

Lecture 3: European Reformation Protestant Theology

1. Reformers and their Schools

The European Protestant Reformation is not easy to date or pin down; nor should we try. It is a dynamic flux of ever-fragmenting heterodox Christian thinking admixed with more orthodox beliefs and practices which, in large measure and especially in the beginning, were defined against certain supposed abuses in the medieval Roman Catholic Church. This movement developed over centuries. However, it is legitimate to speak of the theology of the classical and radical Reformers in so far as certain highly influential individuals laid down the foundations for a Protestant project which was both to grow from them and, in most cases, eventually to outgrow them.

Over two weeks we shall have one lecture in two parts. The first will examine three classic Reformers or Reformation traditions and their legacies, both in those who supported them and those other Protestants who reacted against them. These three are: **Martin Luther (Lutheranism), John Calvin (Calvinism) - constituting the Magisterial Reformation and the Radical Reformation - Menno Simons (the Anabaptists and the Sects)**. We shall mainly confine ourselves to the period 1500 – 1600 and concentrate on those elements and trends that can be traced down to the modern period. So, although John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Martin Bucer and Ulrich Zwingli were highly influential in the history of Protestantism they did not establish churches that later looked back upon them as founding fathers. Reluctantly, therefore, we shall only refer to them in passing where necessary. The second lecture will trace the Reformation legacy within these evolving forms of Protestant Christianity from 1800 to the close of the 20th century. Each major section will include a brief assessment from an Orthodox point of view. This assessment will affirm those aspects which are in accordance with the Tradition of the Church and also identify those that are not. It is hereby hoped that Orthodox Christians particularly might acquire a balanced appreciation

of these heterodox Christian traditions within the inevitable limits of this brief presentation. Resources are offered for further study.

Another third lecture will consider the history of global **Anglicanism** which is, or at least perhaps “was”, a special case in that it has mostly, albeit contentiously, disavowed the term “Protestant” – at least in the modern era. It will be considered together with those more avowedly Protestant bodies (for example, the Puritans and Methodism) that broke away, either shortly after the British Reformation or beyond that into the contemporary period.

2. a. Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Lutheranism

Luther was an Augustinian friar. It is impossible to understand his contribution to Protestant thought without appreciating his inheritance from Augustine as mediated by other pre-Reformation thinkers such as Johannes Tauler¹ (1300-1361) and the other Rhineland mystics² who emphasised individual renunciation and total dependence upon God. St. Augustine, (always in the background in the west), bequeathed to Luther a radical mistrust of the possibilities of enlisting human faculties, primarily the will and good works, in the work of salvation. This belonged to God alone by his grace. Submission to God alone was the sole basis for justification ... that is, being made righteous ... by faith. Of course many will object that this is a very partial and selective reading of Augustine but it cannot be doubted that this Father’s bitter and protracted contentions against Pelagius lay very heavily on the hearts and in the minds of these Reformers, albeit in very different ways. Luther himself coined the term “the bondage of the will” in a work of the same name in 1525. He believed that man was incapable of good apart from the power of God releasing him from the grip of Satan. He denied that humans had any freedom apart from God. Everything was subordinated to this point such that good works were merely the fruit of

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Tauler

² <http://www.spiritualitytoday.org/spir2day/la02.html>

this righteousness, playing absolutely no role in salvation itself. Sanctifying grace (in western Latin terms) was made utterly dependent on justifying grace from which it was strictly distinguished. As with most of the other Reformers, Luther believed that all that was necessary for salvation could and should be taken from Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*). A consensus amongst the Reformers accrued around this cluster of “sola” / only doctrines ... *sola Scriptura*, *sola Fide* (Faith); *sola Gratia* (Grace); *solus Christus* (Christ – the Christocentric rather than Trinitarian emphasis); *solus Deo Gloria* (reverence to God alone) can all be read from Luther’s teachings and many after him.³ As with other Reformers, Lutheranism-after-Luther developed in many different directions; not all of them arguably consistent with the teaching of its ‘founding father.’ Lutheranism has generally followed Luther’s precedent in maintaining the centrality of the Eucharist for Christian life and a liturgical approach to worship. The threefold catholic order of bishops, priests and deacons, however, has been less consistently maintained; some communities and traditions firmly adhering to this, others adopting a more congregationalist model.

After Luther died his disciples fought over his legacy. His friend and academic, Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) was his naturally expected successor but his views sometimes pulled against those of Luther himself in questioning the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist (which Luther upheld) and ascribing to the human will a real role in salvation (which Luther detested). Nonetheless Melanchthon is responsible for the first confessional document of Lutheranism, the Augsburg Confession (1530)⁴. This was later modified in the Formula of Concord (1577)⁵ which, together with other doctrinal statements brought Lutheran doctrine into closer conformity with Luther himself. Nonetheless, this Concord was not universally accepted (in Denmark for example) and the resulting Lutheran

³ An Orthodox refutation of these “sola” positions will be found in an Appendix to this lecture, pages 14-17 .

⁴ The original text of the 1530 Confession and its several Articles may be found here (see also below) :- <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/275/275-h/275-h.htm>

⁵ The Formula may be found here:- <http://bookofconcord.org/fc-ep.php> This web site is an excellent resource for the foundational documents of Lutheranism.

scholastic system differed little in temperament from the medieval Roman Catholic variants that preceded it, in style if not in content.

Not unsurprisingly, not all Lutherans were entirely satisfied with the results, not least the so called “Pietists”, led by Philipp Jakob Spener, (1635-1705). These insisted that conformity to doctrine could not save but only a regenerating, living, personal relationship with Christ. Spener was the godfather of Count von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), the influential leader of the Moravian community at Herrnhut in Saxony and another Pietist. The movement less happily indicated the beginnings of a split in the soul of Lutheranism between mind and heart, one which profoundly affected those of a more liberal and modernist persuasion in later times; notably Friederich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who embraced the romantic idealism of subjectivity and experience over formal doctrinal Protestant orthodoxy.

2. b. Orthodoxy and Lutheranism

Martin Luther supposed that his faith was indistinguishable from Orthodoxy in the Christian East. In 1520 he declared:- “*The Orthodox believe as we do, baptise as we do, preach as we do, live as we do.*”⁶ In 1521 he added, concerning the issue of receiving Holy Communion in both kinds:- “*I now say that on this point the Greeks and Bohemians are not heretics and schismatics but the most Christian people and the best followers of the Gospel on earth.*”⁷ Was Luther accurate in his estimation? We may suppose, sadly, that he was not as no Orthodox Church eventually shared his confidence.^{8 9}

⁶ Martin Luther. “*Luther's Works: Career of the Reformer: II*” Volume 32, eds. G. Forell, H. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958) p. 58, 59.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ An excellent account of the encounter between the Orthodox and Lutherans in the 16th Century may be found here:- <http://www.stpaulsirvine.org/html/sixteenthcentury.htm>

⁹ An admirable collection of resources for the 16th Century dialogue may be found here:- <http://www.angelfire.com/ny4/djw/lutheran-orthodox.html>

Ecumenical contacts were established with Constantinople on the basis of a revised Greek translation of the Augsburg Confession, almost certainly penned by Melanchthon himself but ascribed to his friend and former pupil Dolscius. This was not a translation of the 1530 original but a revision using Greek liturgical terminology and with certain theological adjustments to render it acceptable to an Orthodox readership. Whether or not the writer considered he had authority from his own church to do this is unclear. A contemporary Lutheran¹⁰ has commented as follows:-

“... Eastern piety circled around the three divine attributes, life, love, and light. Sin and forgiveness of sin were only secondary, contributory factors. Man is saved by the healing process of divine grace. Christ is the great physician whose healing power causes man to be saved. To meet this Eastern conception something had to be done: justification had to be sacrificed in favour of reconciliation.”

This overstates the matter since sin and the forgiveness of sin are not secondary matters in Orthodoxy and other Lutherans have not recognised any watering down of Lutheran doctrine.¹¹ An historical account in detail of the theological dialogue between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Lutheran Delegation (1574-1582) need not detain us here but rather we may note and emphasise the conclusions reached – which did not in fact constitute sufficient grounds of agreement for any further contact to be maintained.

The German delegation was entirely respectful, humble and hopeful throughout but Patriarch Jeremias remained reserved and cautious, sensing perhaps that these Lutherans,

¹⁰ Berthold F. Korte, "Early Lutheran Relations with the Eastern Orthodox" The Lutheran Quarterly Volume IX Number I February 1957, p. 56.

¹¹ Wayne James Jorgensen, "The Augustana Graeca and the Correspondence Between the Tübingen Lutherans and Patriarch Jeremias: Scripture and Tradition in Theological Methodology"- Dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Boston University Graduate School, 1979.

although entirely sincere and educated men, did not grasp fully the extent to which east and west had diverged over the previous 500 years. Eventually both sides realised just how far apart they actually were. The Lutherans remained intransigent on the 'filioque', the veneration of icons and they also failed to understand how 16th Century western concerns with justification and righteousness under law and grace established an agenda that was really quite marginal, if at all present, in the Fathers. Jorgensen¹² has helpfully summarised the points of agreement and disagreement as follows:-

Points of Doctrinal Agreement

- a. The fundamental authority of Scripture, its inspiration, and its translation into the language of the people;
- b. God and the Trinity in general;
- c. Ancestral sin and its transmission to the entire human race;
- d. That humanity, not God, is the cause of evil;
- e. The two natures of Christ;
- f. The head of the Church is Jesus Christ alone;
- g. The second Coming, the judgment and future life, and the endlessness of reward and punishments;
- h. The reception of the Eucharist in both kinds;
- i. Rejection of papal satisfactions, indulgences, the treasury of the saints, purgatorial fire, and compulsory clerical celibacy.

Points of Doctrinal Disagreement

- a. Holy Tradition;

¹² Ibid.

- b. The Procession of the Holy Spirit (filioque) – 20% of the debate!
- c. Free Will;
- d. Divine Predestination;
- e. Justification;
- f. The number of sacraments;
- g. The performance of Baptism by immersion (Orthodox) vs. sprinkling or pouring (Lutheran), and the immediate performance of Chrismation and the giving of the Eucharist to those baptised (Orthodox);
- h. The meaning of the change in the Holy Eucharist, and the use of unleavened bread;
- i. The infallibility of the Church and of the Ecumenical Councils

The Patriarch at last became rather weary of the whole thing, but gave his valediction graciously at the end of the dialogue.¹³ Relations between Lutherans and the Orthodox would not rekindle until the 20th Century. After some 14 years of preparation the dialogue recommenced in 1981. There have been 13 sessions so far, the last in 2006.¹⁴ A lot has been achieved but the on-going work has much further to go. The present Patriarch, His Holiness, Bartholomew I, has expressed much more hopeful sentiments than his 16th Century predecessor.¹⁵

¹³ *"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 honour 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 friendships sake. Farewell."*

cited in:- George Mastrantonis, *"Augsburg and Constantinople: The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession"*, (Brookline, Ma: Holy Cross Press., 1982, p. 306)

¹⁴ This web page of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Geneva links to all the Agreed Statements of this 25 year period:-
http://www.ecupatria.org/dial_lutheran.htm

¹⁵ *"We have a long way to walk before we reach full Eucharistic communion. Dialogue is the only way for us as people of good will to solve problems"* (30th Anniversary statement)
<http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Communication-Services/News/Releases.aspx?a=4442>

3. John Calvin (1509 - 1564) and Calvinism

The other great Protestant tradition of the Reformation was that driven by John Calvin, a Frenchman from Picardy who trained as a lawyer before he embraced the Reformation. Calvin was a much more rigorous, systematic and rationalistic thinker than Luther. He also was a capable organiser and administrator, determined to build structures that would give both longevity and stability to the Protestant movement. After an abortive first attempt he succeeded in creating his theocracy in Geneva. He was a prolific writer producing commentaries, systematic treatises (*The Institutes*) and polemical writings. His moralism and world renouncing asceticism bequeathed to the world a new term, Puritanism. One cannot regard Calvin's theology as too far removed from Lutheranism in respect of the classic "solus" (*ante*) but his appropriation of Augustine (or at least elements of Augustine) is far more rigorous and he pursues this with inexorable logic much further. He sees salvation as entirely the work of divine grace such that humanity, being totally corrupt, can contribute absolutely nothing. God predestines some to salvation, some to damnation. Humans may have free will but it is an utterly impotent reality in the face of this irresistible and overwhelming prevenient grace of God. Even when humans appear to "choose" Christ they are merely fulfilling the designs of an inscrutable Providence. All humanity incurs the wrath of God and a sentence of endless torment in hell on account of the Fall of Adam and the pernicious and pervasive effects of original sin. Only God's grace can deliver anyone from this parlous state. This is "the bondage of the will" on steroids!

Not everyone in 16th century Europe accepted without reservation this picture of God and Man. One dissenter was a certain Jakob Arminius (1560-1609) who insisted that humans were free to choose whether or not to accept salvation. Double predestination as taught by both Augustine and Calvin was significantly modified in Arminius' teaching to mean that God has foreknowledge of our choices but not control of them. We are not puppets manipulated by God. Strict Calvinists reacted strongly against Arminius and at the Synod of

Dort (1618-1619) he was answered point by point.¹⁶ In recent times this Synod's confession of faith has been summarised by the acronym "**TULIP**" and Fr. Andrew Damick¹⁷ has usefully set these out for us as follows:-

- **T**otal Depravity – the Fall of Mankind utterly obliterated any goodness in man, rendering him incapable of choosing God.
- **U**nconditional Election – God's choice to save certain people is not based on anything they have done and was made even before creation itself.
- **L**imited Atonement – Christ's substitutionary sacrifice on the cross is only salvific for the elect.
- **I**rrresistible Grace – When God chooses to save someone, that person has no choice but to be saved; free will is in no way involved.
- **P**erseverance of the Saints – Once God has saved someone, that person will never fall away; those who do fall away were never really saved in the first place.

Each one of these Calvinist tenets is completely incompatible with Orthodox Christianity. Collectively they render God capricious, inscrutable and immoral; humanity inert, impotent and hell-bound. As a religious system, Calvinism is rigorously self-consistent and coherent but in its content an Orthodox Christian is bound to find such ideas entirely without warrant in Scripture and Tradition, and, indeed, morally repugnant. One suspects that they would have even embarrassed St. Augustine¹⁸ whose darker speculations on double predestination toward the end of his life nonetheless underpin Calvin's monstrous edifice.

¹⁶ Arminianism survived beyond the Reformation both within many developing Protestant traditions and in newly emergent denominations. Sometimes schisms have resulted as in early Welsh Methodism where a Calvinist approach overcame the more Arminian position of English Methodism.

¹⁷ Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick, "*Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy*" (Chesterton, IN, Conciliar Press, 2011 p. 74)

¹⁸ Augustine of Hippo is a saint in the Greek Orthodox Church but called "Blessed" Augustine by some other Orthodox. Opinions vary about his role in the development of heterodox western theology, Roman Catholic and Protestant in the Second Millennium. A more appreciative and frankly reliable account of the place of St. Augustine in Orthodoxy may be found here:- http://orthodoxinfo.com/inquirers/bless_aug.aspx

From an Orthodox point of view there is little improvement when one surveys worship and ministry in this tradition. Calvinism is severely iconoclastic and anti-sacramental in the Orthodox reference to the Divine Energies and an appreciation of the Incarnation for anthropology and aesthetics. So, Calvinist church interiors have always been without any kind of adornment. Because Calvinism was much more influential than Lutheranism in Britain at the time of the Reformation, Puritan churches, both Anglican and dissenting embraced this bare, minimalist style with a central pulpit often displacing the altar table. In ministry, Calvinism developed a non-episcopal Presbyterian polity with a hierarchy of elders, teaching and ruling, ordained and lay, with, in some places, deacons.

With such huge barriers to overcome in ecumenical dialogue it might be surprising that any agreements have been reached in the modern era but this is not so.¹⁹ Bilateral conversations between the representatives of Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches began in Leuenberg, Switzerland, in 1988. There have been some agreements in doctrines of the Trinity, Christology and the Church. Interestingly, and perhaps not unsurprisingly, the doctrine of the atonement and patterns of ministry have not yet been discussed.²⁰

4. Menno Simons, the Anabaptists and the Radical Reformation

Working Principles

The so called Radical Reformation took the principles of the Magisterial Reformation and by a radical application of individual spiritual liberty and a rejection of the State's involvement

¹⁹ Historically and before these meetings we only have the interesting question as to whether or not the Ecumenical Patriarch Cyril Lukaris (1572-1638) was or was not a Calvinist. His authorship of the avowedly Calvinist *Confessio* of 1629 is disputed by some. He maintained his Orthodoxy over several depositions but never repudiated the *Confessio* in writing. He may have been traduced by reformists, Jesuits, and the Ottoman sultan himself who had him strangled and thrown into the Bosphorus. See:- http://orthodoxinfo.com/inquirers/ca4_loukaris.aspx

²⁰ These problematic issues of the Reformed / Calvinist – Orthodox Dialogue are treated in full here with ample resources for further study:- http://orthodoxinfo.com/inquirers/inq_reformed.aspx

in any church, it tried to create communities of the Spirit. These communities or, strictly speaking, more or less exclusive communes sometimes repudiated an ordained clergy and sacraments but more often simply rejected trans-congregational structures. These communes attracted souls who fancied that they had discovered primitive or pure Christianity. To maintain this position they had to account for the alleged disappearance of true Christianity in the early centuries, certainly before the emergence of Constantine and his supposed statist Catholicism but usually much further back and even within a few generations of Pentecost itself. The favoured theory to account for this disappearance was the so-called "Great Apostasy"; essentially a circular, self-justifying elitist argument for the Radicals' own existence and superiority, or, as we might say - the politics of hubris.

In some senses, therefore, the Radical Reformation it is what happened when a spirit of radical dissent met a 'sola scriptura' notion of biblical authority entirely disconnected from any received tradition. This is the reason why the main persecutors of Radical Reform were the Calvinist and Lutheran exponents of Magisterial Reform, mainly because the Radicals conceived a new Christendom without any State endorsement. We should recall that if it had not been for the support of the German princes, Luther could not have implemented his reform program. Without the political support of the Genevan authorities Calvin's model theocracy would have been strangled at birth. The Radical Reformers would have none of this so they posed a threat to emergent States in Europe who saw a great logic in attempting to domesticate the new Protestant religion. These tensions were exported from Europe to America but it was in the New World that the Radical Reform eventually truly triumphed. It was here that the State and the Church were constitutionally separated; it was here that every member of the elect had the freedom to prove his salvation by the prosperity that came from moral restraint, hard work and spiritual blessing. Prophecy and temporal blessings became normative and linked in America; the home of capitalism and the prosperity gospel. They remained, however, marginal in Protestant Europe and an unknown language in the Europe of the Counter Reformation. Even to this day social and economic theory follows the same fault line between both sides of the Atlantic.

The Anabaptists

The early radicals were often called Anabaptists ... because they rejected infant baptism and “rebaptised” when receiving adults from other churches who had been baptised as infants. It was Zwingli who had first weakened Protestant sacramental theology amongst the radicals by declaring all sacraments merely symbolic expressions of a precursory personal faith. The ‘sola scriptura’ principle had already suggested that infant baptism was too insubstantially supported in the New Testament for it to survive. Believer baptism therefore became the hallmark of the Radical Reformation. In this symbolic rite God did nothing. Baptism simply afforded a dramatic opportunity for an adult or young believer to declare his faith to the community. The practice of immersion simply connected this demonstration to the practice of the New Testament but as an ordinance rather than a regenerating and mystical incorporation into the body of Christ as some other Reformers and Roman Catholics supposed. Later some of these Anabaptists became simply to be known as Baptists. They had many leaders but no one can doubt the influence of an early figure in the movement, Menno Simons.

Menno Simons

Simons was a priest, born in Friesland in northern Holland in 1496. He had doubts about the teaching of the Roman Church and one day was disturbed to hear of the martyrdom of a local Anabaptist. He became convinced that the baptism of infants was wrong but initially he remained a priest. In 1534 the city of Munster was taken over by extreme Anabaptists who declared it to be the New Jerusalem and polygamy was introduced. Roman Catholics and Protestants united for a while to besiege the city which fell in 1535. Many died. When the demoralised Anabaptists were scattered Simons felt a call to leave the priesthood and take up the mantle of an itinerant Anabaptist preacher. This he did for 18 years, organising the Anabaptist movement and establishing it on pacifist grounds. Eventually he was given hospitality by a sympathetic nobleman in Holstein and he spent the last 7 years of his life with him, studying, teaching and writing. The Anabaptists who gathered round him as a leader in Holland and northern Germany became known as Mennonites as did others who

inherited his tradition and communities. Mennon not only opposed the antinomian revolutionary Anabaptist factions but also the quietist precursors of the Quakers who subordinated the Scriptures to a doctrine of personal illumination by the Holy Spirit. In this aspect he was a strict 'sola scriptura' reformer, but in taking up this absolute position and rejecting any concept of Church Tradition he fell into an ancient heresy. He believed the Monophysite doctrine that Mary did not impart our human nature to Christ but was rather simply a 'host mother' to the Logos. Mennonites subsequently repudiated this heresy.²¹

Schisms and Profusions

The Radical Reformation was a much broader and diverse phenomenon than that pioneered by the early Mennonites. By holding to a strict 'sola scriptura' position many groups multiplied and then splintered along the fault lines of a leader's personal biblical interpretations and teachings. Elements from all preceding reformers and traditions, both Magisterial and Radical were mixed together, recombined and redistributed in an ever expanding profusion of sects. These were exported to America where an entrepreneurial spirit promoted new articulations of heterodoxy without restraint once the Freedom of Religion had become firmly entrenched constitutionally and in the culture. An historical perspective reveals a vast spectrum of sects and beliefs, some barely Christian, others taking the route of Radical Reform to a position not too distant from Christian Orthodoxy (uppercase).²² Some of these will be considered in forthcoming lectures when we survey Revivalism from the first so-called Great Awakening to the contemporary charismatic movement, together with the somewhat less radical offshoots that split from Anglicanism.

The great success of the Radical Reformation movement was that it managed to secure its own freedom from the iron grip of the State Churches of the Magisterial Reform and then

²¹ Many contemporary charismatic Baptists and Pentecostals have fallen into the opposing Nestorian / Adoptionist heresy of supposing that Christ became the Son of God in time by being uniquely filled with the Holy Spirit.

²² Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick (Ibid, footnote ¹⁷) gives an overview of traditions in the mainstream of Protestantism (Baptists, Hutterites, Brethren, Moravians, Presbyterians / Puritans, Quakers, Shakers, Methodists, Pentecostals and those much more on the fringe from Unitarians to Adventists, Christadelphians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and Moonies, (pp 95-101, Ch5).

hijacked their doctrines and spirituality into new forms, forging these into popular movements distributed across most if not all the Protestant denominations. In this it both fuelled the secularisation of western Christian culture (accelerated by the Enlightenment) and harnessed it to its own ends by exploiting the freedoms created to drive the profusion of its ever diversifying forms. No value judgement is offered here other than to say that from an Orthodox perspective all these churches are heterodox. Some are simply closer to our position than others. Multilateral dialogues continue to be held from time to time with the Protestant Churches of both the classical / Magisterial and Radical Reformation.²³

Appendix 1: The 5 Great “Solas” – an Orthodox Response²⁴

Sola Scriptura (Only Scripture)

Definitions and Usages: The Magisterial Reformers understood this to mean that Scripture was the supreme authority to which Church Tradition (which they allowed) must be subordinate. Zwingli and the Radical Reformers on the other hand took this further by insisting that Scripture was the *only* authority and anything that could not be directly proven from or shown in Scripture should be rejected.

Orthodox Response: Scripture is the authoritative core of Tradition from which it is not separated. Scripture was originally oral tradition, authenticated by the apostles and before these, the righteous of the Old Testament; in short, the Church. To detach Scripture from Tradition is to lose its context and interpretative framework, rendering it unintelligible.

Sola Fide (By Faith Alone)

Definitions and Usages: The centre of Luther’s Christianity was ‘justification by faith alone.’ By this he meant that a Christian is made or counted righteous by faith alone and not in respect of any good works which he may have performed. As such, this doctrine is closely

²³ For an account of recent European dialogues between the diverse churches of the Reformation and Orthodoxy, see here:- <http://cid.ceceurope.org/working-priorities/orthodox-dialogue/>

²⁴ For more detailed explanations see Damick, *Ibid.* pp. 62-72

allied to that of Sola Gratia (by grace alone – see next section). In other words, nothing that we can do can make us acceptable to God and we have no holiness or goodness of our own. All comes from God and we need simply to accept this and surrender to Him.

Orthodox Response: If we are made righteous (justified) then it is not simply a forensic change in our state either imputed or simply declared by God;²⁵ it is a real inward change and transformation in which God’s action, a believer’s faith and his active cooperation with God in the performance of good works and the acquisition of virtue and holiness all play their part. The Orthodox count justification and sanctification as joint handmaids in the ongoing process of salvation.

Sola Gratia (By Grace Alone)

Definitions and Usages: This is closely linked to “sola fide” as it asserts that only God’s action is present in salvation. The extreme variant of this position is to be found in Calvinism’s doctrine of irresistible grace. Other reformers clung (correctly) to the idea that we can and must choose to be saved ... but even this was often also understood to be a choice enabled only by God and lacking any real human capacity and freedom. The spectre of Augustine’s refutation of Pelagius hangs over this definition. Protestants often regard the Orthodox as semi-Pelagian. In *their* terms, this is true.

Orthodox Response: The initiative and well spring of salvation always belongs to God but salvation may only become operative in any given person by his or her active consent and co-working with God unto righteousness (synergy). Moreover, grace is not simply God’s benevolent and saving *attitude* towards us; grace is nothing less than the uncreated energies of God Himself,²⁶ working with us and within us to make real changes in our lives. Since the Incarnation and the gift of the Spirit has really connected to us to God, salvation is deification (theosis) ... but only if we repent and embrace sacrificial love.

²⁵ Protestants derived these notions from the medieval Roman Catholic belief that righteousness came from “infused grace”. This is a legacy of an Augustinian understanding of original sin in which all original righteousness and capacity for goodness was either lost or severely impaired at the Fall. The Reformers simply took this position and argument to its logical conclusion.

²⁶ Protestantism received this unamended from medieval Roman Catholicism. It reflects the late Latin west’s problem with mystical theology and the conflation of both divine transcendence (apophaticism) and divine immanence (the divine energies).

Solus Christus (Only by Christ)

Definitions and Usages: The reformers reacted strongly against the notion of a mediatorial priesthood or the necessity or desirability of going through the saints or the Mother of God to Christ ... both of which were medieval Roman Catholic beliefs and practices. In upholding “Solus Christus” they were insisting on the direct unmediated and saving relationship between the believer and Christ.

Orthodox response: The believer does have a direct and unmediated relationship with Christ BUT it is the role of the Church, the Sacraments and the intercessory role of its Ministers and Saints to strengthen and deepen that. Were these avenues of God’s saving action to be removed the believer would still have Christ but the work of salvation would then become much more difficult, even problematic. The Church isn’t simply a place where individual believers gather, but rather it is the communion of the Spirit in which salvation more surely happens. The Orthodox also do not accept the Christocentricity that this term implies, common to both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in the west during the second millennium. God’s saving action is always the work of the Holy Trinity, never simply “of Christ” - as if the Logos could act quite apart from the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Soli Deo Gloria (To God Alone be the Glory)

Definitions and Usages: This contains both the unexceptional belief that worship should only be ascribed to God and the more contentious notion that no human or created thing is worthy of any kind of differential and subordinate respect or veneration.

Orthodox response: From an Orthodox point of view this is paired with “Solus Christus.” Worship truly belongs to God alone but a relative respect is also due to humanity as made in His image and likeness. Moreover, sanctity in humans and even in places and created things warrants our veneration since God reveals Himself through and in them. If we refuse to venerate saints, icons, relics and shrines this is to deny the full reality and implications of both the Incarnation and salvation as theosis in the physical realm. It is a sort of crypto-Nestorianism and Iconoclasm that has always been condemned by the Church.

Appendix 2: A Timeline of the European Protestant Reformation

- 1517 Martin Luther's 95 Theses
- 1519 Leipzig Debate
- 1520 Luther's Three Reformation Treatises
- 1521 Excommunication of Luther
Luther at Diet of Worms
- 1522 Luther's *New Testament* in German
- 1523 Zurich becomes a Reformed City
Martin Bucer active in Strassburg
Zwingli active in Zurich
- 1527 Schleitheim Confession of the Anabaptists
- 1529 Marburg Colloquy
Luther's Small and Large Catechisms
- 1530 Augsburg Confession
- 1531 Death of Zwingli
- 1534 Anabaptists take over Munster
Luther's Complete German *Bible*
- 1536 Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion*
published
Death of Erasmus
Execution of William Tyndale
First Helvetic Confession
Menno Simons active
- 1546 Death of Luther
- 1548 Augsburg Interim
- 1551 Death of Martin Bucer
- 1553 Michael Servetus burned for heresy
in Geneva
- 1555 Peace of Augsburg
- 1557 Geneva Bible New Testament
- 1559 Genevan Academy Founded
- 1560 Geneva Bible Complete
- 1561 Death of Menno Simons
- 1562 *Heidelberg Catechism*
Second Helvetic Confession
- 1564 Death of Calvin
- 1580 Book of Concord
- 1603 Jakob Arminius at Leiden
- 1618-1619 Synod of Dort