



Confession of Cyril Lucaris: Patriarch of Constantinople (1629)

Cyrrillus Lucaris (Kyrillos Loukaris), a martyr within the Orthodox Church, occupies a remarkable position in church history. His work is a mere episode, and passed away apparently without permanent effect, but (like the attempted reformations of Wyclif, Huss, and Savonarola) it may have a prophetic meaning for the future, and be resumed by Providence in a better form.

Cyrril Lucar was born in 1568 or 1572 in Candia (Crete), then under the sovereignty of Venice, and the only remaining seat of Greek learning. He studied and traveled extensively in Europe, and was for a while rector and Greek teacher in the Russian Seminary at Ostrog, in Volhynia. In French Switzerland he became acquainted with the Reformed Church, and embraced its faith. Subsequently he openly professed it in a letter to the Professors of Geneva (1636), through Leger, a minister from Geneva, who had been sent to Constantinople. He was unanimously elected Patriarch of Alexandria in 1602 and of Constantinople in 1621. While occupying these high positions he carried on an extensive correspondence with Protestant divines in Switzerland, Holland, and England, sent promising youths to Protestant universities, and imported a press from England (1629) to print his Confession and several Catechisms. This confession, an eighteen point summary of Cyrril's beliefs originally written in Latin, was published in Geneva in 1629. It immediately aroused fierce opposition among other Orthodox leaders since it challenged some of the basic tenets of Orthodoxy. A Synod of Eastern Orthodox Churches was called in Jerusalem in 1672 to refute the position of Cyrril. The Synod produced its own confession, the Confession of Dositheus (Patriarch of Jerusalem), in which it refuted Cyrril's eighteen points, as well as adding four catechetical style questions. Cyrril Lucaris sent the famous uncial Codex Alexandrinus of the Bible to King Charles I. of England and translated the New Testament into the modern Greek language. The Confession of Cyrril expresses the faith which he hoped would become the faith of the Orthodox Church.

## **The Confession**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Cyril, Patriarch of Constantinople, publishes this brief Confession for the benefit of those who inquire about the faith and the religion of the Greeks, that is of the Eastern Church, in witness to God and to men and with a sincere conscience without any dissimulation.

### **Chapter 1.**

We believe in one God, true, Almighty, and in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the Father unbegotten, the Son begotten of the Father before the world, consubstantial with the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father by the Son, having the same essence with the Father and the son. We call these three persons in one essence the Holy Trinity, ever to be blessed, glorified, and worshipped by every creature.

### **Chapter 2.**

We believe the Holy Scripture to be given by God, to have no other author but the Holy Spirit. This we ought undoubtedly to believe, for it is written. We have a more sure word of prophecy, to which you do well to take heed, as to light shining in a dark place. We believe the authority of the Holy Scripture to be above the authority of the Church. To be taught by the Holy Spirit is a far different thing from being taught by a man; for man may through ignorance err, deceive and be deceived, but the word of God neither deceives nor is deceived, nor can err, and is infallible and has eternal authority.

### **Chapter 3.**

We believe that the most merciful God has predestined His elect unto glory before the beginning of the world, without any respect of their works and that there was no other impulsive cause to this election, but only the good will and mercy of God. In like manner before the world was made, He rejected whom He would, of which act of reprobation, if you consider the absolute dealing of God, His will is the cause; but if you look upon the laws and principles of good order, which God's providence is making use of in the government of the world, His justice is the cause, for God is merciful and just.

#### **Chapter 4.**

We believe that one God in Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be the Creator of all things visible and invisible. Invisible things we call the angels, visible things we call the heavens and all things under them. And because the Creator is good by nature, He has created all things good, and He cannot do any evil; and if there is any evil, it proceeds either from the Devil or from man. For it ought to be a certain rule to us, that God is not the Author of evil, neither can sin by any just reason be imputed to Him.

#### **Chapter 5.**

We believe that all things are governed by God's providence, which we ought rather to adore than to search into. Since it is beyond our capacity, neither can we truly understand the reason of it from the things themselves, in which matter we suppose it better to embrace silence in humility than to speak many things which do not edify.

#### **Chapter 6.**

We believe that the first man created by God fell in Paradise, because he neglected the commandment of God and yielded to the deceitful counsel of the serpent. From thence sprung up original sin to his posterity, so that no man is born according to the flesh who does not bear this burden and feel the fruits of it in his life.

#### **Chapter 7.**

We believe that Jesus Christ our Lord emptied Himself, that is He assumed man's nature into His own substance. That He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the ever virgin Mary, was born, suffered death, was buried, and risen in glory, that He might bring salvation and glory to all believers, Whom we look for to come to judge both quick and dead.

#### **Chapter 8.**

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ sits on the right hand of His Father and there He makes intercession for us, executing alone the office of a true and lawful high priest and mediator, and from there He cares for His people and governs His Church adorning and enriching her with many blessings.

## **Chapter 9.**

We believe that without faith no man can be saved. And we call faith that which justifies in Christ Jesus, which the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ procured, the Gospel published, and without which no man can please God.

## **Chapter 10.**

We believe that the Church, which is called catholic, contains all true believers in Christ, those who having departed their country are in heaven and those who live on earth are yet on the way. The Head of that Church (because a mortal man by no means can be) is Jesus Christ alone, and He holds the rudder of the government of the Church in His own hand. Because, however, there are on earth particular visible Churches, every one of them has one chief, who is not properly to be called [head] of that particular Church, but improperly, because he is the principal member of it.

## **Chapter 11.**

We believe that the members of the Catholic Church are saints, chosen unto eternal life, from the number and fellowship of which hypocrites are excluded, though in particular visible churches tares may be found among the wheat.

## **Chapter 12.**

We believe that the Church on earth is sanctified and instructed by the Holy Spirit, for He is the true comforter, whom Christ sends from the Father to teach the truth and to expel darkness from the understanding of the faithful. For it is true and certain that the Church on earth may err, choosing falsehood instead of truth, from which error the light and doctrine of the Holy Spirit alone frees us, not of mortal man, although by mediation of the labors of the faithful ministers of the Church this may be done.

## **Chapter 13.**

We believe that man is justified by faith and not by works. But when we say by faith, we understand the correlative or object of faith, which is the righteousness of Christ, which, as if by hand, faith apprehends and applies unto us for our salvation. This we say without any prejudice to good works, for truth itself teaches us that works must not be neglected, that they are necessary means to testify to our faith and confirm our calling. But that works are

sufficient for our salvation, that they can enable one to appear before the tribunal of Christ and that of their own merit they can confer salvation, human frailty witnesses to be false; but the righteousness of Christ being applied to the penitent, alone justifies and saves the faithful.

#### **Chapter 14.**

We believe that free will is dead in the unregenerate, because they can do no good thing, and whatsoever they do is sin; but in the regenerate by the grace of the Holy Spirit the will is excited and in deed works but not without the assistance of grace. In order, therefore, that man should be born again and do good, it is necessary that grace should go before; otherwise man is wounded having received as many wounds as that man received who going from Jerusalem down to Jericho fell into the hands of thieves, so that of himself he cannot do anything.

#### **Chapter 15.**

We believe that the Evangelical Sacraments in the Church are those that the Lord instituted in the Gospel, and they are two; these only have been delivered unto us and He who instituted them delivered unto us no more. Furthermore, we believe that they consist of the Word and the Element, that they are the seals of the promises of God, and they do confer grace. But that the Sacrament be entire and whole, it is requisite that an earthly substance and an external action concur with the use of that element ordained by Christ our Lord and joined with a true faith, because the defect of faith prejudices the integrity of the Sacrament.

#### **Chapter 16.**

We believe that Baptism is a Sacrament instituted by the Lord, and unless a man has received it, he has no communion with Christ, from whose death, burial, and glorious resurrection the whole virtue and efficacy of Baptism proceeds; therefore, we are certain that to those who are baptized in the same form which our Lord commanded in the Gospel, both original and actual sins are pardoned, so that whosoever has been washed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit are regenerate, cleansed, and justified. But concerning the repetition of it, we have no command to be rebaptized, therefore we must abstain from this indecent thing.

## **Chapter 17.**

We believe that the other Sacrament which was ordained by the Lord is that which we call Eucharist. For in the night in which the Lord offered up Himself, He took bread and blessed it and He said to the Apostles, "Take ye, eat, this is my body," and when He had taken the cup, He gave thanks and said, "Drink all of this, this is my blood which was shed for many; this do in remembrance of me." And Paul adds, "For as often as ye shall eat of this bread and drink of this cup, ye do show the Lord's death." This is the pure and lawful institution of this wonderful Sacrament, in the administration of which we profess the true and certain presence of our Lord Jesus Christ; that presence, however, which faith offers to us, not that which the devised doctrine of transubstantiation teaches. For we believe that the faithful eat the body of Christ in the Supper of the Lord, not by breaking it with the teeth of the body, but by perceiving it with the sense and feeling of the soul, since the body of Christ is not that which is visible in the Sacrament, but that which faith spiritually apprehends and offers to us; from whence it is true that, if we believe, we do eat and partake, if we do not believe, we are destitute of all the fruit of it. We believe, consequently, that to drink the cup in the Sacrament is to be partaker of the true blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the same manner as we affirmed of the body; for as the Author of it commanded concerning His body, so He did concerning His blood; which commandment ought neither to be disremembered nor maimed, according to the fancy of man's arbitrament; yea rather the institution ought to be kept as it was delivered to us. When therefore we have been partakers of the body and blood of Christ worthily and have communicated entirely, we acknowledge ourselves to be reconciled, united to our Head of the same body, with certain hope to be co-heirs in the Kingdom to come.

## **Chapter 18.**

We believe that the souls of the dead are either in blessedness or in damnation, according as every one has done, for as soon as they move out of the body they pass either to Christ or into hell; for as a man is found at his death, so he is judged, and after this life there is neither power nor opportunity to repent; in this life there is a time of grace, they therefore who be justified here shall suffer no punishment hereafter; but they who die, being not justified, are appointed for everlasting punishment. By which it is evident that the fiction of Purgatory is not to be admitted but in the truth it is determined that every one ought to repent in this life and to obtain remission of his sins by our Lord Jesus Christ, if he will be saved. And, let this be the end.

This brief Confession of ours we conjecture will be a sign spoken against them who are pleased to slander and persecute us. But we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and hope that He will not relinquish the cause of His faithful ones, nor let the rod of wickedness lie upon the lost of the righteous.

Dated in Constantinople in the month of March, 1629. Cyril, Patriarch of Constantinople