

Letter 627: 23 November 1536, [Strasbourg], Capito and the Strasbourg Preachers to the City Council of Constance

The letter is printed in BDS 6/1:258–70, no. 19.

[*Summary*]: They have heard that the city council of Constance has written to the representatives of the Swiss Confederacy informing them that they are unwilling to accept the Wittenberg Concord or the *Explanation* supplied by Capito and Bucer [see above, Ep. 618]. Instead, they would negotiate with Luther themselves. The Strasbourgers do not think that this is conducive to peace. They explain their position on the Supper: both the earthly bread and the heavenly body of Christ are given to believers. The bread and wine are not merely signs; Christ is present in them, although not locally. This is what the church of old believed, and this was taught by Oecolampadius and published in his *Dialogue*. This is also the meaning of the Wittenberg Confession and Apologia, which agree with the Tetrapolitan Confession, as was stated at Schweinfurt. They remind the council of Constance that they accepted the Tetrapolitan Confession. They will find the beliefs concerning the Supper in the first Wittenberg Article. The second article denies transubstantiation; the third concerns unworthy members of the congregation, who will nevertheless be allowed to participate in the sacrament. There is nothing in these articles that has not also been expressed in the Tetrapolitan Confession and Apologia, nothing that could promote superstition. This is why Johann Bader, reformer of Landau, recommended the Concord. Philip of Hesse and Philip Melanchthon praised the confession of the Constance preachers and regarded it as being in agreement with their own. They are aware of Thomas Blaurer's reservations, but in this matter one person's opinion should not dominate the discussion. The council must not stand in the way of a concord, which is feared by the papists, Anabaptists, and the followers of Schwenckfeld. Bullinger also agreed that there was nothing wrong with the articles. Capito and his colleagues emphasize that they must agree on the meaning, not the words. If the council insists on writing to Luther separately, the Strasbourgers ask at least to see the letter first. They may be able to avoid trouble by changing a word here or there. They present the following scenarios: if the council does not wish to accept the Wittenberg Articles, they should indicate to the Strasbourgers what they find questionable; if they insist on writing to Luther, they should allow them to comment on the letter before sending it off. The letter is signed by Capito, Caspar Hedio, Bucer, and Matthew Zell.