



*Journal of  
Religion & Society*  
Supplement Series

---

**The Kripke Center**

**Supplement 18 (2019)**

---

## Religion and Reform

Edited by Ronald A. Simkins and Zachary B. Smith

### 2. Failed Expectations

#### The Protestant Reformation and the Orthodox Church

Nicolae Roddy, Creighton University

##### Abstract

During the latter half of the sixteenth century, a handful of Tübingen theologians initiated informal correspondence with the ecumenical patriarch of the Orthodox Church, Jeremias II of Constantinople, in which they expressed the hope and expectation that he would acknowledge the orthodoxy of Lutheran faith and practice. Jeremias's response was gracious, but uncompromising in its assertion that the only way a Christian could be considered truly orthodox would be to receive chrismation and enter into the sacramental life of the Orthodox Church. The Lutheran theologians stepped up their defense on the basis of their vast knowledge and understanding of scripture and patristics, only to be met by more of the same from Constantinople. Tensions increased with each exchange as conciliatory overtures melted away to reveal each side's defining, non-negotiable core position. Upon delivering a delayed third response, the Patriarch invited the Lutherans to remain in contact, but admonished them never again to raise doctrinal matters with the Orthodox Church. This paper provides the historical backdrop for the main issues that continue to plague Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue to the present day.

Keywords: Protestant Reformation; Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue; Augsburg Confession; Jeremias II; Tübingen

## **Introduction**

Conversations over the Protestant Reformation rarely include mention of the Eastern Orthodox Church, albeit for a few very good reasons. First, Orthodox Christians lived at some remove from the arena in which this monumental European historical event played out. Second, Orthodox ecclesiology, based on the monarchical episcopacy model for which Ignatius of Antioch campaigned on his way to martyrdom (Roddy), provided greater institutional flexibility than the hierarchically rigid Frankish papacy, making it somewhat impervious to the causes and effects of western reform efforts. Finally, while the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople enjoyed certain privileges and powers over Christians living under Ottoman imperial rule, he and his flock – the Russian Orthodox Church excepted – were all but socially, culturally, and ecumenically isolated from European life (see Orstrogorsky; Pelikan).

Despite the factors that eclipsed Orthodox Christianity from the West, there were occasional moments of contact that at least opened the possibility of adding a third dimension to the polemic between Catholics and Protestants – moments in which an enlightened patriarch looked westward across the Bosphoros for opportunities to become better acquainted with other Christians and perhaps build upon commonalities that might serve the cause of Christian unity. On the few occasions that this happened, there was always a handful of prominent Lutheran theologians poised to reciprocate. Although these intermittent exchanges produced no lasting communal alliances, an analysis of the divergences that resulted from these mutually failed expectations is worth attention.

### **First Contact (1558-1559)**

Martin Luther is known to have expressed great admiration for “die grieschische Kirche.” He praised the doctrines of the Orthodox Church in the Leipzig debates (1519) and referred to its adherents as “the most Christian of all people” and “the best followers of the gospel on earth” (61). It is stating the obvious to observe that Luther’s lavish praise was not based on any actual experience with real Orthodox persons but reflected an idealized desire to garner support for his movement. However, occupied as he was by more immediate concerns, Luther seems never to have made any direct overtures toward the Orthodox Church for support.

Like most western Christians of his time, Luther possessed very little knowledge about the faith and practice of the Orthodox Church, eclipsed as it was by the Ottoman Empire.<sup>1</sup> What interested them most was the fact that Orthodox bishops had been resisting papal authority in matters of ecclesiology, theology, doctrine, and liturgy since at least the rise of Charlemagne. The Council of Constantinople (879-880), celebrated by some among the Orthodox as the Eighth Ecumenical Council, had officially condemned papal claims to universal authority and anathematized anyone who recited the Niceno-Constantinopolitan

---

<sup>1</sup> Apparently, Melancthon was surprised to learn that following a century of Ottoman domination the church at Constantinople was still viable.

creed with the filioque, an interpolation to the symbol of faith that will be discussed below.<sup>2</sup> With this resistance in mind, Luther and his followers assumed that even under Ottoman domination the Orthodox Church had preserved an original, more authentic expression of Christianity; thus, they would likely be allies in the Protestant reformers' opposition to the papacy (Runciman: 239). The problem was how to go about establishing contact with what Runciman called the "great church in captivity."

Twelve years after Luther's death, in 1558, such an opportunity arose. An elderly Serbian deacon from Montenegro, Demetrios Mysos, arrived in Wittenberg and began gathering information about the rapidly growing religious movement that had polarized central and western Europe. Almost immediately, Mysos made the acquaintance of Philip Melancthon, intellectual leader and systematic theologian of the Lutheran movement, and a cordial friendship ensued. Extending warm hospitality during the deacon's six-month sojourn at Wittenburg, Melancthon set out at once to produce a Greek version of the *Confessio Augustana*.<sup>3</sup> Although his facility with biblical and Patristic Greek was impeccable, Melancthon apparently had some linguistic guidance from Mysos, evidenced by the fact that the translation reflects the Constantinopolitan Greek idiom of the day and appears to accommodate Orthodox understandings of key theological terms and concepts (Florovsky: 149). In order to achieve this, liberties were apparently taken, which have led some scholars to regard the *Confessio Augustana Graeca* as a version of the Augsburg Confession rather than an actual translation (Stuckwisch: 18). At any rate, the work was accompanied by a personal letter from Melancthon, in which he expressed the conviction that Lutherans had much in common with the Orthodox.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, no one knows how Patriarch Joasaph II would have responded to the *Confessio Graeca* since there is no record of him having ever received it. Runciman (246) and Karmires (Mastroantonis: 246) assert that the *Confessio* was delivered to Constantinople, but that the Patriarch and his theologians found it grossly heterodox and in good Byzantine fashion simply chose to ignore it in order to avoid shaming the sender. By contrast, Ernst Benz traces Mysos's journey directly to the Romanian principality of Moldavia, where he came to serve the reform-minded Prince Jakob Basilikos Heraclides. At any rate, it appears almost certain that the *Confessio Graeca* was not delivered to Constantinople at that time. What is worse, Melancthon died in April of the following year (1560), ensuring that his initial attempt to cultivate relations with the Orthodox Church would fail at launch.

---

<sup>2</sup> One may add to this the Orthodox anathemas pronounced against the Byzantine delegation at the Council of Union at Ferrara-Fierenza (1438-45). This council, which was largely a formal appeal on the part of Byzantine emperor John VIII Paleologos and Patriarch Joseph II to secure papal forces against the encroaching Ottoman Turks, included roughly 700 delegates, among them some twenty Greek metropolitans. While the Greek leaders of the delegation signed an agreement acknowledging universal papal jurisdiction, its subsequent rejection by the majority of the Orthodox East demonstrated general willingness on the part of Orthodox Christians to die at the hands of the Ottoman Turks rather than submit to the authority of the Frankish papacy.

<sup>3</sup> The *Augustana Graeca* itself attributes its publication to Paul Dolscius of Plauen, but most scholars are in agreement that the work was produced by Melancthon.

<sup>4</sup> Melancthon's letter, which can be found in Benz (94ff), avoids matters of doctrine.

## Second Contact (1573-1582)

Some fourteen years later, in 1573, Lutheran theologians at the University of Tübingen sought to revive Melancthon's dialogue with the Orthodox East. It was an opportune moment for them, occasioned by the recent installment of Patriarch Jeremias II (Tranos), who was an outspoken, reform-minded monastic so controversial and ecumenically minded that he would be deposed and reinstated twice during the course of his tumultuous career.<sup>5</sup> Jeremias's favorable regard for the newly installed Pope Gregory XIII, of Gregorian calendar fame, may have stoked the Lutherans' sense of urgency in appealing to the Patriarchate for support. At any rate, this renewed contact was initiated by Tübingen theologian Stephen Gerlach, who in 1573 traveled to Constantinople to serve as chaplain for the new imperial ambassador, Baron David Ungnad von Sonnegg (Runciman: 247-48; Florovsky: 145). Gerlach delivered a polite and laudatory introductory letter to Patriarch Jeremias II on behalf of Tübingen's chancellor, Jakob Andreae, professor of theology, and his colleague, Martin Crusius, professor of classical languages. Their correspondence received a timely and equally cordial reply, thus encouraging them to make further contact.<sup>6</sup> On September 16<sup>th</sup> of the following year, they sent a copy of the *Confessio Augustana Graeca* (with Melancthon's letter), along with a deferential letter inviting the patriarch to confirm whether or not the tenets of the Lutheran faith were in accord with the teachings of the Orthodox Church.

Again, the Tübingen professors did not have to wait long for a response. The patriarch's timely reply appears not to have survived, but its contents may be reconstructed on the basis of the Lutheran rejoinder, sent March 20, 1575, in which their reverential, self-effacing approach continues, iterating the hope and expectation that their expression of the Christian faith, stripped of all papal innovation, would be recognizable to the patriarch as the faith of the apostles, prophets, and church fathers. They acknowledged that any differences apart from matters of salvation could be attributed to matters of local culture and custom, separated as they were by the vast geographical distance between them. What is noticeably absent from their letter is any indication that Patriarch Jeremias had yet offered comment on the contents of the *Confessio Augustana*, likely due to the fact that more time would be needed to draft any comprehensive assessment of it. Indeed, such would soon be forthcoming. This fact becomes even more important in the later correspondence from the patriarch, in which excuses are made and forgiveness asked for delayed responses of theological substance, likely indicative of growing Orthodox frustration with the Lutherans over persistent matters of disagreement.

---

<sup>5</sup> Patriarch Jeremias II was initially installed in 1572. He was deposed and anathematized in 1579, largely as a result of his positive interaction with Pope Gregory XIII, but he was restored to the throne the following year. Four years later a number of influential monks had him arrested, beaten, tried before an ecclesiastical court, where he was deposed and exiled to Rhodes. Jeremias was re-instated yet again, after which he traveled to Russia and elevated the Metropolitan Job of Moscow to the status of patriarch (1589), opening the way for autocephaly for the Russian Orthodox Church. Jeremias served until his death in 1595.

<sup>6</sup> Although Andreae and Crusius were the leading instigators of the exchange, other signatories included Lukas Osiander, Jakob Heerbrand, Eberhard Bidembach, Johannes Mageirus, Theodore Schnepf, Stephen Gerlach, Johannes Brent, Gulielmus Holderer, and Johannes Schoppf (Stuckwisch: 24 n. 4).

### First Answer

After exchanging a few letters, in which Jeremias critiques two sermons submitted by Andreae and Crusius, the patriarch sends his first concerted response to the *Confessio Augustana Graeeca* on May 15, 1576. Accompanied by a brief personal letter in which he praises the Lutherans for desiring to restore right doctrine in their part of the world, the patriarch addresses each article of the *Confessio Graeeca* in a firm, yet conciliatory manner; however, as Florovsky observes, “it was not so much an analysis of the *Augustana* itself, as a parallel exposition of the Orthodox doctrine” (150). For example, in his response to the first article, on the nature of God, the patriarch affirms the Lutheran teaching insofar as it is rooted in the doctrine of Nicaea and simply restates the tenets of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed without directly referring to the longstanding issue of the filioque.<sup>7</sup> Although he addresses each article, it appears the patriarch is being selective in what he chooses specifically to address. Responding to the second article, the patriarch appears to all but overlook the Lutherans’ affirmation of original sin, even though the West’s distinctively Augustinian understanding of the doctrine is foreign (albeit not heretical) to traditional Orthodox theological anthropology. Orthodox tradition acknowledges cosmic ramifications resulting from humankind’s sin in failing to fulfill the image according to God’s likeness (Genesis 1:26-27), including the invitation of death into the world (Romans 5:12-14; Wisdom of Solomon 1:12-16). However, the Orthodox affirmation of natural, created grace and freedom in the human person, rooted in the Septuagint translation of image and likeness (εἰκὼν καὶ ὁμοίωσις) in Genesis 1:26-27 (also 5:1-3; 9:6) and developed in Patristic sources,<sup>8</sup> does not comport with the Augustinian notion that humans are born a priori guilty of sin. For the Orthodox, being created in the image of God means that humans are inherently endowed with reason and self-determination, which can be exercised in eternal movement toward God (likeness). The extent to which the patriarch was consciously ignoring this significant theological and anthropological difference is not apparent. At any rate, the commentary abruptly shifts to the proper way (according to the patriarch) to administer baptism – triple immersion as opposed to single – and reasserts the Orthodox position on how and when chrismation should be performed.<sup>9</sup>

The patriarch’s response to the third article, which deals with justification by faith alone, the cornerstone of Lutheran theology, is perhaps most significant as it remains the primary reason for the failure of Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue then and now. In his response, Patriarch Jeremias II cites Basil (and others) for the purpose of illustrating the traditional understanding

---

<sup>7</sup> Filioque, which is Latin for “and the Son,” refers to the Frankish interpolation of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed that affirms the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father *and the Son* (*et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem qui ex Patre [Filioque] procedit*). The interpolation can be traced to the efforts of Cluniac missionaries encountering Arian Christians in sixth-century Spain, who endeavored to bolster the divinity of Christ by equating the Son with the Father. The East objected on the grounds that it altered orthodox understanding of the Trinity, and that its eventual profession in Rome had been advanced without ecumenical consideration. See Webber for the traditional Lutheran take on this issue.

<sup>8</sup> For image and likeness (εἰκὼν καὶ ὁμοίωσις) in Patristic sources, see Irenaeus: 544. Unfortunately, Origen’s commentary on the early chapters of Genesis is no longer extant, but traces of his biblical anthropology may be found in other writings, most notably his *Homilies on Jeremiah* and his writings against Celsus (see Jacobsen).

<sup>9</sup> Chrismation – anointing with holy oil – seals the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the baptized initiate, corresponding to the sacrament of confirmation in the western church.

of the *synergeia* that exists in the simultaneous reciprocity of interaction between God's grace and the human recipient's response, a concept that earns western contempt for its confusion with a kind of semi-Pelagianism. However, the real issue is less rooted in theologoumena than the practical role tradition plays in their respective soteriologies. From an Orthodox perspective, Luther's doctrine of justification by faith seems innovative and out of balance with sacred tradition. For the Lutherans, Orthodox anthropology and its concomitant affirmation of inherent, natural grace, upon which its particular understanding of theosis (or deification) is based, is alien to the soteriology of sola fide. At the point where the exchange moves toward justifying the opposing views on the basis of the Bible, it becomes clear that differences in matters of soteriology intersect with disagreement over the relationship between scripture and tradition. Both acknowledge that scripture has its origins in church tradition, but the question arises over whether scripture is the ultimate authority in judging and reforming tradition, or rightly interpreted within tradition and in support of it. While both soteriological positions can be supported by scripture and patristic sources, the Lutheran position tends to give greater weight to the former, while the Orthodox position favors the latter.

The divergence in position over the authority of scripture and tradition overshadows all the points in which Lutherans and the Orthodox were in basic agreement, including the nature of God, conciliar formulations regarding christology and Trinity, affirming Christ's real presence in the Eucharist with both species made available to communicants, the affirmation of the second coming of Christ, the afterlife, clergy marriage, and others. The divergence over the relationship between scripture and tradition becomes even more polarized in the later cycle of correspondence, where charitable agreement and good-faith compromise gives way to grittier points of disagreement.

The turning point for this begins with the Lutheran rejoinder to the patriarch's first answer, dispatched in June 1577, which opens with an affirmation of the authority of scripture in light of sacred tradition. Freely quoting Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom in defense of the complete authority of scripture, the Lutherans express concerns over the dangers of innovation – that is, the human production of beliefs and practices absent from, or contrary to the words of scripture – comparing it to clear waters from a fountain becoming tainted by passing through a channel of reddish-brown earth (Mastrantonis: 114). The letter states, “Therefore, no better way could ever be found to interpret the Scriptures, other than that Scripture be interpreted by Scripture.”<sup>10</sup> It states further that Christians living before the Patristic age were in no way impoverished in their knowledge of truth; likewise, words and concepts produced by the Church Fathers, as well as the Seven Ecumenical Councils, are affirmed as truth insofar as they can be logically deduced from scripture:

Thus, concerning the Son of God, we gladly accept the word *homoousion*, even though this word is not found in the sacred books. Moreover, we accept it not because it is found or ratified by the Synod in Nicaea, but because the sense of this word is expressed in many places in the Scriptures wherever there is a reference to the eternal divinity of the Son, much as this same Synod, being

---

<sup>10</sup> All quotations from the correspondence between the Tübingen theologians and Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople are taken from Mastrantonis.

motivated by the Holy Scriptures, held the Arians in check with this adopted term (Mastrantonis: 117).

It is on this basis that the Lutheran theologians launch their finer arguments, beginning with the aforementioned issue of the filioque.

In light of Lutheran theologians' concerns over ecclesiastical innovation, it is interesting to consider their justification for retaining the filioque. Their argument begins with an assertion that the purpose of Nicaea was to refute Arius regarding the eternal divine begetting of the Son, not to formulate a complete doctrine of the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, despite the promulgation of the interpolated version of the creed in Frankish Rome, the Lutherans affirmed that it would be pointless and wrong to abandon the filioque given their view that the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son is affirmed in scripture. Quoting John 15:26 and 16:14, the Lutheran theologians write: "If indeed the Son sends the Paraclete, and the Paraclete is sent by the Son, how does he not proceed from the Son by whom he is sent?" (Mastrantonis: 118).

Historically, the Orthodox Church has objected to the interpolation on two grounds: 1) that it confuses the hypostatic properties of the Holy Trinity, confusing the monarchic view that preserves the hypostatic property of the Father as Ground of Being for the eternal begetting of the Son and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit, so that affirming a double procession of the Spirit subjects the Spirit to the other two Persons of the Trinity; and, 2) that the interpolation to this fundamental symbol of faith was introduced in Rome by Frankish bishops without having consulted bishops from the rest of Christendom. Since then, centuries of debate have ensued over how the two positions might be reconciled. At the risk of oversimplification, the Lutheran position (so, too, the Vatican's, albeit for different reasons)<sup>11</sup> acknowledges that the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed was in fact interpolated, but they remain convinced that the formulation is justified by scripture and that they are therefore obliged to maintain it. Despite the intransigence, it is clear that the filioque is not a major theological issue for Lutherans, especially since it was something they were already well accustomed to; moreover, it had not been a point of contention with Rome. While ostensibly open to both Lutheran and Catholic arguments in defense of the filioque, the Orthodox find the Lutheran defense theologically unclear and expect the symbol of faith to be recited in its original form, thus preserving the monarchical model of the Holy Trinity. Specifically, the Orthodox accuse the Lutherans of failing to differentiate between "sending" (as in Christ's affirmation that he will send the Paraclete) and "proceeding," which as a hypostatic operation of God the Father as Ground of Being for the other two Persons of the Trinity, based on scriptural texts such as John 14:26. The Lutheran reasoning that "If the Spirit is sent by the Son, then it follows that the Spirit also proceeds from him," is rejected by the Orthodox as illogical and erroneous based on a lack of theological precision and failing to differentiate between the divine essence (or substance, *ousia*) and the Triune God's divine operation (or energies, to use the Palamite term) – a distinction made neither by Catholics or Lutherans. At any rate, both sides base their respective positions on ample scriptural and patristic texts and each charges the other with misinterpretation of these sources. While a great deal of ink has

---

<sup>11</sup> For example, John-Paul II's *Dominus Iesu* confesses the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed without the filioque.

been spilt on how to make each position palatable, if not agreeable to the other, the disagreement persists to this day.

### Justification by Faith vs. Theosis (Deification)

Simply stated, what is commonly known about basic Lutheran doctrine rests upon Paul's "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6) and the fact that being justified, or made righteous before God, has nothing to do with personal virtue or any good works, but relies solely upon the merit of Christ imparted "by grace through faith." Thus, human effort, commonly referred to as "works" are set apart from the salvific act taking place in the life of the supplicant, who receives the free gift of grace through faith and is therefore said to be made justified, or righteous before God.

By contrast, Orthodox tradition understands salvation in terms of sanctification through deification, or theosis (Meyendorff), terms not all that familiar to Lutherans.<sup>12</sup> The Orthodox understanding of theosis – the process by which God creates human beings with the potential for becoming by grace what God is by nature – begins with Irenaeus's affirmation that God became a human being that we might be made God, which echoes in the writings of Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa (Lossky: 97). Theosis, which has as its goal union with God, is based on New Testament texts that speak of transformation (*μετασχηματίζω*, e.g., Philippians 3:21), transfiguration (*μεταμορφόομαι*, 2 Corinthians 3:18), and union with God in Christ (e.g., John 17:22-23; 2 Peter 1:4). Although patristic language about theosis sounds foreign to western ears, there is certainly no disagreement in affirming the redemptive, self-emptying (*κένωσις*) of the Son of God as expressed in the phrase "God became (a) man"; however, an Augustinian view of the negative condition of fallen humanity and the role of the crucified Redeemer easily draws focus away from the integral concept of union with God (Lossky: 98-99). Redemptionist theology, most radically articulated by Anselm of Canterbury in *Cur Deus Homo*, emphasizes the passion of Christ, which further influenced the West to focus on the Cross, in contrast to the East's emphasis on the Incarnation, which unites God and humanity, making theosis possible.

According to Orthodox tradition, being created in the image of God means inherently possessing the natural grace of reason (*λογικόν*), the power of self-determination (*αὐτεξούσιον*), and, according to Basil of Caesarea, love (*ἀγάπη*) (*Aghiorgoussis*). This stands in contrast to Augustinian thought, which views grace as an extrinsic gift imparted by God. Thus, salvation for the Orthodox means progressively moving in the likeness of God towards ineffable God, which occurs through synergistic cooperation with the Holy Spirit in the sacramental life of the Church – a *synergeia* of divine grace and human will. Although fasting, almsgiving, penance, prayers for the deceased, invoking the intercession of saints, and the like are each addressed separately in the exchange of correspondence between Tübingen and Constantinople, all would be regarded as works of one sort or another so need not be covered here.

---

<sup>12</sup> Although Marquardt (185) notes that one of Luther's sermons, from 1526, states that, "God pours out Christ His dear Son over us and pours Himself into us and draws us into Himself, so that He becomes completely humanified (*vermenschet*) and we become completely deified (*ganz und gar vergottet*, "Godded-through") and everything is altogether one thing, God, Christ, and you."

### Miscellanies: Eucharist, Holy Orders, and Monasticism

Orthodox and Lutheran Christians both affirm the real presence of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist. The Orthodox assert a real transformation (μεταβολή) of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, whereas Lutherans assert that the body and blood of Christ is “in, with and under” the bread and wine. Understood in light of the Lutheran affirmation in the Smalcald Articles, namely, “We hold that bread and wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ” (III.IV.1), it is difficult to see these positions as being very far apart. Both affirm the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist without affirming the transubstantiation of the Scholastics.

Minor, or rather less significant points of difference reflected in the correspondence include the Lutherans’ rejection of invoking the saints, as well as offering prayers on behalf of the deceased. The Orthodox liturgy affirms the real presence of angels, archangels, and the community of saints gathered around the altar table at the epiklesis, the part of the anaphora (oblation) in which the priest invokes the heavenly ones to witness, along with the laity, the holy mystery taking place there. Whether at church or at home, Orthodox Christians enlist the saints – especially the Mother of God (Theotokos) – for support in standing before “the dread judgment seat of Christ,” a belief and practice not known among Lutherans.

Last, but certainly not least, while the Orthodox Church affirms a married priesthood (so long as the marriage occurs before ordination), the sacerdotal nature of the office is rejected by Lutherans in favor of a life of charitable service. In place of priests as sacerdotal presiders over the sacraments, Lutherans appoint ministers that preach the gospel and tend to the sick. A similar concern underlies the rejection of the monastic life – at least the reclusive one, for instead of compelling all to obey the commandments, a monastic who is “striving after piety might not worship God and do good to his neighbor” (Mastrantonis: 148).

### End of Correspondence

Jeremias’s first and second responses, dated 1576 and 1579, were highly critical of the Augsburg Confession. By the final response Jeremias had rejected virtually all of its statements, approving only of the fact that the Lutherans continued to appeal to the authority of the seven Ecumenical Councils. The Tübingen professors issued rejoinders that consisted of progressively stronger defenses of their position, which ultimately served only to disengage Jeremias from the exchange. The patriarch’s waning interest in dialogue with the Lutherans, influenced by weightier issues facing the patriarch at the time, delayed his third and final response for an additional two years. His reply, dated June 6, 1581, was largely an iteration of his original position. It was at this time that the patriarch invited his interlocutors to remain in cordial contact, which they did for a time, but politely admonished them never again to raise doctrinal matters with him again:

Therefore, we request that from henceforth you do not cause us more grief, nor write to us on the same subject if you should wish to treat these luminaries and theologians of the Church in a different manner. You honor and exalt them in words, but you reject them in deeds. For you try to prove our weapons which are their holy and divine discourses as unsuitable. And it is with these documents that we would have to write and contradict you. Thus, as for you,

please release us from these cares. Therefore, going about your own ways, write no longer concerning dogmas; but if you do, write only for friendship's sake. Farewell (Mastrantonis: 306).

Although Lutheran theologians sent additional letters and documents to the patriarch from time to time, in good Byzantine fashion he ignored them until all correspondence trickled to an end.

### Later Overtures

It was sometimes the case that the Orthodox Church's involvement in Reformation polemics had somewhat of an effect upon the faith of the Eastern Church, albeit a temporary one. The most notable case was the controversial Cyril I Lukaris of Constantinople, a seventeenth-century patriarch who invested a great deal of interest in Reformed theology while actively endeavoring to counter Jesuit missionary efforts in eastern Europe to convert Orthodox Christians to Roman Catholicism. Lukaris cultivated close relations with Lutheran scholars at Wittenberg, Tübingen, and elsewhere. His *Confession of Faith* seems to be aimed at reforming the Orthodox Church along Calvinist lines (Hadjiantoniou; FitzGerald: 71-77). Although he was accused of being somewhat of a Calvinist, his popularity among the Orthodox faithful got him elected and re-elected on five different occasions. His Jesuit, other Catholic, and Orthodox enemies eventually succeeded in convincing Sultan Murad IV that the patriarch had acted against the empire; so in, 1638, the Sultan commanded his Janiseries to murder the patriarch. Despite questions over the nature of his Calvinist leanings, Cyril I is regarded by the Orthodox Church as a holy martyr.

### Epilogue: A Few Words Concerning Modern Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue

It would be appropriate to conclude with a look at the current state of affairs in Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue as a means for assessing progress on the salient issues still lodged between parties. Although the Orthodox Church entered the modern ecumenical movement as early as 1920, formal dialogue with the Lutheran Church did not occur until 1959, at which time the Evangelical Lutheran churches in Germany (Evangelisches Kirchen Deutschland, which includes Reformed and United churches in its membership) entered into dialogue with the Moscow patriarchate. In 1967, the Lutheran World Foundation, which reports to represent over 74 million Lutheran Christians in some 145 churches around the globe (roughly 95% of all Lutherans worldwide), initiated high-level visits with Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople (Lutheran World). Encouraged by this and other examples of ongoing mutual interest, the foundation was laid for the establishment of a Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission, which met for the first time in 1981, in Espoo, Finland. Since that time, seventeen plenary sessions have been convened, most recently in Helsinki (November, 2017).

It is important to realize that the Lutheran World Federation is just that, a federation, and is not itself a church representing all Lutherans (although 95% makes for substantial representation). On the other side of the table, while it is the case that all canonical Orthodox jurisdictions have participated in the dialogue at one time or another, the self-governing status of Orthodox jurisdictions sees both hold-outs and drop-outs, the latter most recently represented by the churches of Bulgaria and Georgia. Thus, the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue is not an official one in which all Lutheran and Orthodox churches are officially represented.

Nevertheless, these meetings have produced over a dozen statements of common accord, attesting to mutual respect and a desire to better understand the theological, doctrinal, and ecclesiastical positions of the other in the quest for Christian unity.

While longstanding discussions over the role of scripture and tradition and issues related to it (such as the filioque) have resulted in greater understanding of the other, additional obstacles have arisen since the first joint meeting in Espoo, Finland, in 1981, most notably centered around issues of sex and gender: same-sex marriages and the ordination of women to high ecclesiastical office. According to the preamble of the 2011 plenary in Athens, the Orthodox delegation regards the ordination of women as a “clear deviation from Christian practice.” In what it regards as “the emergence of a new moral code” regarding human sexuality and same-sex relations, Orthodox representatives warn that such controversial anthropological innovations, as they call them, would constitute radical challenges and serious obstacles to ongoing Orthodox-Lutheran dialogue (Joint International Commission).

Finally, at the 2017 Helsinki meeting, a Lutheran-Orthodox Seminar was convened in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation under the theme “Legacy of the Reformation: Lutheran and Orthodox approaches” (Lutheran World). In anticipation of the seminar, earlier in the year – May 30th to be exact – Patriarch Bartholomew was awarded an honorary doctorate from Tübingen University’s Department of Evangelical Theology and History for his nearly half-century of active support on behalf of Orthodox-Protestant dialogue. During his acceptance address, the patriarch praised Luther’s concept of freedom in Christ as having “epochal significance,” for challenging secular notions of individualistic, self-centered, self-serving freedom.

From an Orthodox perspective, the formal proceedings have gone far to mitigate many of the historical and theological misunderstandings between dialogue partners, but the ultimate goal of establishing full unity with the Lutheran faith has yet to be served (Meimaris: 185). Moreover, the Orthodox Church continues to be plagued by its own fundamentalist elements – certain monks and bishops who regard any participation in ecumenical dialogue as heresy. In contrast to Patriarch Bartholomew’s praise for Luther’s concept of freedom at the recent meeting in Helsinki, the late Romanian archimandrite Cleopas Ilie referred to Martin Luther as a second Arius, decrying him, along with Calvin and other Protestant reformers, as heretics and schismatics. The recent council held in Kolympari, on the island of Crete, saw participation on the part of only ten of fifteen Orthodox Church jurisdictions. The synod produced a series of documents that a number of bishops throughout the Orthodox world have criticized to one degree or another, but none so fiercely as the statement on ecumenism. As a result, some bishops and archimandrites have chosen to omit mention of the bishops in support of ecumenism in their liturgies.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, as the Orthodox Church struggles with its internal problems centered around ecumenism, its moderate and progressive elements continue to engage in cordial and respectful dialogue with both Lutherans and Roman

---

<sup>13</sup> For example, Archimandrite Chrysostomos, abbot of the Holy Monastery of the Life-Giving Spring, in Paros, Greece, recently submitted a detailed accusation of heresy against His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew to the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church, asking the Synod to recognize and condemn twelve heterodox teachings having largely to do with ecumenical overtures towards the Roman Catholic Church.

Catholics. If the worldwide Orthodox Church can eventually resolve its own internal conflicts concerning ecumenism, it will come to occupy a more unified position at the ecumenical table.

### Bibliography

Aghiorgoussis, Maximos

- 1976 "Applications of the Theme 'Eikon Theou' (Image of God) According to Saint Basil the Great." *The Greek Orthodox Theological Revue* 21, 1: 265-88.

Benz, Ernst

- 1949 *Wittenberg und Byzanz*. Marburg am Lahn.

Cleopas Ilie, Archimandrite

- 2017 "Enduring no blasphemy: A Homily for the Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council." Translated by Jesse Dominick. *Orthodox Christianity* (May 29). Available online at <http://orthochristian.com/103875.html>.

FitzGerald, Thomas

- 2018 "The Orthodox and the Early Protestant Reformations." Pp. 64-77 in *Remembering the Reformation: Commemorate? Celebrate? Repent?* Edited by Michael Root and James J. Buckley. Eugene: Cascade.

Florovsky, Georges

- 1974 *Christianity and Culture, Collected Works*. Volume 2. Belmont: Nordland.

Hadjiantoniou, George A.

- 1961 *Protestant Patriarch: The Life of Cyril Lucaris, 1572-1638, Patriarch of Constantinople*. Richmond: John Knox Press.

Irenaeus

- 1989 *Adv. Haer.* Volume 16; *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, Volume 1. Ante-Nicene Fathers. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Jacobsen, Anders Lund

- 2008 "Genesis 1-3 as Source for the Anthropology of Origen." *Vigiliae Christianae* 62: 213-32.

Joint International Commission for Orthodox-Lutheran Dialogue.

- 2011 "An Inter-Orthodox Evaluation of the Dialogue (1981-2011)." Inter-Orthodox Center of Penteli, Athens, Greece (May 2-5). Available online at <http://www.ec-patr.org/docdisplay.php?lang=en&id=1350&tla=en>.

Lossky, Vladimir

- 1985 *In the Image and Likeness of God*. Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

Luther, Martin

- 1997 *The Works of Martin Luther*. Volume 3. Albany: Books for the Ages.

The Lutheran World Federation

- 2017 "Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue." Available online at <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/lutheran-orthodox-dialogue>.

Marquart, Kurt E.

- 2000 "Luther and Theosis," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64, 3: 182-206.

Mastrantonis, George

- 1982 *Augsburg and Constantinople: The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession*. Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press.

Meimaris, Theodoros

- 2013 "Thirty Years of the International Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Lutherans (1981-2011): Evaluation and Prospects." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 58: 183-221.

Meyendorff, John.

- 1989 "New Life in Christ: Salvation in Orthodox Theology." *Theological Studies* 50: 481-99.

Ostrogorsky, George

- 1986 *History of the Byzantine State*. Translated by Joan Hussey. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Pelikan, Jaroslav

- 1977 *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*. Volume 2. The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Roddy, Nicolae

- 1991 "The Campaign for Catholicity in the Letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch." *Coptic Church Review* 12, 2: 49-57.

Runciman, Steven

- 1968 *The Great Church in Captivity: A Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of the Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smalcald Articles

- n.d. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Lutheran Church*. Available online at <http://bookofconcord.org/smalcald.php>.

Stuckwisch, Richard

- 2000 "Justification and Deification in the Dialogue between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremias II." *Logia* 9, 4: 17-28.

Webber, David J.

1999 "The Nicene Creed and the Filioque: A Lutheran Approach." *Logia* 8, 4: 45-52.