



Issues, Etc.TM

Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio

TRANSCRIPT

Rev. Todd Wilken, Host

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"Reformation Confessors: Martin Chemnitz"

Guest:

Pastor Paul McCain

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WILKEN: When you consider the contribution, the intellect, the kind of force of personality that was the 16th century reformer Martin Luther, it's kind of hard to believe that in the second generation of the Reformation, there is another Martin who equals Luther in many ways. Maybe not in the force of personality – not as compelling a personality – but certainly as compelling a theologian and as great a contributor as Luther himself. Some would even say that without the second Martin, the first Martin would not have gotten anywhere. The

second Martin – Martin Chemnitz. Now, you might not be familiar with his name, but by the end of this hour, I hope that you are and that you appreciate his contribution to Reformation theology.

Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* on this Tuesday afternoon, the 22nd of October. I'm Todd Wilken. Thanks for tuning us in for day two of *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. We'll be talking about Martin Chemnitz. Pastor Paul McCain is our guest. He's Publisher and Executive Director of Editorial for

Concordia Publishing House, based in St. Louis, and General Editor of *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*. Paul, welcome back to *Issues, Etc.*

McCain: Hey, Todd, great to be with you.

Wilken: He's called "the second Martin." Why is Martin Chemnitz called "the second Martin"? Who coined that particular epithet?

McCain: Well, according to what we know, it was actually the Roman Catholics who first called him that, who recognized in Martin Chemnitz such a powerful force to be reckoned with that they ended up coining a little phrase that said, "If the second Martin had not come, the first Martin would not have stood." In other words, Martin Chemnitz so well defended the theology and work of the Lutheran Reformation, and Martin Luther in particular, that they gave him the name "second Martin." I guess they intended it to be some kind of an insult, but it was actually kind of a grudging compliment.

Wilken: So let's talk about him as – well, first of all, a little biography of the man. And then let's talk about him emerging as a theologian that can, in history, legitimately take a second place only to someone like Martin Luther.

McCain: Yeah, it's really interesting. Chemnitz came to Wittenberg as part of his schooling, and he was constantly moving around in his earlier life because of financial difficulties. But he did study at Wittenberg for two years, and actually had a chance, even though at the time he didn't fully appreciate it. Apparently he had the chance to hear Martin Luther lecturing on the book of Genesis at some point. But he was more a student of Philip Melancthon in Wittenberg. But then he went on to the city of Magdeburg for a couple of years, and a couple other cities, and he finally received his Bachelor of Arts degree at Wittenberg between the years 1545 and 1547. During

those years particularly he came under the personal supervision and tutelage of Philip Melancthon. And then he got his Master's of Theology later from Königsberg, and at that point he had kind of an interesting twist in his career. He was hired to be the duke's – the prince of the area – his personal librarian and also teacher to his students and members of the court. So he spent several years doing that, and that was a very key time in his life, because as he writes about it in his own autobiography, those years are so precious to him, because he literally spent hours and hours and hours in the library reading very carefully through all the early church fathers, taking very careful notes on what, I guess, today, we would call notecards. So it was a huge opportunity for him to really grow in his knowledge, and you can see that in all his writings. And then he finally came back to Wittenberg, where he became a member of the Wittenberg faculty in 1554. And then from there, he went on to become a key leader of the church in the Braunschweig, Germany area. And during that time, he became what is known as a superintendent, which is basically just another word for bishop. He became the area supervisor of all the congregation's church workers in the area.

Wilken: So how long was he actually on the faculty, do we know, at Wittenberg? Is that a significant portion of his career?

McCain: No, he was not on very long at all. In fact, he was made a member of the faculty in 1554, and later that same year, he accepted the call to become what's called coadjutor of Braunschweig, just a church supervisory position, with his friend, Joachim Mörlin. And he and his friend Mörlin played a critical role later, trying to bring peace and harmony among feuding Lutherans.

Wilken: Now, he – that feuding part of his career, wherein, after Luther's death – and

we've discussed this in another venue, talking about the Formula of Concord, with which Chemnitz is very strongly associated – give us kind of a thumbnail sketch of what Chemnitz and the other leaders of the Reformation in the second generation were facing from within Lutheran ranks.

McCain: Well, at the death of Martin Luther in 1546, almost immediately there broke out heavy controversies among the Lutherans, and part of the huge problem was at the very same time, there was actually warfare where the Roman Catholic ruler, Charles V, had attacked and defeated the ruler of the area of Wittenberg, John Frederick the Magnanimous, and defeated him in 1547. So there was an enormous amount of controversy politically, socially, and also theologically. Fortunately, Chemnitz kind of came to the intense struggles just a little bit later. You'll notice in his career he didn't really get super involved in these matters until the late 1550s. And by that time, ten, twelve, fifteen years had gone by of intense controversy, and then Chemnitz came on the scene later with his coworker, Mörlin, and they became more involved in trying to work out some of the controversies. Basically, it all came down to the fact that after Luther died, there was no strong leader to follow him. People looked to Philip Melancthon, but Philip Melancthon simply didn't have the personality and character that Luther did. And he, unfortunately, made compromises and allowed statements to stand that were subject to different interpretation. He kind of played fast and loose with the theology of John Calvin on the Lord's Supper, on the nature of free will, and just led to all kinds of controversy. And so there developed, basically, two major parties, called the Philipists, who followed Philip Melancthon, and then a group that came to be known as the Gnesio-Lutherans, which means "genuine Lutherans." And those folks were led by a man named Matthias Flacius. And so this controversy went on for about just roughly 15 years, until

finally Chemnitz rose in more prominence, and he, along with several other key rulers, like Jacob Andreii, were able to approach these issues a little more calmly and go through them a little more systematically and work out things in a very careful manner, which led to the Formula of Concord, of which Chemnitz was the chief editor and author, and then the entire *Book of Concord*, of which Chemnitz was a main editor as well.

Wilken: So how much of Chemnitz do we find in that final document, the Formula of Concord? How much, would you say, are we seeing his fingerprints on the Lutheranism of his day?

McCain: Well, honestly, his fingerprints are all over it, but he was very careful to make sure that everybody involved made a significant contribution. I actually have a book on my shelf that identifies, sentence by sentence, who's responsible for that sentence or paragraph. Chemnitz is in there quite a lot, but so also is Jacob Andreii, Nicholas Selnicker, other people who contributed to the final work on the Formula of Concord. And that was very intentional on Chemnitz's part. He wanted to be a unifier and, a phrase that some used to refer to Chemnitz and others, is "a concordist," a person who wanted harmony. And so I would say Chemnitz very intentionally, even though he took a very prominent leadership role in getting people to agree to the Formula of Concord, when it came to writing it he was very careful to work with other people and make sure their views were heard and included as much as possible.

Wilken: Could you describe, with a minute or so here, the task that he undertook to edit the entire *Book of Concord*? That's a pretty big responsibility, especially considering what they were intending to do by way of that book.

McCain: Sure; well, I don't want to mislead anybody into thinking that Chemnitz was like a one-man operation here. He took it upon himself to serve as kind of the final, general editor, in the sense of guiding, overseeing, making sure documents were put in that were proper, that were the best editions that they thought belonged in the *Book of Concord*, rejecting those that they felt did not – for instance, later editions of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession were rejected. Later versions of the Augsburg Confession itself were rejected. He carefully sought out the edition of the Smalcald Articles that Luther had written in 1537. And then when it came to the Formula of Concord, of course, his role was to make sure that all the notes, all the proceedings, all the decisions that had been made by this smaller committee were finally all incorporated into the book. But again, his chief role was spending a number of years literally traveling around different territories in Germany, getting people to agree to the Formula of Concord, to say, "Okay, this is a good solution; okay, we agree to it." And he and Jacob Andreii, but perhaps even more Chemnitz himself, was finally responsible for getting over 8500 signatures of key pastors, teachers, professors, and political rulers to sign the *Book of Concord* itself.

Wilken: Why was that so important to him and the other second generation Reformers? Not only the idea of "Concordia" – that's what they named the book in the end – but the fact that it really reflected a genuine concord, a genuine assent and common confession?

McCain: Well, the most important reason was because they were so absolutely convinced of the priceless treasure of the rediscovered Gospel. It happened during the life and ministry of Martin Luther, along with all his colleagues. You know, Luther is often hailed as "the Great Reformer," and he was, but there was a great team of people working with him as well. They all

contributed. And Chemnitz was an heir of this great theological rediscovery and this great treasure. He recognized it as such. And he on his own – even though Philip Melancthon was, frankly, a mentor to him and a close friend – finally he had to reject even Philip Melancthon's errors in order to preserve the clarity of the Gospel that had come shining and breaking forth through the Reformation. So that was a reason he wanted harmony. He wanted the controversies that had erupted to be resolved on the basis of clear teachings of Scripture, and a common understanding of what they mean, and again, particularly, how everything is tied back to the comfort of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. And that was Chemnitz's driving passion.

Wilken: It's *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. Today, this Tuesday afternoon, October the 22nd, we're talking about 16th century reformer Martin Chemnitz. Pastor Paul McCain is our guest. When we come back, were they aware that they were actually setting a milestone in history? Stay tuned.

[BREAK]

Wilken: Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* I'm Todd Wilken. We're talking about 16th century reformer, 2nd generation reformer, Martin Chemnitz. Pastor Paul McCain is our guest.

Paul, you were talking about the work that, obviously, Chemnitz didn't do by himself, but did it in concert with many others. When they were editing the *Book of Concord*, when they were compiling it, when they were passing it around for signatures and things like that, were they aware that they were setting a milestone in history, that what they were working on would become what we know of today as *the Lutheran Confessions*?

McCain: Oh, yes. They were very mindful of how important this document, this book would become. That's why they were so careful in how they edited it. Chemnitz basically had to take over some of the editing of the entire book because others kind of goofed it up, for lack of a better way of putting it. And he was very mindful of the fact that they had to do a very careful job because, at the time, the Roman Catholics were accusing the Lutherans of having no set form to any of their confessional documents. They're like, "Well, which one do you mean? Do you mean the one from this year or that year? Who wrote this? Who wrote that? I mean, this was being thrown in their faces by the Roman Catholics, who were making fun of them, saying, "Well, you Lutherans aren't even sure of what you actually believe, teach, and confess." And so that became kind of a motto throughout the Formula of Concord, and kind of caught up with the whole *Book of Concord*, was a very definitive expression of "What we believe, teach, and confess, and because of that, what we must therefore reject and condemn?"

Wilken: It's informative to read both the preface and then the very short ending to that last document, the Formula of Concord. It's kind of a commentary on everything that comes before it. And one of the things that they say there – I don't know if it's Chemnitz who actually says this, but they say, "Look, we accept these documents that come before and the document we're presenting here. Not because our theologians wrote them, but because they teach the clear teachings of Scripture." Why was that so important?

McCain: Well, that's the very point. This was not simply the fact that, well, we liked what Luther said, so we'll copy what Luther said. It was that we are absolutely convinced, and I don't know exactly what you're referring to, but at the end of the entire *Book of Concord*, it's not really part of

the Formula of Concord, and I have an original copy of the *Book of Concord*, and you can actually see in the typography – you turn to the very last page, and there is set in a very prominent typeface the assertion of Chemnitz and his fellow formulators of the Formula of Concord, and they say that these and similar articles and what belonged to them and what follows from them we reject and condemn as wrong, and we hold to these documents. And then they go so far as to say that in the sight of God and all Christendom, the entire church of Christ, we want to testify – now, here is an answer to your question; do they really know what they're doing? "We testify to those now living and those who will come after us that we will stand with intrepid hearts before the judgment seat of Christ with this confession and give an account of it." That's a very serious matter.

Wilken: That's obviously one of the places people will find Martin Chemnitz. But his scholarly work other than that is significant. How would you describe the most significant of his other scholarly works?

McCain: Well, just absolutely enormous. Chemnitz is – even though Philip Melancthon started to do this work of kind of gathering and systematizing the Lutheran theological position on things, Chemnitz came along and took it even further, and is in many ways and many respects the father of Lutheran doctrinal theology. In other words, a careful summary of exactly what it is we believe, teach, and confess. That was part of his personality. He liked to get things in order, get it sorted through, get all kinds of quotes to show who taught what and when, what's right, what's wrong. He was a much more systematic theologian in that regard than Martin Luther was, who was mainly a Biblical exegete. And Luther was so pressed for time that he never had the chance to sit in calm years at the end of his life and say, "Okay, I'm going to summarize everything I've ever taught." He never had

that luxury. Chemnitz had that time; he had that luxury; he had the blessing of being in positions where he had plenty of time to get everything down. So one of his most significant works is the examination of the Council of Trent. After the Council of Trent had met, Chemnitz was able to provide an absolute stellar response to the whole thing. It's in huge volumes, where he goes through point by point by point of the Council of Trent's assertions. And the Council of Trent was the Roman Catholic Church's answer to the Lutheran Reformation. Some people even go so far as to say, and I find myself saying this quite often, that really, what we know today as Roman Catholicism really took its final form at the Council of Trent. That's where Rome had to really lock down on a lot of things that, even until the Reformation, were a bit up in the air. So this response to the Council of Trent is, in many ways, the best response to classic Roman Catholicism that anybody's ever written. So that's probably the most famous work of Martin Chemnitz. But there are many others as well.

WILKEN: I want to mention two others, and then kind of round off a little biography on him. There is, in addition to his *Examination of the Council of Trent*, his work that has come to us today simply as *The Two Natures in Christ*. What was he doing in that work?

McCain: Well, this was a phenomenal work, and it is some heavy stuff. What he's doing is giving a great presentation of the classic doctrine on the two natures in Christ, or Christology. And he did this because Christology, or the doctrine of Christ and understanding how He is true God and true man – one person, two natures – Christology lay at the heart of a lot of controversies with the Calvinists, actually. To my knowledge, the Lutherans never argued with Rome on classic Christology, but it was with Calvinists that they argued, because the Calvinists started to say things

like, "Well, it's impossible according to the two natures in Christ for Jesus to really be present in the Lord's Supper. At His Ascension, the human nature ascended into heaven, and there is where it resides, and that's why it's impossible for it to be present under the bread and wine of the Sacrament." So all of these issues started to come up, and the Lutherans dug back into the early church Christology – and Luther himself had even done this. Interestingly enough, Luther began to appreciate more and more the Greek fathers. They were not as popular in the west as, of course, the Latin fathers. But Chemnitz, of course, was a master of all the church fathers, so he set forth this phenomenal treatise on the two natures in Christ, which, again, to my knowledge, is probably the best Christology ever written by a Protestant theologian. I don't think anybody's outdone Chemnitz yet.

WILKEN: Did he get that knowledge of the fathers from what you mentioned earlier in our conversation, his work as a librarian, being able to, with some time to take, familiarize himself with the writings that came before him?

McCain: Yeah, precisely, Todd. His work on Christology and the way he quotes the church fathers is amazing, and it's precisely because of what he had done in his earlier years. Let me just quote from his autobiography, describing his time when he was forced to spend time in a library – boy, what a horrible thing, huh? He says here, "I now had the most desirable store of the best books in the ducal library, and God governing my course, I devoted myself wholly to the study of theology. And here was my method: first, I read all the Biblical books in their order; I compared all the various versions and expositions, old and new, which were in the library. If I met anything that seemed memorable or remarkable, I made a note of it on paper arranged for this purpose. And then I read the writings of the fathers from the earliest

of years, and what engaged my attention was entered into my notes. And then I read the most recent authors, who pointed out the fundamentals of the purified doctrines” – he’s talking about Luther – “and chiefly those who wrote polemical treatises on the controversies of our times. I read all the arguments of the Papists, the Anabaptists, the Sacramentarians, and from what foundations the explanations and solutions were to be taken. The notes I made of all these things in my memoranda I still have and often inspect carefully with great delight and profit.” So in other words, today we would say he sat in front of a computer and prepared this huge database and mined all these works and pulled out anything he thought was interesting. So this is how he went about his theological task.

WILKEN: Now, that’s an important thing to note here: how he did his theology. And it’s actually something that was modeled later by a man we’ll be talking about later this week, C.F.W. Walther. That sequence of Scripture, the fathers; in the case of Walther, he would then go to the confessions, other theologians. Why is that method so valuable and important even today?

McCAIN: First of all, you begin with the Scriptures. You want to just immerse yourself in Scripture. And you see this as a characteristic of all of these great church fathers. I would hope to model them, but when you read the writings of everybody from St. Augustine to Martin Chemnitz – Martin Luther, Chemnitz, Walther, all these guys – they quote the Scriptures as if they’ve got the whole thing memorized. Now, in some cases, they actually had. So this is just a huge part of their mind and heart, and then they’re able to read all the other writings with profit and understand in them, “Well, that’s in line with Scripture; that’s not quite right; boy, that’s a great way of explaining it.” So they’re able to cherry-pick the very best of all these writings. So it

is interesting how often great theologians have some experience like Chemnitz, where they are allowed to sit and study and study and study. Walther had the experience of being sick for a long time, and that’s when he read a lot of Martin Luther and basically was converted to Christianity.

WILKEN: When we come back, we’re going to spend some more time talking with Pastor Paul McCain on this *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. It’s the 16th century reformer Martin Chemnitz. When we come back, he has another work – he actually has several other works that we’ll talk about. But the one that has come down to us with the simple title, *The Lord’s Supper*, translated by the late J.A.O. Preus. What were Chemnitz’s concerns when he wrote this doctrinal essay? We’ll find out right after this.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: Welcome back. I’m Todd Wilken. This is *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. Today on this Tuesday afternoon, October the 22nd, we’re talking about 16th century reformer Martin Chemnitz. Pastor Paul McCain is our guest: Publisher and Executive Director of Editorial for Concordia Publishing House based in St. Louis, and he’s General Editor of *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*.

Returning to the subject of his works, there are several more that I want to talk about: this one on the Lord’s Supper and then also his church orders from Braunschweig. The one on the Lord’s Supper, it’s come down to us in a book translated by the late J.A.O. Preus III, and he brings us kind of a doctrinal essay on the Lord’s Supper. What were Chemnitz’s concerns here?

McCAIN: Well, again, he was right in the thick of the debates between a group who had taken over Wittenberg, ironically, rightly called “the Crypto-Calvinists.” They were trying to slip in the teaching of John Calvin,

and sadly, Melanchthon was part of this. He's the one who started it, and his students took it even further. Sadly, and you can imagine what a tense meeting this must have been – Chemnitz and his colleague Mörlin personally went to see Philip Melanchthon, to try to get him to be honest about his position on Calvinism, to refute what had been said falsely about the Lord's Supper. And it was a pretty unpleasant meeting. They both went away very sad because Melanchthon simply got all defensive and basically refused to acknowledge any error. But can you imagine the students of this great man having to go to him and say, "Master Philip, we're very troubled by these statements." So actually, this book that Chemnitz wrote was one of many documents that he had written on the Lord's Supper, but this particular edition we have is the best version of the series of sermons he gave, of other previous books he had written. And this was kind of the culmination of it. It's a fantastic book on the Lord's Supper, and again, I have to say, I would challenge anybody to find a better book on the Lord's Supper. I would say this book by Martin Chemnitz, combined with Hermann Sasse's book, *This is Written* on the Lord's Supper; if you read those two books on the writings of Martin Luther on the Lord's Supper, you'll basically be set for life and will be able to evaluate everything clearly.

WILKEN: Now, you mentioned that he was a supervisor, or we would say a bishop today, in Braunschweig, Germany. How would you describe his responsibilities, the tasks that he undertook in that capacity?

McCain: Well, it's interesting – at the time of the Reformation, the Lutheran Confessions acknowledged that there can be bishops. And they even say, "We'd be happy to continue the historic practice of the office of bishop, as long as they allow the Gospel, as long as they don't assert powers that are not given, blah, blah, blah. And

ironically, there was really only one bishop in Germany after the Reformation. His name was Nicolaus Amsdorf. He was personally consecrated by Martin Luther. Luther didn't even like the idea of making a bishop. But as a favor to his prince, who wanted Amsdorf to be a bishop, he went ahead and consecrated Amsdorf to be bishop. That was kind of the last time we had a bishop in Germany, until the era of Liberalism and Rationalism, when everybody's all gaga about bishops – so I'm talking about 19th century/20th century stuff like that. But in Germany – this is not true in Scandinavia, by the way, which retained bishops – but throughout Germany, the system of consistories developed, which consisted of clergy – learned clergy and learned laity, and those were appointed usually by the local prince, and that's kind of the bad news. The local prince appointed a supervisor, and they were given that title. The word "supervisor" is almost a literal translation of the Greek word "overseer," which is "episkopos," from which we get the word "episcopal bishop." It's kind of ironic. But at any rate, it was a de facto bishop position, and their job was to literally supervise or oversee all the activities of the clergy, the teachers, the catechists, people who were living who were still at the time consecrated – what we would call nuns and monks, actually. They hadn't quite left some of the facilities. All the local congregations, all the systems of welfare, the church took care of the poor, and each of these areas had what was called a church order. And Chemnitz prepared a church order for the territory of Braunschweig, Wolfenbüttel, which is what it is today. And in fact, Matthew Harrison has translated with some other people this church order. We're going to add it to the extensive collection of his writings that we've translated into English. It's very interesting how detailed, down to the supervision of precisely what the clergy will preach on, what they will teach, how they will teach, how they will preach. I think most American Lutheran pastors, no matter

how conservative they are, would rebel at the degree of supervision that they were under.

WILKEN: So we have a window into what life in the earliest, at least in Braunschweig, what life in the early Lutheran congregations was like, and how Chemnitz thought it ought to be conducted through these church orders.

McCain: Absolutely. I should say, one church order is not vastly different from the next. For lack of a better illustration, it's not like, "Well, Braunschweig was into historic liturgy, but Saxony was into the praise bands." It wasn't anything like that. They were all very unified in liturgy and doctrine, and they saw those things mutually supporting one another, and as a very beneficial thing. And again, the key was unity. In other words, there might be a pastor in the Braunschweig area who, if he had his druthers, would burn incense at every church service, but he was not allowed to do that because that was not the common practice. They gave up personal liberties; they realized that they had to subsume their personal opinions for the sake of harmony amongst one another when it comes to matters of adiaphora. In other words, it's good to agree to do the same thing the same way for the sake of order in the church, to provide for a very clear way of teaching the Gospel, so that ultimately everybody's on the same page. Now, in Chemnitz's day, that was very literally the case. They were on the same page. In fact, Chemnitz wrote a book to be used to interview pastors once a year, and if a man could not answer the questions correctly, he was coached a little bit, but if he still couldn't do it, he was dismissed. There was just no playing around in those days.

WILKEN: How often?

McCain: I think it was once a year they tried to make the rounds and make sure

these guys were still properly aware of their doctrine and were able to explain doctrine carefully.

WILKEN: Is this also a picture – in particular, the church orders upon which Chemnitz had a direct influence – is it a picture of how at least Martin Chemnitz thought the Reformation that is kind of codified in the Lutheran Confessions ought to be practiced, ought to be put into action?

McCain: Yeah, and that is a brilliant point. Often times, when we today read the *Book of Concord* and read things; for instance, in Article 10 of the Formula on Adiaphora, where it says, "Well, one church can do it one way, one church can do it the other way; it doesn't really matter." I've heard people almost take those words to that extreme; I know you have, too, Todd. That in no way reflects the reality of what they meant by those words. When they say "churches", they don't mean individual congregations, they don't mean "St. Martini's in Braunschweig will do this," and then the congregation which is literally about 500 yards away – I've been there – was going to do something totally different. That's not what they meant. When they say "churches," they mean regional, territorial churches. For instance, in Saxony, they might not use all as often, or all the time, the full historic vestments of the church. Now, the pastors were vested, but maybe they didn't retain all the same ceremonies. Maybe they didn't continue to use, oh, liturgical napkins when they distributed the Lord's Supper. In my opinion, that's the kind of liturgical minutiae they were saying doesn't matter at the end. "As long as we're all doing it the same way in this territory, that's fine." It might not be exactly what they're doing up in Braunschweig, but it wasn't as if Braunschweig was using a liturgy and the Saxons were just freestyling it every Sunday. It was so far from their understanding, it kind of boggles the mind.

WILKEN: Can you give us just kind of a brief picture of what it would have looked like on a Sunday morning, in Braunschweig, with Martin Chemnitz as the bishop or the supervisor. What would that Sunday morning have looked like?

McCain: Well, I think we would complain a lot, because the services were very long. First of all, they always had the Lord's Supper as their chief service of the day. Generally, Sunday would start with Matins, and then you would have the chief Divine Service – the "hauptgottesdienst" – for the day, and that was, let's just say around 10 or 11. That would take them into the noontime. They would probably go home for lunch, and then they would have Vespers at the end of the day. If it was a festival of some kind, for instance, Easter or Christmas, the services would just come one after another, and they would go for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, the first day after Christmas, the second day after Christmas, the third day after Christmas, Pentecost Monday – which is still a holiday in Germany, by the way – these festivals would go on for days. So there was just a whole lot more church going on. And the sermons were very long – they were 45 minutes to an hour. The sermons were just very different. I would say they were almost a combination between a doctrinal Bible class and a sermon. They didn't break for small group Bible study or Bible classes; they would just go to church. You could be there for two hours. And this continued throughout all parts of Germany, well up into the days of J.S. Bach, where we know what liturgical life was like in Leipzig, which was part of Saxony. The vestments would look very Roman Catholic to us. Everything was chanted, everything was sung. Honestly, it would be very hard for an outsider coming in for the first time to distinguish a Lutheran Divine Service from a Roman Catholic service, if they didn't understand the doctrine and look for some real key indicators – sermons were very long and

doctrinal, very Gospel-focused, and the Lord's Supper was conducted differently; there was no sacrifice of the mass and so forth. People were receiving the elements in both kinds. There were a lot of people taking communion, which wasn't the case in many Roman parishes; not many people took the sacrament. If the priest took it, that was good enough; we're spectators, blah, blah, blah. But other than that, it looked very similar to what one would typically expect in a Western Catholic church service.

WILKEN: When we come back, we'll spend some more time with Pastor Paul McCain. We'll talk a little bit more about Martin Chemnitz's theological method. It seems a little antiquated to us today, but in fact, Pastor McCain wants to make the case that Chemnitz's theological method, his approach to how you do theology, beginning with Holy Scripture, is very relevant today.

I'm Todd Wilken; this is *Issues, Etc.* Stay tuned.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: We have about 10 more minutes with Pastor Paul McCain of Concordia Publishing House. Day 2 of *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. We're talking about the second Martin after Martin Luther, 16th century reformer Martin Chemnitz.

Paul, let's return to the subject we were discussing briefly before, and that is Chemnitz's theological method. Why is it as important today as when he was plying it himself?

McCain: Well, again, because it's so clear, it's so Biblical, it's very easy to follow and read. That's not to say it's easy to understand, because he does use the formal language of theology, and one has to be aware of some of these things. But Chemnitz just does a wonderful job of laying out in a very systematic fashion the key teachings of the Lutheran Reformation. And

again, that's why he earned the begrudging compliment that he was the second Martin. If he hadn't come along and struggled for the truths that Martin Luther had struggled for, they would not have stood. In other words, if the second Martin had not come, the first Martin would not have stood. The Roman Catholics surely recognized this, and we do as well.

WILKEN: That signal work of his, *The Examination of the Council of Trent* – that council was, in fact, in some ways, the council that the earlier reformers had hoped for when they first approached both Pope and Emperor with the Augsburg Confession. Of course, it certainly didn't turn out to be the council they wanted, but they did get a council of sorts, didn't they?

McCAIN: Yes, it's very interesting how long it actually took. The Council of Trent actually started in 1545, but then it didn't pick up again until 1563. Martin Luther wrote the Smalcald Articles in 1537 because in that year, everybody was convinced the Pope was just about to call a council. They kept being promised there would be a general council to hash all this stuff through. But it took decades for it to happen. By the time it finally happened, there was nothing ecumenical about it; it was simply a gathering of the Roman Catholic leadership in Western Europe. But it set in stone the Catholic doctrines on many things that even until that point had been a little bit up in the air.

WILKEN: Now, what was Chemnitz's take on that? Did he understand the Council of Trent kind of the way we do today, which was the counter-reformation, a response mostly to Lutherans, but also to the Reformation itself? Did he understand the Council of Trent that way?

McCAIN: Yeah, Martin Luther, like everybody else in his day, clearly understood what was going on at the Council of Trent. This was Rome's definitive

response to the Reformation; particularly to the theology of Martin Luther, but also to the Calvinists. So Trent solidified everything, and the work of the counter-Reformation, we have to concede, was extremely successful. Huge pockets of Reformation theology, clergy, people, congregations, they were wiped away in France and in Spain, and even in Italy, if you can imagine it. There was a pretty strong pocket of Lutheranism in Italy; even some Roman Catholic bishops and Cardinals had become, basically, de facto Lutherans. All of this was wiped out by the Council of Trent and the counter-Reformation, led by the Jesuits, that took place at the same time.

WILKEN: Did Chemnitz recognize that something had effectively changed with the Roman Catholic counterparts, with the Council of Trent – you said it kind of ossifies Tridentine, medieval Roman Catholicism, sets it in stone, and it has been that way ever since. Did he recognize, "Look, they've actually shifted the teachings of the historic church to respond to us?"

McCAIN: Chemnitz realized that the Council of Trent basically set in stone every last questionable or controversial doctrine in the Roman Church. For instance, up until the Council of Trent, there was still a pretty strong movement that perhaps the Pope's power shouldn't be as much as it is; it should be more a matter of a collegial, conciliar approach, with the group of bishops all ruling and governing the church together. But Trent locked down the absolute authority of the Pope, no questions asked. Not that there was much question before, but it made it a matter of saving doctrine, and on many other points. So Chemnitz realized that there was absolutely no hope whatsoever that the Lutherans would ever be able to get their points across in the Roman Catholic Church. That was just painfully obvious.

WILKEN: In his response to the Council of Trent – because the Council of Trent uses formal theological language, where they anathematize the various teachings and teachers of things like justification by grace through faith, for Christ’s sake alone. Respond in kind – does he anathematize right back at them when he responds?

McCain: He’s blunt, but again, Chemnitz is just more of a calm personality. When you read Martin Chemnitz, if you’re used to reading Martin Luther, you’re not going to find these soaring flashes of rhetoric, or exciting phrases. Chemnitz is, frankly, a little more plodding, a little more slow, a little more deliberate. I said off-air to Jeff, I think he’s just a tad more boring than Martin Luther. But the point is, he is so clear. And what he does is he painstakingly dismantles the Roman position with Scripture, with appeal to the church fathers, by citing other Roman teachers, showing how they’re contradicting themselves. So it’s just a very careful approach.

WILKEN: Some have suggested, and it’s really no surprise that they do, but especially in the liberal wing of Lutheranism, that Martin Chemnitz represents a step beyond where Luther himself would have gone, that he kind of turned Lutheranism into something that Luther never would have wanted it to be. How do you respond to that?

McCain: Well, the short response is, that’s a bunch of baloney. The second, more careful, response is simply, you can only say that if you have not carefully read the writings of Martin Luther himself. Everybody likes young Luther, but once you get past about 1520, 1530, then Luther starts himself writing dogmatic treatises on many points of doctrine, saying, “This is what we cannot compromise; this is what we will not compromise.” Chemnitz is just a faithful student of Martin Luther. That’s just a matter of honesty. Those are just sound bites that

liberal Lutherans use to basically reject even the solid theology of Martin Luther.

WILKEN: On a previous anniversary of the Reformation, back in the late ‘90s, there was the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by both the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation. There was a headline just yesterday from the *Vatican Insider* – the Pope calls for mutual forgiveness between Catholics and Lutherans, but it’s really about another meeting, ecumenical meeting, between the Lutheran World Federation and representatives of Catholicism. They’re going on the assumption that they don’t disagree on things like justification anymore. If Martin Chemnitz were alive today to read these headlines, or to read the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, how do you think he would respond?

McCain: I think he would say about the Roman Catholic Church, “I can’t fault them; they’re being true to what they believe. But by golly, I’m gonna fault these so-called Lutherans who have compromised so much of the doctrine of the Lutheran Church.” I think he would be irate to see what the Lutherans have done with the Lutheran Reformation, and even the Pope himself, I thought, in the statement he gave to the representatives of the Lutheran World Federation that he met with on October 21st, just this week – he didn’t say anything too radical. All he said was, “It seems important to me that we all confront one another in dialogue on the historical necessity of the Reformation, on its consequences, on the answers that have been given to it. And we can ask forgiveness for the evil caused to one another, and for the offenses committed before God.” I would say amen to that. I don’t find anything to disagree with what Pope Francis said there. But Francis was very careful not to say, “Well, of course, now we are going to compromise everything we’ve stood for for 500 years.” The

Lutherans are the ones doing that, not the Roman Catholic Church.

WILKEN: With only about a minute, what's the best thing to remember about this Lutheran confessor during this Reformation Week, Martin Chemnitz? About a minute.

McCain: His passion for faithfulness and for faithful proclamation of the Gospel, for his teaching it clearly to people, making sure that pastors and those responsible for handing on the Christian faith in our congregations are doing so very faithfully. And again, his passion, as was the passion of all the Lutheran reformers: to make sure that the comfort of the troubled consciences comes through in every doctrine taught. Namely, the good news that Jesus Christ is the Savior, the one who forgives your sins, the one who wins you a place in heaven and will be with you throughout your life. That was Chemnitz's passion.

WILKEN: Pastor Paul McCain is Publisher and Executive Director of Editorial for Concordia Publishing House, based in St. Louis. He's General Editor of *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*. Paul, thanks for being our guest.

McCain: My pleasure, Todd.

WILKEN: *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week continues tomorrow. We're going to talk with Dr. Ben Mayes of Concordia Publishing House about the most influential Lutheran theologian of the 17th century. You know his name; you'll find out more tomorrow: Johann Gerhardt. Thursday, C.F.W. Walther with Dr. Larry Rast, and on Friday, Pastor Matt Harrison, President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, will introduce us to a 20th century Lutheran confessor, Hermann Sasse.

I think it's quite true, because Luther never would have said, "The work is done." The first Martin did not consider his work done when he finally breathed his last, but he knew that what he was leaving, he was leaving to posterity, even to the second generation. And this is how it always is: the Gospel is observed generation by generation, by the faithful who receive it and who pass it on to the next. Such is Martin Chemnitz, the second Martin.

I'm Todd Wilken; I'll talk with you tomorrow. Thanks for listening to *Issues, Etc.*

