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The Fathers of the Church, the Reformation, and the Failed Attempts at Union between the Tübingen Theologians and the Patriarchate of Constantinople: A Broad Perspective

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Abstract: The sixteenth century witnessed dramatic upheavals in Eastern and Western Europe in both the ecclesiastical and political domains. In the previous century, Constantinople had fallen to the Ottoman Turks, meaning that its Eastern Orthodox inhabitants were severed both politically and religiously from their Western Christian neighbors, who were ruled over by sovereigns that derived their spiritual authority from the Papacy. Meanwhile, the Reformation endangered the unity of the political and religious spheres of the Catholic West. As it soon became clear that the mainstream Reformers were neither united nor consistent in their ecclesiological views, one thing remained a constant: a recourse to the Fathers of the Church for the confirmation of Reformed tenets such as sola scriptura and sola fide. The use of Patristic proof texts played an important role in the attempt of the Lutherans to unite with the Orthodox, the former reading the writings of the Fathers in a very different way to the latter. This article analyzes why this attempt at union failed, with specific focus on the correspondence between the Tübingen theologians and the Patriarch of Constantinople, Jeremiah II Tranos, in their respective reading of the *Augsburg Confession* which represents the main Lutheran articles of faith.

Keywords: Fathers of the Church; Patristics; Roman Catholic Church; Orthodox Church; Luther; Reformation; Radical Reformation; Patriarchate of Constantinople; Patriarch; Tübingen

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1. Introduction

Long before the Great Schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church in 1054 AD, the second Ecumenical Council in 381 elevated the see of New Rome, Constantinople—the capital of the Byzantine empire—second to the old Rome among the emergent ecclesiastical centers. Since the beginnings of the Church, the elder Rome had been "first among equals", the center of judicial administration with a growing consciousness of universal jurisdiction. While these two ecclesiastical centers would develop different customs based on their divergent cultural and historical trajectories—Rome was Latin-centerd, the East Greek-speaking, the former would come to use unleavened bread in the Eucharist, the latter leavened, etc.—a common source of unity among them was their recourse to the writings and lives of the Fathers of the Church. The Fathers were usually considered holy figures, often ordained bishops or clergymen, sometimes monastics, other times neither, who defended and articulated the Christian faith—especially in terms of dogma or doctrine—principally through their writings. In contemporary scholarship the study of the Fathers is known as "Patristics".

When the break between the two Romes took place around the turn of the first millennium, still these two churches—which would become known as Catholicism and Orthodoxy, respectively—could be said to have had more in common than not because of their joint Patristic antecedents. They mostly venerated the same Fathers as saints, some of whom participated in formulating the commonly held doctrinal definitions articulated at consecutive Ecumenical Councils, one of the highest instruments of spiritual and jurisdictional or

canonical authority in the Church. And while Rome would continue to hold Ecumenical Councils after the schism with the Greek East and would develop other categories to signify great teachers of the faith—such as the "Doctors of the Church"—nevertheless the Fathers would remain a common source of succor and verification of each Church's respective identities through times of crisis: for the former during the Reformation period, and for the latter during Ottoman occupation. This adherence to the Fathers is of course not to be confused, from a methodological point of view, with the discipline of Patristics per se: the latter developed in post-Enlightenment academia which emphasizes the analysis of texts in an objective or non-confessional manner in order to determine their meaning in context.

While Patristics is still undertaken in a confessional manner, especially by traditional Christian ecclesial communities like Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, nevertheless the use of the writings of the Fathers as proof texts to confirm Church doctrine—or as containing the elements of doctrine espoused by churches officially (decrees of Ecumenical Councils, the Roman Catholic magisterium, etc.)—has always been a feature of Christianity from an institutional point of view, and is thus relevant to the present study which addresses the use of the Fathers by the Lutherans and Orthodox, respectively, in relation to a reading of the former's *Augsburg Confession*, a foundational Reformation document. Indeed, this article contextualizes the lack of consistency in the approach of the Reformers toward the writings of the Fathers and their contributions to Church doctrine—resulting in the re-emergence of ancient Christian heresies with the Radical Reformation—in order to demonstrate that this lack of uniformity, which had sacramental and ecclesiological ramifications, in fact presaged the failure of the attempted union between the Lutherans and the Orthodox initiated by the Tübingen theologians in Germany in the middle of the sixteenth century.

The Reformation led to the splintering of Western Christendom among various denominations: Catholicism remaining the mainline Church with emergent Lutheran, Zwinglian, Calvinist, Anabaptist, and later, Anglican confessions of faith, to name the major Reformation strands. In the middle of the sixteenth century, several serious attempts were made by the Lutherans to establish a correspondence and ultimately a union with the Orthodox Church, specifically with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, based partly on the incentive to confirm their own confessional position from support of the Apostolicity that they knew the Patriarch possessed as "first among equals" among the Eastern or Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches, i.e., those churches that adhere to the doctrinal Definition of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 addressed below. ("First among equals" is a title that the Patriarchate had claimed since the schism with Rome in 1054). This is something that, given their split from Rome, the Reformers were not willing to do with Rome, despite Catholicism's inherent Petrine Apostolicity. This article will present some of the factors that led to the theological correspondence between the Lutheran theologians at the University of Tübingen and Jeremiah II Tranos, Patriarch of Constantinople. It will also assess the Patriarch's response to the *Augsburg Confession* that comprised the 28 articles of faith of the Lutherans, and the role that the Fathers of the Church played in his reading of the new doctrinal formulations in the 1550s. As made clear by Ammann and Kennerley (2020, p. 271):

> In this period, well-known Church Fathers were disseminated in new, groundbreaking editions, many hitherto lost Greek church authors were rediscovered and made available in the original language or in translation, and Patristic texts were closely read by the many, often feuding, confessional groups who sought answers to the questions that had been raised by contemporary debates about the past and present of the Church.

Thus, it will be shown that differing interpretations of Patristic texts, based on different ecclesiological understandings, played a pivotal role in undermining the possibility of union between the Lutherans and the Eastern Orthodox.

2. The Situation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Orthodox Church

On the eve of the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II on the 29th of May 1453, the Patriarchate of the city was left to its own devices. The Russians, at war with the Mongols, were too far away to be of any assistance either before or after the siege. After the city fell, the rulers of Russia—the Tsars—had styled themselves as successors to the Byzantine emperors, who up until that time were considered by the Orthodox in Constantinople and elsewhere within the Byzantine commonwealth as divinely appointed sovereigns (Sloutsky 2019, p. 276). The Russians' claim to having inherited Byzantine imperial rule was specifically predicated on the marriage of Zoe Palaiologos, the niece of the last Emperor of Byzantium, Constantine XI—who died during the city's fall on 29th of May—to Ivan III, the Grand Prince of Moscow (Gregory 2005, p. 345). When the city fell, Zoe's father, Despot Thomas of the Morea in the Peloponnese, sought refuge in Rome. It was there that, under the protection of the Papacy, Zoe's name was change to Sophia, and the marriage between her and Ivan was proposed by Pope Paul II in 1469 as a way of strengthening ecumenical relations between Catholics and Orthodox Russians (Sloutsky 2019, pp. 277, 279). However, this move's failure became clear when Zoe returned to Byzantine Christianity after arriving in Moscow in 1472, with her grandson, Ivan IV (the Terrible), later becoming the first Tsar. Thus, Russia, the only Orthodox country not to have been conquered by the Ottomans, though still technically under the jurisdiction of Constantinople until the conferral of its own Patriarchate in 1587, nevertheless remained geographically and ideologically distinct from both Constantinople (i.e., Ottoman Konstantiniye) and Western Christendom (Gregory 2005, p. 346).

The Papacy had in any case been compelled to make these aforementioned overtures to Russia because of the suspicions harbored by Orthodox Christians that formerly belonged to the Byzantine Empire toward the Pope and Catholicism in general. This was especially the case among the inhabitants of Constantinople. The Byzantines had received help from the Catholic West in the form of the mercenary traveller Giovanni Giustiniani Longo, who arrived at Constantinople on the eve of its fall with 700 soldiers, most of whom, including Giovanni, sacrificed their lives protecting the city. The Pope had also sent 200 archers together with the Byzantine humanist Bessarion, who had become a Roman Catholic cardinal and was responsible for retrieving ancient and medieval manuscripts from Greece and other former Byzantine territories and preserving them in the maritime capital of Venice (Cameron 2010, pp. 197–98). Nevertheless, whatever help that was received from the Christian West was perceived as tainted. The Fourth Crusade in 1204 and the subsequent Latin occupation of the city were still a bitter memory, and anti-Catholic feeling ran high, especially against Bessarion and other members of the pro-unionist party who had tried to reconcile Orthodoxy to Catholicism at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1431–1439)—the seventeenth Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church—that attempted to mediate a union between the Byzantine Christians and Rome (Gill 1959; cf. Stormon 1981).

With Constantinople's fall in 1453, the Byzantine Empire and its collective belief that the secular affairs of the Christian oikoumene would forever remain solemnly guarded and guided by the Emperor were shattered. In the Emperor's place now ruled an Islamic Sultan who established a new pattern of administration for the Christians in his territories. First, Orthodox Christians were relegated to millet or nation/people status which meant that they were allowed to govern themselves according to their own laws (Runciman 1997, p. 167). The Sultan, however, also demanded that the Christian millet be centralized, and the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which was in close proximity to the Sublime Porte, i.e., the imperial court of the Sultans, was naturally chosen (ibid., p. 177). The Patriarch, a Greek-speaker yet still identifying as a Roman, henceforth became the Ethnarch of all the Orthodox under Ottoman occupation, regardless of their ethnicity: Greeks (still self-identifying as Roman, with a growing sense of Greek nationalism), Romanians, Serbs, Bulgarians, Albanians, etc. This stifling situation for the non-Greek speakers, complicated by the rise of various nationalisms in later centuries, led to the establishment of independent or autocephalous churches in these aforementioned regions that still recognize the Patriarchate

of Constantinople as "first among equals": all of this in spite of the demise of the Roman millet and the gradual curtailing of the rights and privileges of what the Turks still designate as the Rūm or Roman Patriarchate (Patrikhanesi).

Before becoming the first Patriarch after the fall of the city, Gennadios Scholarios was intransigently opposed to Catholicism and was thus appointed deliberately as such by Sultan Mehmet II in order to drive a wedge between the Catholic kingdoms of Western Europe, with their fealty to the Pope, and Eastern Orthodox Christians. In 1439, fourteen years before the city's fall, Gennadios was present at the Council of Ferrara-Florence as a pro-unionist, but had returned to Constantinople as a staunch advocate of resistance to the union, having been influenced in no small part by bishop Mark of Ephesus who interpreted the Council as heretical. Gennadios followed Mark in taking the Council to compromise the 'faith of the Fathers,' which, since the ninth century 'triumph of Orthodoxy' over iconoclasm in Constantinople, had become an indelible feature of Byzantine/Orthodox Christianity in both its imperial and ecclesiastical spheres (Ware [1962] 1993, pp. 42–81).

Thus, the Patriarchate, without an Emperor and separated from Rome, was endowed (paradoxically) by the conquering Muslims with prestige and authority. But this also caused many problems. The Patriarchate of Constantinople was now for the first time responsible for the lay affairs of the people, and thus the administration of the Patriarchate had to be reorganized to cater for these new and enlarged obligations. Mehmet had established several precepts that would safeguard the integrity of the Orthodox against certain abuses, but the ambivalent dispositions of his successors meant that these precepts were regularly transgressed (Runciman 1997, pp. 189–90). The Patriarchate of Constantinople was not only captive to foreign rulers, but, by force of circumstances, was gradually becoming introverted. Compelled to deal with both internal and external problems—including corruption and betrayal (ibid., pp. 187, 193–94)—its more genuine incumbents had to struggle to maintain and promulgate the traditions that they had received from the past. In any case, because of half a millennium of Islamization in Asia Minor, the late Byzantines and their Eastern spirituality had become increasingly cut off, geographically and intellectually, from Roman Catholicism and Western Christendom in general. After the Council of Florence and the Fall of Constantinople, this applied all the more in the sixteenth century, when the West became preoccupied with the complex issues and problems caused by the Reformation (see Vryonis 1971).

3. The Reformation: Context, Theology, and the Use of the Fathers

In the early 1500s, the Papacy, headquartered in Rome, remained the undisputed spiritual center of Western Europe. But the expensive enterprises of the Renaissance—artistic, architectural, or otherwise—had thrust it into debt. The then Pope Leo X (1475–1521) ordered that indulgences (indulgentiae: the full or partial remissions of punishment due for sins that had not otherwise been forgiven via the sacrament of confession (Hamilton 1986, p. 47)) to be sold throughout Christendom in order to finance the rebuilding of St Peter's Basilica in Rome (Grimm 1958, p. 106). To this end, he sent the Dominican friar Johann Tetzel to Germany to preach indulgences and gather funds. In Germany, Martin Luther, an Augustinian friar, had completed his theological training several years previously and held a chair at the University of Wittenburg. Upon learning that Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz endorsed Tetzel's actions, Luther allegedly felt compelled to nail a copy of his infamous *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenburg on 31 October 1517 (yet cf. Iserloh 1968, pp. 76–97) within which disputation he argued against the sale of indulgences. These were supposed to draw on the treasury of merit acquired by Christ's sacrifice and the penances of the saints and very often made it congenial to pay off by money or gift penances imposed by the Church for sins committed (Hamilton 1986, p. 47). This formulation of indulgences emerged from atonement theology that had come out of scholasticism in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, and was a point of divergence for Roman Catholics and the Orthodox at the Council of Ferrara-Florence, since the Orthodox—while having engaged with scholasticism through various representative figures of the Byzantine intellectual

Renaissance that took place in the fourteenth century (Schulz 2010, pp. 23–32)—did not accept scholastic theological developments wholesale (Estep 1998, pp. 116–17).

Coming to interpret the Church's doctrine of penance in a different light, Luther argued in his *Theses* that avariciously based indulgences gave too much "plenary remission of all penalties" when sins called for "true contrition" and belonged to God alone to forgive (Grimm 1958, p. 107, and see *Theses* 1, 3, 6. 12, 20–21, 57, 86 [ed. Bettenson, pp. 260–62, 265, 267]). Luther studied certain portions of the Bible including the letters to the Hebrews, Romans, and Galatians, and came to believe that the undertaking of good deeds or works, which he identified with the Pauline concept of law, are inherently useless due to the fact that human beings are incapable of good deeds outside the grace of God which is conferred upon them if they have faith in Jesus Christ (Estep 1998, p. 116). In his *Preface to the Epistle of St Paul to the Romans* (ed. Dillenberger, p. 22) Luther wrote:

> We reach the conclusion that faith alone justifies us and fulfils the law; and this because faith brings us the spirit gained by the merits of Christ. The Spirit, in turn, gives us the happiness and freedom at which the law aims, and this shows that good works really proceed from faith.

Insofar as he disparaged the significance of works as a result of his emphasis on faith, Luther placed himself at odds with the Roman Catholic Church (later clarified formally in Tridentine Session 4 [ed. Schroeder pp. 32–45]), and, as circumstances would prove, his theology would be considered incompatible with Orthodoxy as well. As his popularity grew and his views spread, Luther and a small circle of confidants, including the scholar Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560), began to fan the flames of an extremely disruptive Reform, especially after Luther called the Pope "Antichrist" in repost against the 1520 Bull against him for his *Ninety-Five Theses* (Dickens 1974, p. 96; cf. Greengrass 2014).

The Reformation spread rapidly throughout Europe, owing not only to Luther and his contemporaries but also to other prominent figures such as Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531) who facilitated a simultaneous movement in Switzerland. Zwingli, who was not aware of Luther at the time he began his reforms, diverged from him on several doctrinal points. In Zwingli's approach to the Lord's Supper as symbolic and as merely memorial, Luther took him to be denying the faithful the Real Presence of Christ when partaking the Bread and Wine in the Eucharist, resulting in a bitter correspondence that culminated in a colloquy at Marburg in 1529 where Luther, Melanchthon, and several others met with Zwingli and other Swiss theologians in order to come to an agreement (Estep 1998, p. 150). Luther had rejected the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation (encoded in Lateran Council IV [1215], canon 1): the mystery of the conversion of the elements into Christ's body and blood with only the appearance of bread and wine remaining, and his position was consubstantialist instead. He accepted the reality of Christ's body and blood as "in and under" the taking of the elements, a view basically following an older Catholic position (going back to fifth-century Pope Leo I [Epistula 59]). In the Marburg discussions, the Fathers of the Church significantly played a role, with the writings of Sts Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, and Augustine—all of whom believed that the Eucharistic bread and the wine actually become the body and blood of Christ without further qualification—being evoked in the squabble (Backus 2019, p. 434), which remained an impasse to the unity of the two movements, thereby resulting in the first Great Schism within the Reformation.

From this point onward, a united reform movement was impossible. Luther, having departed from his original goal of attempting to reform aspects of the Catholic Church, endeavored now to remain as conservative as possible while the other reform movements, hastened by the emergence of figures belonging to what is known as the Radical Reformation, took a more controversial line. This situation was all the more complicated by the fact that the Protestant churches, instead of being subject to (or extensions of) a single governing body—as in the case of Roman Catholicism—were now aligned with the secular authority of various rulers with their conflicting dispositions, which was similar to the Orthodox pattern both before and after the fall of Constantinople. (The theocratic Byzantine government in relation to the former; Reformed doctrines and 'new monarchies'

or early modern 'nation-states' for the latter). Despite these problems, in 1530 at the Diet of Augsburg, which was convened by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in order to allay further divisions within the Church in his realm, Melanchthon presented a summary of the beliefs of the Reformers which he had drafted in consultation with Luther that later became known as the *Augsburg Confession*.

Foundational for the Lutheran churches, the *Augsburg Confession*—which set the precedent for the confessionalism that would become characteristic of the development of the many varying Protestant denominations—grounded them in authoritative principles that conditioned the development and reception of Lutheranism and distinguished it from the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand and Radical Reformers on the other, especially the Anabaptists (1520s on), who increasingly abandoned the traditional approach toward doctrine and faith heretofore upheld by Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Be that as it may, in its 28 articles delineating the Lutheran profession of faith including God, Original Sin, the Son of God, Justification by Faith, the Office of Preaching, to name a few, the *Augsburg Confession* refers to early Fathers venerated by Roman Catholics and Orthodox alike, such as Sts Cyprian, John Chrysostom, Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Gratian, not to mention post-Schism champions of Catholicism like St Thomas Aquinas (Tappert 1959, pp. 43, 45, 50, 55, 60, 64). These were obviously interpreted in a selective manner aligning with Luther's characteristic emphasis on sola scriptura and sola fidei, yet in Melanchthon's reconciliatory stance, the *Confession* was framed in hope of drawing diverging energies back into a stable, unified reform position (Elert 1962, vol. 1, p. 278). After all, he first came to be seriously engaged in the study of the Church Fathers in vital correspondence with the non-Lutheran Reformer Johannes Oecolampadius and the relatively independent Martin Bucer (Sperl 1959, esp. pp. 172–75).

The Radical Reformers would not be so accepting of Patristic tradition, referring only to the Scriptures in a selective manner that re-introduced what would be considered various heretical beliefs that in earlier periods had been addressed by the Fathers of the Church. One such belief was modalism, popularized in the third century by Sabellius who believed that the three members of the Trinity are not distinct persons but modes of manifestation of the one God. This compromised the integrity of the three persons who paradoxically are one God on account of their shared divine essence and was refuted by the fourth-century Cappadocian Fathers Sts Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa. These Fathers, in a manner that was a watershed for the Greek-speaking East in terms of theologizing, applied new terminology, namely that of hypostasis (ὑπόστασις), which they distinguished from its synonym ousia (οὖσία), meaning essence, and utilized it for personhood. In this way, they replaced the weaker terms deployed by the Sabellians to indicate how God sometimes appears as Father, Son, and Spirit, namely the Greek term πρόσωπον or Latin persona, and thus, one could speak of God as three eternal hypostases who share the same divine essence (Otis 1958). The other heresy that re-emerged in the Radical Reformation was monophysitism, which is the belief that Christ only had a single divine nature that overshadowed his human one, believed to have been propounded by Eutyches of Constantinople and Dioscorus of Alexandria and condemned at the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. It is worth exploring these deviations further to determine the extent to which Luther, who had a hand in drafting the *Augsburg Confession*, adhered to Patristic doctrine in contrast to his radical counterparts (for first guidance, see Williams [1962] 1995).

4. Luther, Other Reformers, Protagonists for Radical Reformation, and the Fathers of the Church

The Reformation—and the major Western Renaissance—witnessed an upsurge in editions and translations of Patristic texts, works by "Origen, [John] Chrysostom, Irenaeus, Cyprian, Arnobius, Hilary, and others" (Rummel 2004, p. 35), like Jerome. Indeed, in 1517, the same year that Luther—whom we have already seen was familiar with the writings of Cyril—acclaimedly published his *Theses* on Wittenburg's Castle Church doors, wrote

about his aims to expose more students to the writings of St Augustine in an attempt to 'dethrone' Aristotle who had been so instrumental in forming the theology of the scholastics (Hendrix 2004, p. 41). But while Luther and his disciple, Melanchthon, could marshal the works of the Fathers in their delineation of Reformation tenets, their emphasis was always on the Scriptural text (Kusukawa 2004, p. 67), as was also the case with the major Swiss Reformers Zwingli and Calvin (Stephens 2004, pp. 83–84; Steinmetz 2004, p. 117). And the Fathers not only had a role in helping Luther articulate his Christological doctrine —even if he prioritized the Scriptures over Patristic texts—but as we have seen, referring to Cyril, John Chrysostom, and Augustine, they were employed in the Eucharistic debates of the Reformers at Marburg as well (see above). Along with Cyril and Augustine, John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* utilized the writings of the Cappadocian Greek Fathers and others. Despite their criticism of Roman Catholic traditions and doctrinal formulations and their emphasis on Scripture and faith alone, the mainstream Reformers worked in familiarity with the writings of the Fathers and tried to remain consistent enough with established, especially pre-ninth-century Catholic doctrine, albeit with different emphases (cf., e.g., Headley 1963, pp. 204–7) and with the chief formulations of the first seven Ecumenical Councils (so Luther's 1539 Authority of Councils and Churches [ed. and trans, Smyth]).

In order to make sense of just how far the Radical Reformation deviated from accepted doctrinal formulations, we can turn to the use of Fathers who contributed to foundational Church tenets. In relation to the holy Trinity, most of the mainline Reformers—Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin—accepted the belief that God is three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—united in a single essence (Bainton 1964, p. 127), and that the Son became one of us as Christ Jesus for our salvation. In Patristic tradition, the Eastern or Greek-speaking Fathers, beginning, as we have seen, with the Cappadocians, affirmed that the distinct hypostases of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit incomprehensibly share the same essence which is common to them (Meyendorff 1983, pp. 181, 186). Western Fathers like Sts Augustine and later, Anselm, generally began with the simplicity or unity of the Godhead and gave precedence to the essence of God, within which the persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct (ibid., 1983, p. 184). These two approaches are in fact complementary and, insofar as they were adhered to by the Latin and Greek-speaking churches before the Great Schism, not much more need be said on the matter, except that, on account of geographical and cultural factors, the latter (i.e., Western) position and its language was taken up by the main Reformers. In Luther's *De Servo arbitrio* (*On the Bondage of the Will* (ed. and trans. Packer and Johnston]) Pt. 1, sect. 4), Luther referred to the Trinity as "in the Godhead", declared that "the Trinity, the incarnation, and the unpardonable sin are facts", and Calvin entitled the thirteenth chapter of his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Bk. 1, ch. 13 as follows: "In Scripture, from the Creation Onward, We Are Taught One Essence of God, which Contains Three Persons". Thus, for the Reformers, that there was a Trinity of persons in the Godhead was clear from the testimony of the Scriptures and presupposed. What they seemed to be more interested in were Christological issues since their respective understandings of Christ had ramifications for their positions on sacramentology and ecclesiology. The writings of Fathers, such as Cyril of Alexandria, were important for Reformed Christologies, as with Luther, who, in his 1540 *Disputation on the Humanity and Divinity of Christ*, maintained that there was a complete unity of the two natures in the person of Jesus:

> From eternity he was not man, but now he is conceived from the Holy Spirit, born from the Virgin, made God and man in one person, which had predicated of it both man and God. Here was made the union of the person. Humanity and divinity enter into each other. The unity, that is what contains it. I confess two natures which cannot be separated. The unity makes it; a unity which is a greater and firmer joining than that of body and soul, because these are separated, the other never. The immortal divine nature and the mortal human nature, but unity

> in one person: That is Christ, son of the impassible God, God and man crucified under Pontius Pilate.

The above passage indicates that Luther was basically in line with the Christological reflections of Cyril, who in the early fifth century refuted Nestorius of Constantinople's belief that the Son and Logos of God could not be born of a human being, and thus had to assume a human body, in this case, Jesus. In opposition to this, Cyril emphasized the oneness or unity of Christ's person in a manner that was consistent with liturgical experience: we pray to the one Christ and we partake of the one Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist, a oneness of personhood that would later be articulated as having united two natures, divine and human, which we will presently clarify.

Without getting into the details of the controversial exchange between Cyril and Nestorius that resulted in the anathematization of the latter and the eventual vindication of Cyril's theology at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 553, the Alexandrian bishop had a powerful yet misinterpretable Christological slogan: that there is "μία φύσις τοῦ [Θεού] Λόγου σεσαρκωμένη" or "one nature of [God] the Logos incarnate" (Second Letter to Succensus 2 and 3). The term φύσις here does not necessarily mean 'nature' but can be taken to mean 'reality' or 'life' as reflected in the fact that Cyril elsewhere also used the term 'person' (ὑπόστασις) to denote the manner in which God the Logos 'hypostatically' (καθ᾽ ὑπόστασιν) or 'personally' united a second nature, that is, the human one, to himself while remaining fully God (Second Letter to Nestorius 4). This means, of course, that when referring to Christ's oneness, Cyril was not referring to his nature, insofar as we have seen that he considered Christ to have both divine and human natures. Instead, Cyril referred to the oneness of Christ's person, of "the Logos incarnate".

Cyril's theology was enshrined in the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus (431), when Nestorius was excommunicated, but his influence is further detectable after his death (in 444) at the Fourth, 451 Council of Chalcedon, with its credal language of the one hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ. The Chalcedonian Definition was recognized by the Eastern Orthodox as well as Roman Catholics, not least because of the instrumental contribution of Pope St Leo I with his famed Tome, which articulated that two natures, divine and human, respectively, fully inhere within the person of Jesus. The trouble was, however, an exaggerated version of Cyril's "μία φύσις" formula. A literalizing, misinterpreting and compromising of it by Cyril's outspoken disciples Eutyches of Constantinople and Dioscorus of Alexandria resulted in perturbation over their monophysitism ('one-nature' Christology) and its spread. Chalcedon turned out to seemingly be an accommodation between mostly (Nestorius-affected) Antiochene stresses on Two Natures and mostly (Cyril-inspired) Alexandrian on One. The Alexandrian (Coptic) Patriarchate, realizing key Cyril-sponsored phrases were absent from the Chalcedonian formula (such as "the one incarnate nature of the divine Logos" and "after the union, one nature", suspected the Nestorian "beast" had returned and rejected it (along with other Oriental Churches) (see Sellers 1953, p. 256). But Cyril himself had been no Monophysite, certainly of the Eutychian type (condemned at Chalcedon) (cf. also Pelikan and Hotchkiss 2003, p. 172). From a soteriological perspective, this would sever us from participating in the effects of Christ's resurrection which he accomplished in the flesh (via, for example, the Eucharist), and so the definition of Chalcedon was formulated to affirm both Christ's divinity and humanity for both doctrinal and salvific reasons:

> So, following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the Virgin God-bearer as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, acknowledged in

> two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation. (*Definitio* [ed. Bettenson, p. 79]; and see Pelikan and Hotchkiss 2003, p. 181)

This statement not only profoundly illustrates Christ's consubstantiality with both God the Father and humanity in his person, but it employs apophatic terminology, as reflected in the words "no confusion, no change, no division, no separation", in order to secure that ultimately this hypostatic union compromises neither nature and yet remains beyond comprehension. It has been argued that Zwingli and Calvin, in stark contrast to Luther, advocated a Christology which reflected that of Nestorius, but the evidence for this is not altogether convincing, especially when misrepresentations are discerned. They both upheld the unity of Christ's divine and human natures, albeit not as strongly as Luther (Reardon 1981, p. 80). Despite their differences in emphasis, the Reformers' Christologies were closer to (though not identical with) the standard of orthodoxy represented by Fathers like Cyril, Leo, and the Council of Chalcedon. This is in contrast to the Radical Reformers, such as the Spiritualists, various Anabaptists and Unitarians. The former lapsed into a sort of anti-ecclesiological monophysitism in the formulations of Sebastian Franck and Caspar Schwenckfeld (1490–1561) who affirmed that Christ's human nature was not consubstantial with our own (Reardon 1981, pp. 227–29), but uniquely akin to God. Indeed, in a letter to the Flemish Anabaptist leader Johannes Campanus (1500–1575) preserved in the *Amoenitates literariae* (1729) of Johann Schellhorn, we find Schwenckfeld went as far as to exclaim:

> I am fully convinced that after the death of the apostles, the external Church of Christ with its gifts and sacraments vanished from the earth and withdrew into heaven and is now hidden in spirit and in truth and for these past 1400 years there has existed no true Church and no efficacious sacraments.

This demonstrates that the relative eradication of traditional approaches to doctrine and the sacraments undertaken by the Reformers—for Luther, the sacraments eventually comprised only baptism and the Eucharist—opened up its radical fringe to bypass belief in the Church that administers these sacraments altogether. Though he believed that Christ was "God and man in one person indivisible" (McLaughlin 1986, p. 212), which is seemingly consistent with Chalcedon, Schwenckfeld affirmed that Christ's human nature was not consubstantial with our own, but uniquely like God's, an "uncreaturely" body brought from heaven implanted in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of "celestial flesh" that in a way reflected monophysitism (Steinmetz 2001).[1] And this mitigation of Christ's humanity had profound implications for ecclesiology: the human nature of Christ was here dismissed along with all that pertains to the Church on earth (Reardon 1981, pp. 227–29). Needless to say, the Spiritualists were ostracized for their views. Submitting an account of Schwenckfeld's beliefs to the theologians who backed the Schmalkaldic League, which was a military alliance of Lutheran princes upholding the *Augsburg Confession*, Lutheran Martin Frecht (1494–1556) forcefully opposed his Christology. The refutation significantly appealed to the Church's early credal formulations with their Patristic antecedents—including the Nicene, Athanasian, and Apostles' Creeds—with the denunciations of both Schwenckfeld and Sebastian Franck's views drafted by Melanchthon and signed by the other renowned Lutherans at Schmalkald. Franck was not officially condemned but removed himself from ecclesiastical politics and lived out the rest of his life as a printer.

In relation to anti-Trinitarian modalism, otherwise known as Unitarianism, we must observe the works of Michael Servetus (1511–1553) and Fausto Sozzini (1539–1604) who were two of its foremost representatives. In *The Restoration of Christianity*, Servetus asserted that Christian teaching had been "falsified successively by the early Fathers, by the Roman church and finally by the reformers" (Wendel 1965, p. 94). For Servetus, it was the role of faith to achieve the true intellectual recognition of the divinity of Christ based on Scripture (Reardon 1981, p. 232). This led him to a Platonic reading of the literal text of the Bible where God the Son and Logos became the ideal reason which subsumed the essences of all things. Created beings appeared to Servetus to consist of "the successive degradations of the divinity, from which they proceed by emanation" (Wendel 1965, p. 94). This is perhaps best reflected in his ideas concerning the eschaton or the 'last things' where Servetus

declared a 'Trinity of dispensation' in Section 41 of the very first book of his *De Trinitatis Erroribus Libri Septum* (*The Errors of the Trinity, Seven Books*). This was performed in a manner consistent with the Neo-Platonic theory of an ontological emanation and return—from the One through to the Nous and the World Soul and back again (Stumpf 1975, pp. 109–11). In *The Errors of the Trinity* (ed. Wilbur) Bk. 3, sect. 19, we read that at the end of time, the ministries of both the Logos and the Spirit in this dispensational Trinity, as powers emanating from the one God, will terminate, because we will no longer have the need for either an "advocate", i.e., the Holy Spirit, or a "reconciler", i.e., Christ, for God will be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).

In addition to this, in Bk. 2, sect. 11, Servetus betrays certain theological affinities with Schwenckfeld in his opinion on Christ's humanity:

> See how gloriously God brought forth the Son whom He had decreed to beget as His only begotten. . .when I raise my eyes to Him who sits at the right hand of God the Father in Heaven I tremble when I hear you refer to Him as the human nature. Do you not see that it is He who governs all things?

Servetus' ideas were unacceptable to both Reformers and Roman Catholics. John Calvin refuted the errors he found in his works, but Servetus persisted, eventually having them published in Vienne which resulted in his arrest by the Inquisition in the city. Due to a lack of incriminating evidence, he was released and intended to flee to Naples by way of Geneva, but was found, rearrested, and imprisoned at Calvin's instigation (Wendel 1965, p. 95). He was tried for heresy and burnt at the stake in April 1553, with the Swiss Reformers and the Lutherans supporting both Calvin's refutation of him and the Genevan magistracy's decision to put him to death (Wendel 1965, p. 97).

Servetus' death, however, gave a martyric impetus to the Unitarian cause, which was gaining momentum and which influenced the thought of Fausto Sozzini. The Unitarians of Poland, known as the Polish Brethren, had a minor church in Raków that had broken off from the mainstream Reformed Church of Poland in 1563 over the nature of the Trinity (Pelikan and Hotchkiss 2003, p. 709). Sozzini believed that the Bible's main purpose was to mediate a message which could be used for the rational and wilful ordering of one's life. The inferences derived from the text of Scripture for the articulation of doctrine were therefore redundant. For Sozzini, Christ could not directly participate in the Godhead, for God, who alone is divine, was the acting agent ad extra in Christ's virgin birth and his miracles, death, and resurrection from the dead (Reardon 1981, pp. 234–35). Sozzini founded his own unitarian movement called the Socinians, which is the Latinized form of his surname. *The Racovian Catechism*, comprising an outline of unitarian tenets, was subsequently drafted as a series of responses to rhetorical questions posed by an invisible interlocutor. Published in 1605, it manifests Sozzini's lasting influence on this group. In *On the Nature of Jesus Christ Son of God* (ed. Reed), ch. 1, we read:

> Prove to me that in the one essence of God there is but one person?
>
> This may indeed be seen from hence, that the essence of God is one, not in kind but in number. Wherefore it cannot, in any way, contain a plurality of persons, since a person is nothing else than an individual intelligent essence. Wherever, then, there exist three numerical persons, there must necessarily, in like manner, be reckoned to have three individual essences; for in the same sense in which it is affirmed that there is one numerical essence, it must be also held that there is one numerical person.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the cornerstone of Christian tradition and experience, is here being altogether rejected. Moreover, this anti-Trinitarianism had ramifications for Christology: Christ was relegated to a position below God the Father, and in this way Sozzini evoked ancient subordinationist heresies such as Arianism, which posited the creatureliness of the Son of God (and was rejected in AD 325 at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea). The marginalization of Christ, both in terms of elevating his divinity at the expense of his humanity—and thus rationalizing him into abstraction—as well as the

denial of his concrete Personhood as the second member of the Trinity, might have even opened the doors for the proliferation of deranged Messianism, as seen, for example, with the Radical Reformer Jan Bockelson (1509–1536), an ex-tailor from Leyden, who crowned himself presumptuously as a 'Davidic' king, substituting for Jesus in his Second Coming in the German town of Münster which he renamed the eschatological New Jerusalem, and which led to the siege of the city and the death of many of its inhabitants (Cohn 1970, pp. 252–80).

In light of these few examples from the Radical Reformation—for there are many more—it becomes clear that although the mainline Reformers had less deviating views on the Trinity and Christ, their relative disunity on the Eucharist, the meaning of the sacraments, and other ecclesiological matters—even if usually argued with reference to Patristic proof texts—opened the gates for the disbelief that the Son and Logos of God became human as Christ (i.e., monophysitism) and the rejection of the belief in God as Trinity (in a manner similar to the ancient Sabellians or modalists). Indeed, Servetus and Sozzini were simultaneously dismissive and selective in their use of the Fathers in their respective interpretations of the Scriptures and Christianity in general. In stark contrast to these Radical Reformation departures, it is striking just how Patristically oriented are the first and third articles of the Lutheran *Augsburg Confession* on God the Trinity and Christ, respectively. On the former, the *Confession* states:

> We unanimously hold and teach, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Nicaea, that there is one divine essence, which is called and which is truly God, and that there are three persons in this one divine essence, equal in power and alike eternal: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. All three are one divine essence, eternal, without division, without end, of infinite power. (Tappert 1959, pp. 27–28)

And on the latter:

> It is also taught among us that God the Son became man, born of the virgin Mary, and that the two natures, divine and human, are so inseparably united in one person that there is one Christ, true God and true man, who was truly born, suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried in order to be a sacrifice not only for original sin but also all other sins and to propitiate God's wrath. The same Christ also descended into hell, truly rose from the dead on the third day, ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God . . . The same Lord Christ will return openly to judge the living and the dead, as stated in the Apostles' Creed. (Tappert 1959, pp. 29–30)

It is clear that the use of the Fathers, Councils, and Creeds was considered acceptable by the authors of the *Augsburg Confession*. It is to this text we now turn, for with its use of the Fathers, the Lutherans presented the *Confession* to the Patriarchate of Constantinople as evidence of their orthodoxy in an attempted union with the latter.

5. The Tübingen Theologians and the Patriarchate of Constantinople

We have seen that at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, which was convened by Charles V in order to alleviate the growing divisions within the Western Church, Philip Melanchthon presented a confession containing the tenets for reforming the Church which he had drafted in consultation with Luther. The *Augsburg Confession* was to play an important role in the relations between the Lutherans and the Patriarchate of Constantinople in their crucial correspondence over a decade. This correspondence has been meticulously analyzed by Dorothea Wendebourg (1983) in her *Reformation und Orthodoxie: Der ökumenische Briefwechsel zwischen der Leitung der Württembergischen Kirche und Patriarch Jeremias IL von Konstantinopel in den Jahren 1573–1581*. The original texts are compiled in the *Acta et Scripta Theologorum Wirtembergensium, et Patriarchae Constantinopolitani* by Patriarch Jeremiah [Hieremia] and Jacob Andreae (by 1584), but I have especially consulted George Mastrantonis' (1982) seminal and more widely accessible work, *Augsburg and Constantinople*, which contains

translations of these texts into English. In any case, both Churches, Lutheran and Orthodox, would inevitably be forced to communicate with one another because of their common opposition to Catholicism (Travis 1984, pp. 311–12). Moreover, it was important to the Reformers that their desire to return to what they perceived to be the true doctrines of the early Church was in line with the beliefs of the Eastern Orthodox, who, on account of their antiquity, were believed by the Lutherans to have maintained and faithfully guarded the traditions of the apostles (Travis 1984, p. 310). Melanchthon's efforts throughout the 1540s and 1550s to contact Constantinople were made in collaboration with two Greeks of varying temperaments, a professor based in Venice and a wayward adventurer named James Basilicus (d. 1563), both of whom made for problems in such sensitive transactions.

In the case of the aforementioned former, who was known as Antony the Eparch, difficulties arose due to his reluctance to put the Lutherans, whom the devout Catholic Charles V opposed, in a position to undermine the Emperor, who was the only person, or so Antony believed, who could seriously oppose the Ottomans. In the case of James Basilicus, who claimed to have descended from royalty and to be a distant cousin of the then Patriarch Joasaph II (tenure, 1555–1565), things were a little more complicated. Basilicus promised to put the Lutherans in touch with the Patriarch. With Lutheran support, he was crowned Prince of Moldavia and, endeavoring to remodel the state based on Reformation ideals, was eventually murdered by an angry mob with his promise unfulfilled (Runciman 1997, pp. 240–45). In 1559, however, Patriarch Joasaph II sent his deacon Demetrios Mysos to Germany to gather information about the faith, worship, and customs of the Reformers (Travis 1984, p. 304). Now, the renowned Patristics scholar, Georges Florovsky (1893–1979), has tried to downplay this ostensible desire of the Orthodox to establish rapports with the Protestants by maintaining that

> . . .many of these ecumenical conversations were initiated, not so much because of any immediate theological concern, as from heavy diplomatic pressure arising from the general international situation. (Florovsky 1993, p. 187)

Certainly, whereas the Lutherans sought theological verification, the Orthodox mostly needed political support. In any case, this was just the opportunity that Melanchthon was looking for. He entrusted a letter outlining the beliefs of the Reformed Christians and a Greek translation of the *Augsburg Confession* to Demetrius who was to deliver it to the Patriarch in Constantinople. Melanchthon died before he could receive any news from the deacon. No news, however, would be forthcoming. Upon reading the *Confession*, Joasaph, seemingly unnerved by its content, decided simply to pretend to have never received it rather than spoil relations with a potential ally (ibid., p. 189).

An alternative hypothesis, though, maintained by George Mastrantonis, is that Demetrios, after receiving the translation from Melanchthon and having warmed to Lutheran beliefs, went to Moldavia to deal with its ruler, Prince James Basilicus, who was then imposing Reformation doctrines on the Orthodox there. He therefore did not go to Constantinople at all, and with his death, the translation of the *Augsburg Confession* was lost. This interpretation is significant due to the fact that it exonerates Patriarch Joasaph from the negative accusations made against him that he deliberately misplaced the *Confession*. The assessment of the veracity of this account, however, is outside the scope of this article. Suffice it to state that whatever happened to the document, Orthodox and Lutheran relations were pushed back over ten years until the historical correspondence between the Tübingen theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II in the 1570s (Mastrantonis 1982, p. 9).

At the University of Tübingen in Germany, the famous Lutheran Professor of Theology, Martin Crusius (1526–1607) firmly held the belief that union with the Church of the Greeks was a real possibility (Chadwick 1964, p. 358). The opportunity for renewed discourse came in 1570 when the German emperor Maximilian II (1527–1576) sent a zealous Lutheran ambassador to Constantinople who in turn appointed one of the Tübingen theologians, Stephen Gerlach, as the chaplain there (Yannaras 2006, p. 72). Gerlach put the Greek scholar Theodore Zygomalas in touch with Crusius, and it was through Zygomalas that both Crusius and the chancellor of Tübingen University, Jacob Andreae (1528–1590), were

able to come into contact with the then Patriarch of Constantinople Jeremiah II Tranos (1530–1595) (Runciman 1997, p. 246). Crusius' role has been explored meticulously in a volume by Paul Neuendorf (2022) entitled *Daraus kündten auch die Graeci lärnen* (So by What Was Announced the Greeks also Learnt). The Tübingen theologians established a personal correspondence with Jeremiah, sending him several letters to which the Patriarch replied in a paternal spirit. This encouraged them to send a fresh copy of the *Augsburg Confession* in Greek to the Patriarch in the hope of securing the union between the two churches (Yannaras 2006, p. 72). Jeremiah, however, could not ignore the *Confession* as his predecessor had because Gerlach was close at hand, awaiting a response. Aided, therefore, by a team of scholars, including Theodore Zygomalas and the latter's father John, he composed a reply to the Tübingen theologians which systematically addressed the content of the *Augsburg Confession* (Littlewood 2000, p. 836).

After receiving a reply from Jeremiah in which he acknowledged receipt of the document, Andreae wrote to the Patriarch before the latter had responded to its contents. This document is now known as *The Letter from the Tübingen Theologians to Patriarch Jeremiah [II] Accompanying the Augsburg Confession*:

> Although we might, perhaps, differ in some customs because very great geographical distances separate us, we, on our part, had hoped that we were in no way innovating on the main articles concerning salvation, since (as far as we know) we held and had kept the faith which had been handed down to us by the Holy Apostles and Prophets, by the God-bearing Fathers and Patriarchs, and by the seven Ecumenical Synods that were founded upon the God-given scriptures.

Here, Andreae is proclaiming that Lutheran beliefs are anchored in Patristic tradition and the Ecumenical Councils informed by it, not to mention the Scriptures. Indeed, the adherence to the 'faith of the Fathers' remains a constant and deep conviction throughout the correspondence (Travis 1984, p. 313). Jeremiah's response to the *Confession*, submitted to the Lutherans in 1576, clearly demonstrates that he did not agree. In fact, the Patriarch's reply, consisting of 21 chapters corresponding to the 21 articles of faith contained in the first part of the *Augsburg Confession*, would have deeply disappointed the Lutherans. It even began with a quotation from Basil of Caesarea's *Against Eunomius* 2.8 implying that the Lutherans had departed from the spirit of the same synods referred to in Andreae's letter. Thus:

> One who has the judgment of Christ before his eyes, who has seen the great danger that threatens those who dare to subtract from or add to those things which have been handed down by the Spirit, must not be ambitious to innovate, but must content himself with those things which have been proclaimed by the saints.

The Patriarch's response also addressed the list of ostensible abuses that constituted the second part of the *Confession* which the Lutherans maintained were being perpetuated by the Catholic Church, but which were standard in both Catholic and Orthodox practice (Littlewood 2000, p. 836). These included confession, celibacy, monastic vows, and fasting, to name a few.

Of the 21 articles in the *Confession*, Pt. 1, many of which are not equally discussed, there are certain points of agreement, including the first article concerning the Nicene Creed as accurately reflecting the truth of the Church; the second concerning the doctrine of Original Sin; and the seventh pertaining to the nature of the Church as based on a proper teaching of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments (Mastrantonis 1982, pp. 32, 36, 46–47). The Patriarch, however, considered many of these as only partially true and subsequently corrected them by expounding Orthodoxy's perspective concerning each one. For example, in his response to the first article, he affirmed that the filioque should be omitted from the Nicene Creed because—in a manner reflecting the Orthodox Church's position in general—he considered it an erroneous interpolation made by the Catholic Church several centuries earlier (Mastrantonis 1982, p. 32). The Patriarch pointedly quotes

various diachronic Patristic sources that do not refer to the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, such as the Pope-saints Gregory the Great and Leo III. This was in spite of the evidence that earlier Fathers venerated by both Orthodox and Catholics alike, such as Origen and Augustine, articulated the procession of the Spirit via both the Father and the Son in a manner that is retrospectively consistent with the filioque clause (Siecienski 2010, pp. 34–35, 60).

For the second article on Original Sin, Patriarch Jeremiah emphasized that baptism for the remission of sins should only be done via triple immersion—no longer mandated in the West at this time by either Reformers or Roman Catholics—and immediately followed by chrismation. Concerning the seventh article, he stated that the sacraments were seven in number, including "baptism, chrismation with the holy unction, Holy Communion, ordination, marriage, penance, and holy oil" (Mastrantonis 1982, p. 47) before expounding upon the function and merit of each one consecutively. He was clearly aware of the Lutheran belief in only two sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist (*Confession* arts. 9–13). The fact that the articles with which the Patriarch was able to partially agree needed clarification and amendment underlines a significant point: the Lutherans and the Orthodox held different opinions concerning the nature of the Church or ecclesiology. And we can hardly leave aside the disputed articles of faith with which Jeremiah disagreed in order to illustrate the irreconcilability of some of the Lutheran and Orthodox positions. Concerning free will in art. 18, the Lutherans emphasized the impotence of the will without the grace of God, quoting a text erroneously attributed to St Augustine entitled the *Hypognosticon* or *Hypomnesticon contra Pelagianos et Coelestianos* (*An Instructive Letter Against the Pelagians and Coelestians*). In *Hypognosticon* Bk. 3, ch. 4 it states:

> We concede that all men have a free will, for all have a natural, innate understanding and reason. However, this does not enable them to act in matters pertaining to God (such as loving God with their whole heart or fearing him)...

In response to this, Jeremiah quoted St John Chrysostom's *Commentary on Epistle to Hebrews*, *Homily 12*, namely his interpretation of a passage from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans which reads, "So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy" (Rom 9:16). Concerning this passage, John stated:

> For we must first choose the good; and then He leads us to His part. He does not anticipate our choice, lest our free will be destroyed. When we have made our choice, then He brings us to great assistance . . . For it is ours to choose and to wish, but God's to complete and to bring to an end.

Reflecting upon the Fathers and their approach toward Scripture, Jeremiah accepted that the grace of God is paramount, but he nonetheless affirmed that it is only those who actively will to be saved that are saved. Also, the 21st article, which discourages prayers to saints as intercessors before God, was swiftly rebuked by Jeremiah, who espoused the Orthodox (and Catholic) position by stating that "we make mediators of all the saints, especially the Mother of the Lord, and along with her the choirs of the angels and saints, whom we venerate in a relative manner, but not in the manner of divine worship" (Mastrantonis 1982, p. 90). Lastly, one of the more significant points of disagreement was the Lutheran belief concerning justification by faith alone, which constitutes the subject of the fourth article of the *Augsburg Confession* and which we saw was a main feature of the Reformation with Martin Luther's insistence on sola fide. The original text stated that "our churches teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works but are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith" (Pelikan and Hotchkiss 2003, p. 60). Jeremiah repudiated this by asserting that "the Church demands a living faith, which is made evident by good works" (Mastrantonis 1982, p. 37). He also quoted the *Shorter Rules* of Basil in order to once again demonstrate that his assertion had its basis in the mindset of the Church Fathers. As Basil wrote:

> The grace from above does not come to the one who is not striving. But both of them, the human endeavour and the assistance descending from above through faith, must be mixed together for the perfection of virtue. . .

This dynamic illustration of the intricate relationship between faith and works, resonating with the apostle James the Just's assertion that "faith without works is dead" (Jas 2:20), is in stark contrast to the Lutheran emphasis on sola fide.

Turning to the second part of the *Augsburg Confession*, Jeremiah addressed the so-called burdens or abuses of the Catholic Church which the Lutheran Reformers believed they were rectifying, since the Orthodox Church adhered to these as well. These included, as we saw above, monastic vows, compulsory clerical celibacy (which, for the Orthodox, was optional), confession, and fasting (Littlewood 2000, p. 836). Jeremiah was again compelled to give a fuller and more balanced position on these issues, affirming that monasticism is a praised and legitimate office of the Church; that both celibacy and marriage for priests are, from the Orthodox Church's perspective, equally valid, and that confession is an indispensable sacrament of the Church employed since early times for the therapy of the soul and the forgiveness of sins (Mastrantonis 1982, pp. 92–93). Jeremiah then ended his response by exhorting the Lutherans to follow and submit to the apostolic and synodal decrees of the Orthodox Church, for he believed that, only when doing so, by this could the "two churches . . . become one by the grace of God" (Mastrantonis 1982, p. 103).

Unfortunately, the Tübingen theologians' sincere hope for union would not be attained. They sent another letter to the Patriarch in 1577, clarifying the points to which he had objected. The Patriarch responded in the following year, reiterating his views in a manner which was clearly less conciliatory. The Lutherans, adamant in reaching an agreement, sent yet another letter in 1580, which argued that the matters of dispute were only matters of terminology, and that perhaps other differences could be treated as differences in ritual and usage. The Patriarch's final response concerning this matter is indicative of both the inability of the two churches to find common ground, and the role that divergent readings of the broader tradition shared by Orthodoxy and Catholicism—but especially the reinforcement of that tradition in the writings of the Fathers—had to play in the ultimate failure of the Reformer's intentions:

> We request that from henceforth you do not cause us more grief . . . Therefore, going about your own ways, write no longer concerning dogmas; but if you do, write only for friendship's sake. Farewell (Mastrantonis 1982, p. 306)

6. Conclusions

By the early fifteenth century, that which had constituted the 'undivided' Church almost half a millennium earlier was fragmented and in deep strife. The Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople, under Ottoman occupation, was administering to a subject people isolated from their Western counterparts, whom they viewed with bitterness. The Roman Catholic Church, adjusting to the new social, political, and ideological environment of the Renaissance, had come under attack by Reformers who believed that it had become corrupt. Theologians such as Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon attempted to reform aspects of Catholicism while their counterparts, Zwingli and Calvin, attempted to create independent churches anchored solely on the scriptures and faith. In reality, they—along with the Lutherans later on—substituted traditional Catholicism with their own administrative instruments that were dependent on the vicissitudes of local independent sovereigns. Thus, the Reformation quickly became disunited on both the level of faith and the level of ecclesial or denominational governance.

Deprived of established criteria of authority settled in the institution of the Papacy, in the canons of Ecumenical Councils, and in the broader tradition, the various protagonists for Reformation soon displayed their divergent understanding of the Bible both in relation to the Scriptural texts themselves and in relation to the Patristic interpretation of these texts. These fractured understandings influenced doctrine, so that while Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin could agree on fundamental Trinitarian and Christological beliefs,

they nevertheless disputed in relation to everything else, especially the Eucharist. Into this maelstrom entered the Radical Reformers: the Anabaptists, such as Spiritualists Franck and Schwenckfeld, and those Unitarian rationalists Servetus and Sozzini who denied even the humanity of Christ and the existence of God as Trinity altogether. Against this complicated background, it is no surprise therefore that by the 1550s, the conciliatory Melanchthon turned to a more or less stable apostolic Church, the Orthodox one, for union and confirmation of the Lutheran tenets of faith delineated in the *Augsburg Confession*. The irony is that Melanchthon did not consider that the Orthodox, in spite of their split from Catholicism centuries earlier, had much more in common with the Roman Catholic Church than with the Reformers themselves.

This is reflected in the correspondence between the Lutherans and the Orthodox, specifically by the overtures of the Tübingen theologians to Patriarch Jeremiah II. Faced with a fragmenting Reformation, armed with a confessional platform to better stabilize the increasingly problematic situation, and motivated both out of a sincere desire to establish their apostolicity by appealing to and even seeking union with the Orthodox Church, not to mention securing an ally against Rome, the correspondence failed miserably. And this failure had just as much to do with the content of the *Augsburg Confession* as it did with the Patristic proof texts that were used by the Tübingen scholars to justify their positions on important doctrinal matters—positions which the Orthodox, who, sharing with the Western Catholics as they did a deep appreciation of the Fathers, ultimately rejected the Lutheran recourse to the same Patristic tradition. As I have attempted to demonstrate by assessing some of the points of disagreement outlined by Patriarch Jeremiah with recourse to Patristic sources in his response to the *Augsburg Confession*, namely in relation to the filioque (which we have seen was a matter of contention between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches), the sacraments, and free will—as well as the Lutheran approach to the nature of the Church and the scriptures—all of these could not be reconciled with the views of the Lutherans. By reacting so severely against Catholicism, the Lutherans not only polarized themselves from their Western contemporaries, but from the Orthodox as well, and a mutual antagonism against Rome could not constitute enough common ground to secure a union.

We detected, at the beginning, the Patristic bases of Martin Luther's theology, indeed the apparent stamp of Cyril of Alexandria's special Christological formulations in his approach to the divinity of Christ. If this has been quite widely noted, however, there still remains the question of Luther's Protestant freedom to theologize "beyond Cyril" (Malysz 2023). In any case, no matter how nuanced Cyril's position was, by the sixteenth century, Cyril's Coptic associations still partly tainted him with pro-monophysitism and the anti-Chalcedonians (especially from the seventh century on and the monothelite controversy on) (see e.g., Gregorios and Chrysostomos 1996). The Patriarch of Constantinople in the 1550s was not ready for dissonances either from the West or the East. The paradox is that the Orthodox primate held so 'fast to the Faith' when his position was relatively vulnerable under the Sultan. The Turks had controlled the Balkans from the fourteenth century, so the former Byzantines (Romans or Greeks) largely lost; Russians were staking the ground of their own hallowed destiny in the north; The Ferrara-Florence Council had not been finalized and glory-enshrouded Rome, however damaged by Protestantism, was firming its own doctrinal ground at Trent during the time of the correspondence we have considered; Lutheranism was making grounds in Moldavia and Slovenia; and intransigence still applied between churches accepting the Chalcedonian Definition or not. The apparently embattled Patriarchate of Constantinople stood firm and the Faith, complicated by factors relating to ethnicity, became the key uniting factor for those under its charge. And this was at the time when one great moment was obviously coming to an end, when the great *Patrologiae Graeca et Latina* were eventually thought to be best brought to a close.

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Note

[1] It is important to note that while this term was utilized in the ancient polemic between the Chalcedonians and what would become the Oriental or Orthodox churches—Coptic or otherwise, i.e., non-Chalcedonians—these days 'miaphysitism' is the preferred nomenclature in both scholarly and ecumenical circles.

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