully drawn up summary of the doctrine when He spoke the words of Gen. 3:15. This brief passage is a kind of fountain from which flow all the prophetic oracles, so that it is a summary of the whole of the Christian doctrine and of all the articles of our faith. Therefore, although our first parents and after them the rest of the patriarchs, in the church and in its public meetings, discussed at length the Creation, the sadness of the Fall, sin and the corruption of our entire nature, the malice, cleverness, and power of the devil, concerning Christ the Redeemer, faith in Him as the Mediator, concerning the practice of faith and repentance, the cross, death, resurrection, and similar articles of faith, yet always this brief passage was the canon and rule of faith. For whatever can be taught concerning these articles is summarized in perfect order in this brief passage. And a normally diligent person can easily observe in this statement the order, beginnings, progress, and goals of the heavenly teaching which to this day is proclaimed in our churches.⁴³

Harmonia Evangelica (1593)

One of the most intriguing works of Chemnitz that Polykarp edited was the *Harmonia Evangelica*. Not only did he edit this work, but he added to it considerably. The *Harmonia*

⁴² Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, Vol. 1, trans. J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 15–16.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 17.

Evangelica is a harmony of the New Testament Gospels. The translation of it into English has recently been undertaken by the Center for the Study of Lutheran Orthodoxy in Malone, Texas, with the title *The Harmony of the Four Evangelists which the very renowned theologian, Martin Chemnitz, began very auspiciously; which Dr. Polycarp Leyser continued and which Dr. John Gerhard completed most fruitfully, both of whom were theologians of no less renown.*⁴⁴

In 1573 Chemnitz began to edit his *Harmonia*, but he was so pressed by his many other duties that he never finished the work. He authored the first part of the *Harmonia* (chapters 1–51). It was later published after his death by Polykarp Leyser in 1593. Leyser carried on the work of Chemnitz and published an additional portion of it (chapters 52–140) in the years 1603–1610. The whole project was completed by Johann Gerhard in 1626–1627 (chapters 141–180). This massive harmony of the Gospels was published in completion at Frankfurt and Hamburg in 1652. The present English translation is using as its source a 1703 Latin edition published at Hamburg. Concerning the production of the *Harmonia*, Gerhard wrote in a letter to Høe von Höenegg:

Once I finish the *Loci*, I shall gird myself for the continuation of the *Harmonia*. I indeed confess and I have confessed publicly in the preface that this labor of mine people should not even in the slightest compare with the divine labors of the blessed Chemnitz and the blessed Polycarp [Leyser] of sacred memory. Meanwhile, because I see that your distinguished reverence and other godly and erudite men are so willing for me to put together the rest, I shall not refuse whatever this part of the work imposes on me.⁴⁵

The *Harmonia Evangelica* was so popular among Synodical Conference Lutherans that pastors in the Missouri Synod translated portions of it in the nineteenth century. This work, entitled *Perikopen*, was published in seven volumes including the historic Gospels of the church year, the festival Gospels, and the Passion history.

The harmony is an excellent homiletical tool for Lutheran pastors. As a pastor studies the Gospels, he finds in the harmony a rich treasury of information concerning the life of Christ, the history of the New Testament, and the teaching of Scripture.

An example of the insights given by these three great Lutheran theologians is found in Matthew 2:15. Here the prophecy concerning our Lord, “Out of Egypt have I called My son,” is explicated.

You see, the explanation is forced and twisted of those who contend that in that statement: “Out of Egypt have I called My son” Hosea is simply and narrowly prophesying nothing else but about the Child Jesus, called as He was out of Egypt. ... So great is the union of Christ, the Head, and His members, that what is said about the members refers correctly to the Head and is said to be truly

⁴⁴ The first volume of the *Harmonia Evangelica* may be obtained at Bethany Bookstore at the cost of \$40.00.

⁴⁵ Erdmann Rudolph Fischer, *The Life of John Gerhard*, trans. Richard J. Dinda and Elmer Hohle (Malone, Texas: Repristination Press, 2001), 434.

fulfilled in Him. That he might show the more clearly the conformity of the Head and members about which Paul speaks in Rom. 8:29, Matthew establishes the following comparison with this allegation of his. Israel was born in the land of Canaan and quickly was driven out into Egypt, there it remained until God called it out of it and returned again. This was the time of the infancy or childhood of the people of Israel, as Hosea says: "When Israel was a little child," and Moses says, Deu. 1:31: "The Lord has carried you as a man generally carried his little child." The Child Jesus, however, was born in the land of Canaan and fled into Egypt during His infancy. There He spent some years of His infancy and He remained there until God called Him back again through an angel. Because it was necessary for the elect to be in conformity with the image of the Only-Begotten and truly First-Begotten, the Child Jesus, that which Hosea says – "Out of Egypt have I called My son" – we say correctly was fulfilled, first, in the people of Israel as the members; and, second, in the very Head, the Child Jesus.⁴⁶

Here Chemnitz, Leyser, and Gerhard refer to what today would be designated as indirectly messianic or typological prophecy. A typological messianic prophecy applies first to some Old Testament individual or event and then through it as an intervening type to Christ. In this particular situation, Hosea's prophecy speaks first of all of Israel, God's Son, in the Old Testament and then points to God's Son *par excellence*, the only begotten of the Father from all eternity, Jesus Christ.

In Luke 3:16, John the Baptist makes this interesting statement, "I indeed baptize you with water, but ... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Some assume from this text that John is implying that his Baptism was inferior to Christ's Baptism. Note the exegesis of this text in the *Harmonia*.

In that which follows ("I baptize with water"), he is not comparing his Baptism of water with the Baptism of water if Christ should give it. Christ, after all, baptized no one with water, John 4:2. John isn't comparing his Baptism with the Baptism of the apostles, but is comparing his person and ministry with the person and office of Christ. This difference has a place also in all other ministries. He says: "I am providing only an external voice for the preaching of repentance and the remission of sins, and with my hand I minister water to sprinkle you for repentance.... With those words, when he says: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire," he is looking to this visible coming infusion of the Holy Spirit in the appearance of fire upon the apostles on Pentecost. That visible gift was the witness that Christ had received and had the gift of pouring out the Holy Spirit upon believers, Acts 2:33. ... Christ baptized with the Holy Spirit

⁴⁶ Martin Chemnitz, Polykarp Leyser, and Johann Gerhard, *The Harmony of the Four Evangelists which the very renowned theologian, Martin Chemnitz, began very auspiciously; which Dr. Polycarp Leyser continued and which Dr. John Gerhard completed most fruitfully, both of whom were theologians of no less renown*, Volume One, Book One, trans. Richard J. Dinda (Malone, Texas: The Center for the Study of Lutheran Orthodoxy, 2009), 229–230.

even in John's Baptism, for Christ's Baptism is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, whom He pours out, as we have shown, in the hearing of faith and in Baptism.⁴⁷

John was merely a servant of Christ, using his mouth to preach and his hand to pour out water in Baptism. It was Christ who was working through John's preaching and Baptism. John poured out water, and at the same time Christ poured out the Holy Spirit, giving the forgiveness of sins and working faith in His redemptive work. The power of the Spirit in water Baptism was publicly confirmed on Pentecost through the appearance of the fire on the heads of the apostles.

The *Harmonia Evangelica* has served Lutheran pastors as a vital exegetical and homiletic tool or resource for generations. As the Latin language became less accessible to parish pastors, a German translation of portions of the *Harmonia* was completed in the nineteenth century as noted above. The Center for the Study of Lutheran Orthodoxy is to be commended for publishing the English translation of the *Harmonia* by Dr. Richard Dinda. This is an indispensable harmony of the Gospels in the library of every orthodox Lutheran pastor.

In this anniversary year of the death of Polykarp Leyser, he is remembered as a great Lutheran churchman and theologian. Throughout his life he worked relentlessly to maintain and preserve the orthodox Lutheran confession of faith amid attacks from both the Reformed and Rome. In his Dresden period, he became the model of the Lutheran court preacher in the seventeenth century. He spans the time between Chemnitz and Gerhard and was closely associated with both of them. He continued the production of the *Harmonia Evangelica* began by Martin Chemnitz most auspiciously and completed by Johann Gerhard most fruitfully. He is a theological bridge between Chemnitz and Gerhard. His example as *Seelsorger* and theologian is one properly emulated by every orthodox Lutheran pastor.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 291.

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