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# *Intra-Confessional Polemics in the Reformation*

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*Although religious polemic is typically understood and studied as a phenomenon of mutual antagonism across the confessions—Protestant against Catholic and Catholic against Protestant—the growth of the early modern polemic traditions was the product of heated internal controversy. In a series of theses intended to point to rhetorical aspects of conflicts within the Lutheran and Catholic confessions, this paper brings forward features of polemical writings from the disputes between Gnesio-Lutherans and Philippists in the wake of the Augsburg Interim of 1548 and those between and among Jesuits and Jansenists in the seventeenth century. Early modern religious thought, I suggest, cannot be understood without attention to the fissures within the Lutheran and Roman Catholic traditions.*

Historians of the Reformation are right in focusing their attention on the divisions between Wittenberg and Rome, between the Anabaptist and Reformed camps, and (to use more recent categories) between the sectarian and the magisterial that determined the contours of the modern, fragmented, Western church. Whether scholars work within those categories or question their utility, their starting point is the emergence of plural church traditions defined by political boundaries and confessional documents. The Reformation was born in controversy, and its history is a series of disputes over doctrine and practice. The divisions that emerged at Heidelberg and Augsburg in 1518 and 1519, the condemnations of theological faculties, and the Colloquies that followed are points in which evangelical doctrine was defined vis-à-vis a dominant theology, which in turn sought to strengthen and clarify both core and difference.

Less well known are points of contention within the opposing camps, fissures in the supposedly unified fronts that became the dominant traditions. Controversial theology is correctly understood as work intended to refute positions and challenge the authority of a particular "other" church, either

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generally or on specific doctrines. Yet, within these churches there was an undercurrent of tension evident in both tone and substance. Religious polemics were not limited to partisans of one confessional body attacking those of another but were part of the growth of each of the traditions. Their rhetoric is evidence of the seriousness of their internal disputes, and it merits historians' attention.

Out of many possible examples, I want to focus on two cases of intra-confessional religious controversy: the dispute between the Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans in the wake of Luther's death and the clash of the Jesuits and Jansenists in the seventeenth century. The work of achieving consensus in doctrine within these branches of Western Christianity was a process of clarifying, sometimes in contentious disputations, the concepts each tradition would come to regard as authoritative.

The following discussion is organized, somewhat unconventionally, as a series of theses, three each from the Lutheran and Catholic episodes and one that points to commonalities and differences. These observations are offered as a contribution to the general theme of our meeting: the question "Whose Christianity?" The early modern period was an era of struggles to define the essence and boundaries of the church. Both Evangelicals and Catholics sought to define the church in distinct ways: the former as the proclaimer of the Gospel in contrast to the alleged idolatry of the Roman Church, the latter as a visible and hierarchical body and a bulwark against the supposed sedition of the Reformers. Within each tradition, however, those fundamental terms became grounds for bitter dispute. Thus, the Lutheran separation of godly and worldly kingdoms became contested in the years after Luther's death while the Roman tradition saw disputes over the coherence and authority of the hierarchical church. The dissension within each tradition serves as a corrective against assumptions that polemical energy was directed outward.

## I. The Heirs of the Reformers Were Disputatious Guardians

Although February 1546 does not rise to the significance of October 1517 or the Diet of Worms, Luther's death on the eighteenth of that month represents a turning point in the course of the Reformation. The crisis that followed Luther's death originated not in Wittenberg but in a longstanding feud between the two houses of Saxony (divided since the end of the previous century) and the church policy of Maurice of Saxony (1521–1563), who became Elector of Saxony after the 1547 Battle of Mühlberg. Allied with Emperor Charles V despite being himself Protestant, Maurice helped defeat the Schmalkald League, which had been formed to defend Protestant

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territories from threatened attack after the 1530 Diet of Augsburg. Ostensibly in order to bring unity to a religiously divided region, Maurice (who would be called the Judas of Saxony for his actions) sought in the Augsburg Interim of May 15, 1548 to restore various Catholic practices which the Evangelicals had rejected as idolatrous.[1]

The policy was condemned as a reversion to the beginnings of the Reformation and to Luther's effort to eliminate practices thought to be meritorious works and thus by definition idolatrous. Whether Maurice sought a model of the church that would be inclusive of Protestants and Catholics or wished to bring the Reformation churches back within the Roman fold, the reintroduction of elements from the old faith was considered a betrayal by Protestants who had expected that their practices (and, more pointedly, their exclusion of works previously done for the sake of merit) would be protected.

The followers of Melanchthon, then widely considered Luther's successor at Wittenberg, understood Romans 13:1–7 to mean that rulers are appointed by God and that resistance was not justified against a legitimate ruler.[2] In order to neutralize their meritorious value and thereby shield them from the charge of being idolatrous, Melanchthon applied the term *adiaphora* (indifferent things) to practices that did not contribute to salvation. Theoretically, such a qualification allowed for the reintroduction of practices associated with the Roman Church: they were deemed permissible so long as no one considered them meritorious works. Opposing Melanchthon and his followers were a group asserting strict fidelity to Luther's rejection of anything idolatrous; practices originating in the older system of works could not avoid the association with works-righteousness. Encamped in Magdeburg and allowing no compromise, these "genuine Lutherans" (Gnesio-Lutherans) accused the Melanchthonians (or Philippists) of compromising with an agent of the Roman Church and thereby, in their thought, the Antichrist.[3]

The Philippists, for their part, could claim fidelity to Luther's teaching by pointing to his use of Romans 13:1–7 and the distinction of worldly and godly kingdoms that, in their interpretation, assigned church practices to the former. Abandoning the obligation of loyalty to civil rule was to fall into what the Philippists considered the error of the Anabaptists: turning the

[1]Nathan Baruch Rein, "Faith and Empire: Conflicting Visions of Religion in a Late Reformation Controversy—The Augsburg *Interim* and Its Opponents, 1548–50," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71, no. 1 (March 2003): 45–74.

[2]Ralph Keen, "Luther and Political Life," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Martin Luther*, ed. Derek Nelson and Paul R. Hinlicky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[3]Robert Kolb, "Dynamics of Party Conflict in the Saxon Late Reformation: Gnesio-Lutherans vs. Philippists," *Journal of Modern History* 49, no. 3 (September 1977): D1289–D1305; and Robert Kolb, *Luther's Heirs Define His Legacy: Studies on Lutheran Confessionalization* (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1996).

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Gospel into law for seditious ends. This dispute over Luther's legacy exposed a dilemma: justification by faith and the separation of worldly and godly realms each required the other, yet Wittenberg and Magdeburg diverged over which of the two represented the irreducible core of the theology. Soteriologically, justification by faith alone was held absolute, while the program of religious reform was impossible without the two kingdoms doctrine that assigned control of the churches to the civil magistracy. By denying the authority of their civil ruler, the sectarians at Magdeburg appeared as schismatics. Derided by his adversaries as a compromiser, Melanchthon remained fixed in his view that the political order is "a singular work of God," with magistrates who "are custodians of discipline, exercise judgment, take care that citizens are correctly taught about God, prohibit Epicurean fury and idolatry, perjury, lasciviousness, and bodily injury."[4] The well-ordered state, says Melanchthon, is a "highly modest school, in which knowledge of God shines and the duties of virtue are practiced"[5]

## II. Estranged Peers Were Vilified, Not Reconciled

Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575), one of the Magdeburg opposition, saw himself so assuredly on the side of the truth that he embraced the persecution of Magdeburg's adversaries.[6] In a work titled *That All Persecutors of Christ's Church in Magdeburg are Persecuting Christ Himself*, Flacius asserts that:

> The great evil that has ruled the godless world has become so much greater in our time, not just among those who are not Christians but rather among those who like to call themselves Evangelicals and not papists; for now, there are many who, with no fear of God, knowingly and willingly help the Antichrist, his knaves, and Mass-priests, persecute and murder the poor church of Christ. And thus, they completely destroy the true religion of Christ and raise up and strengthen the Antichrist, with all his idolatry, abomination, lewdness in various forms, and inhuman tyranny.[7]

[4]Melanchthon, *Loci praecipui theologici*, in *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*, ed. Hans Engelland and Robert Stupperich, vol. 2, *Loci praecipui theologici 1559* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1980), p. 728, lines 33–39.

[5]Melanchthon, *Loci praecipui theologici*, p. 729, line 40 to p. 730, line 2.

[6]Luka Ilić, *Theologian of Sin and Grace: The Process of Radicalization in the Theology of Matthias Flacius Illyricus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2014).

[7]Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Das Alle Verfolger der Kirchen Christi zu Madgeburgk d. Herrn selbs verfolgen* (Magdeburg: Michael Lotter, 1551), sig. A1v: "Solch gros vbel / so es je in der Gottlosen Welt geregieret hat / so geschicht es jtzt zu vnser zeit viel mehr / nicht allein bey denen / so nicht Christen sind / sondern auch bey denen / so Euangelische vnnd ia nicht Papisten heissen wollen. Denn jtzt jrer viel / one alle GOTtes furcht / wissentlich vnnd williglich / die arme Kirche Christi dem Antichrist / seinen Knechten vnnd Messpfaffen helffen verfolgen vnnd ermordern /

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Nikolaus von Amsdorff (1483–1565), another of the Gnesio-Lutherans, rebuffed an overture of Georg Maior (1502–1574), one of the Philippists, accusing him of insincerity.[8] According to Amsdorff, Maior wished to be reunited with his fellow theologians, then exiled to Magdeburg, but Maior also claimed that the devil had driven them to Madgeburg in the first place.[9] (Amsdorff styles himself an exile, *exul*, on the title page of his pamphlet.) Maior's defense of his position, Amsdorff claims, is hollow, a thing of mere words, and Amsdorff does not forgive him for calling Flacius a "soul murderer." Ignoring the concept of adiaphora, Amsdorff accuses Maior of being a Pelagian or a Papist, terms virtually synonymous in the Evangelical imagination and equally pejorative.[10] Amsdorff asserts that, in claiming that works are necessary for salvation, Maior is following and supporting the superstition of the monks and works-priests; Maior's language, he claims, is that of the Antichrist's "Mass-Bishops and Sacrifice-Priests."[11] Flacius, likewise, attacks Maior with the contrast of divine and demonic forces: "Whoever wants to watch out for the devil, Antichrist, and their many servants should be careful. I have shown everyone the truth, according to my ability. Thus, I am purer than those who are lost; and I cannot keep anyone from rushing headlong toward the devil."[12]

Distinctions between divine and human teaching alternate with the contrast of Christian doctrine and the work of the Antichrist. For example, in his 1552 refutation of Andreas Osiander's (1498–1552) doctrine of actual rather than imputed righteousness, Amsdorff claims to stand firmly by God's word (Luther is not invoked) and not to be led astray by "human dreams."[13] Flacius coins a new term for Osiander's doctrine in his treatise *Against the New Heresy of Dikaieusists* (*Dikaieusisten*), constructed on the Greek word

Vnd also auch die ware Religion Christi gantz vnd gar vertilgen / das Antichristenthumb aber mit alle seinen Abgöttereyen / grewel / vielfeltiger vnzucht vnd grausamer Tyranney helffen."

[8]Robert Kolb, *Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483–1565): Popular Polemics in the Preservation of Luther's Legacy* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1978). See also Irene Dingel, ed., *Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483–1565): Zwischen Reformation und Politik* (Leipzig: Evangelische, 2008).

[9]Nikolaus von Amsdorff, *Ein kurtzer vnterricht auff D. Georgen Maiors Antwort / das er unschüldig sey / wie er sich tragice rhümet: Das gute werck zur seligkeit nit von nöten sind; Das gute werck zu eim Christlichen leben hie auff erden nötig sind* ([Magdeburg?], 1552), A2.

[10]Nikolaus von Amsdorff, *Ein kurtzer vnterricht*, A3, A3v, A4v.

[11]Nikolaus von Amsdorff, *Ein kurtzer vnterricht*, A2.

[12]Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Antwort Matth. Fl. Jllyr. auff etliche Beschüldigung D. Geo. Maiors vnd D. Pomers* ([Magdeburg: Christian Rödinger], 1551), B4: "Wer sich für dem Teuffel / Antichrist / vnd seinen vielfeltigen Dienern hüten wil / der hüte sich. Ich hab die warheit / nach meinem vermügen / jedermanne angezeigt. Darumb bin ich rein am blut / derer / die verloren warden. Denn ich kan keinen halten / das er nicht mutwillig zum Teuffel lauffe."

[13]Nikolaus von Amsdorff, *Auff Osianders Bekentnis ein Vnterricht vnd zeugnis* (Magdeburg: Christian Rödinger, 1552), B4v.

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for righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) and translated perhaps as "righteousers."[14] It was at least a *new* heresy—not that the old ones had run their course.

In writing against the author of an anonymous pamphlet defending the concept of adiaphora, Flacius invokes the Prophets in their call for Israel to abandon its ties with the Assyrians and other nations. How harshly God reproaches the Jews is known to all who read scripture, he states, adding that "this is for a good reason, for God wants His people kept apart completely from the assembly of the devil. . . . Thus, we also at this time reproach, and do so most righteously, those who put on Spanish or Turkish attire"—in one conjunction linking Catholic garb with that of Christendom's greatest threat.[15] Flacius continues: "Thus, I pray that we can avoid conforming to the impious and this world, so that we may avoid God's wrath."[16] Flacius reminds his readers that permitting these practices under any guise, either meritorious or indifferent, is the work of the Antichrist[17]

On the same theme and at the same time, Flacius offered a *Brief Summaries of the Religion of Jesus Christ and of the Antichrist*, the latter being a veritable catalogue of the Roman practices being reintroduced, such as the "waxen" Agnus Dei, blessed herbs, candles, "and a thousand other remedies and ways to avoid hell and enter the kingdom of heaven."[18] "The final remedy," Flacius writes, "is the fire of purgatory, in which once we have sufficiently been cooked, purged, and cleansed of all weight of sin, we will automatically fly up to the kingdom of heaven."[19] The scorn and irony, which Flacius voices in terms like "water and salt magically made holy," are reminiscent of the early Luther, yet here directed at apostate Wittenberg.

The tone of these authors reminds us that they are contending for the salvation of souls and not disagreeing on points immaterial to their

[14]Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Wider die newe ketzerey der Dikaeusisten: Vom Spruch Christi Joan. am XVI; Der heilige Geist wird die Welt straffen umb die Gerechtigkeit, das ich zum Vater gehe* (Magdeburg: Rödinger, 1552).

[15]Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Omnia Latina Scripta* (Magdeburg, 1550), C4: "Neque id sine causa, nam & uult Deus suum coetum a Diaboli caetu penitus seiunctum esse, & illa ipsa externa signa fuerunt certae animi, in Ethnicismum degenerantis, notae. Reprehendimus & nos hoc tempore, idque iustissime, eos, qui uel Hispanicum, uel Turcicum uestitum suae imitari."

[16]Flacius, *Omnia Latina Scripta*, C4v: "Vt igitur Deum ipsum iratum non habeamus, obsecro, ne nos impijs & seculo huic conformemus."

[17]Flacius, *Omnia Latina Scripta*, C4.

[18]Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Breves summae religionis Iesu Christi, & Antichristi* (Madgeburg: [Michael Lotter], 1550), A5v: "Adesse aquam & salem magice sacrata, quae deleant delicta, fiant aspersis salus & uita. Adesse cereos Agnus Dei, sacratas herbas, candelas, & mille alia remedia ac uias euadendi inferos, & intrandi regnum coelorum."

[19]Flacius, *Breves summae*, A5v: "Vltimum remedium esse purgatorium ignem, in quo cum satis excocti, purgati, & ab omni pondere sordium mundati erimus, necessario simus in regnum coelorum subuolaturi."

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followers' salvation.[20] Thus, amid customary terms of vituperation, we find language that aligns the author's position with godliness and associates the opposition with all that is harmful and, in a word, diabolical. Addressing the scholars of Wittenberg in 1549, Flacius contrasted Christ's church with that of the devil, the work of the latter being to draw the faithful from certainty to doubt. The devil, "with all his armor," does nothing except strengthen the godless in their evil and lead the God-fearing into weakness and doubt. Doctrines that had been held as certain were now cast into such suspicion that the people thought all manner of things and no longer knew which was right and which was wrong.[21] Those who found a solution to confessional differences in the restoration of practices formerly seen as idolatrous invited the opprobrium that the first Reformers unleashed against the Roman Church.

## III. New Confessions Drive Out the Old

The Evangelical separation of realms or "kingdoms," present in the early works of Luther and Melanchthon's 1521 *Loci communes*, was codified at the 1530 Diet of Augsburg and the question of permissible resistance arose in its wake, most notably in the form of Luther's *Warning to his Dear German People*. And while Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession questions "whether bishops or pastors have the right to introduce ceremonies," it was clear to the Magdeburg theologians that the Interim had transgressed the legitimate jurisdiction of civil rulers. The 1550 Magdeburg Confession made this clear: "The doctrine of Luther's (which is Christ's own) which was presented at Augsburg has now been turned into horrible sins against conscience by several German princes and states . . . so that there is no ground for forgiveness by God; nor can the damage be removed from the families of princes or from the rest of the defectrix, Germany."[22] In the

[20]Nathan Rein, *The Chancery of God: Protestant Print, Polemic and Propaganda Against the Empire, Magdeburg 1546–1551* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) is a comprehensive treatment of the pamphlet wars.

[21]Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Entschuldigung Matthiae Flacij Illyrici geschrieben an die Vniuersitet zu Wittemberg, der Mittelding halben* (Magdeburg: Christian Rödinger, 1549), E4: "Was thut der Teuffel anders mit all seiner rüstung / dann eben das / das er die Gottlosen in jhrem bösen wesen sterckt / die Gottfürchtigen aber schwecht / vnd inn zweifel füret. Denn er fürt die leut in zweifel das sie wanckelhafftig werden / vnd gedencken / wie itzt one zweiffel vnzelich viel gedencken / Sihe / vnsere grossen Doctores thun das / vnd noch mehr / one zweiffel / were die lehr war gewest / so hetten sie wol standhafftiger dabey gehandelt. Ich weis nicht welche lehr recht oder vnrecht ist."

[22]*Confessio et Apologia Pastorum & reliquorum ministrorum Ecclesiae Magdeburgensis* (Magdeburg: Michael Lotter, 1550), A3: "Veruntamen confessio doctrinae Lutheri, quae est ipsius Christi, ut primum Augustae facta est, magna confitentium fide & gloria, ita uere nunc Augustae rursus est abiecta horribili scelera contra conscientiam a plerisque principibus & statibus Germanicis, solo euentu superioris belli fractis, do quo scelere publico publice ipsos

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Confession, Nikolaus von Amsdorff, together with the other Magdeburg clergy, offered the Gnesio-Lutheran position with the challenge that "no Christian will rightly be able to condemn or oppose their position on dogmas or ceremonies."[23] The Magdeburg Confession both affirms and supplants the one presented at Augsburg; in its own form, it articulates doctrines consonant with those presented by Melanchthon in 1530, yet does so in a way that declares Magdeburg the faithful custodian of those doctrines:

> Now, Christian reader, you have the sum of that doctrine which, just as it is established in prophetic and apostolic scriptures, and disclosed again in these days out of the great shadows of the reign of the Antichrist through the man of God, Luther of holy memory, and consolidated in the articles of the Augsburg Confession, which still resounds in our churches, uncorrupted and pure, thanks to the singular goodness of God.[24]

The Decalogue, according to the Confession, remains always in effect, no matter what other laws may be in place; the power of the First Table is the divine prohibition of idolatry and of the "human traditions" that originate from impious opinions.[25] The Confession condemns the "papist abomination" of penance; and concerning the Supper, the Magdeburg theologians are understandably more strident against those who they claim have restored "for the most part" (*magna ex parte*) the Roman Mass, "and thus in both word and deed have made it something different from communion."[26] In this instance, the labels "Interimist" and "Adiaphorist" are used to classify the Philippists among the Anabaptists, Zwinglians, and, of course, the Romanists, signaling the sense among the Magdeburg leaders that their counterparts in Wittenberg have deviated completely from the Gospel:

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accusari, singulos a suis pastoribus, & a prestantioribus uniuersos, ipsosque uerae poenitentiae signa publice dare necesse erat, quod quamdiu non fit, nullus est relictus ueniae locus apud Deum, nec auferetur plaga a familijs principum, & a reliqua defectrice Germania."

[23]*Confessio et Apologia*, E2v: "Itaque haec pars nostrae confessionis & Apologiae apud illam partem hostium nostrorum, qui sunt Interimistae & Adiaphoristae, nulla prorsus eget probatione, quin ipsi sua sponte fateantur, nos propter dogmata & caeremonias damnari & oppugnari a Christianis recte non posse."

[24]*Confessio et Apologia*, E1v: "Habes nunc Christiane lector summam eius doctrinae, quae ut in scriptis propheticis & Apostolicis est fundata, & ex magnis tenebris regni Antichristi his nouissimis temporibus rursus euoltua per uirum Dei, sanctae memoriae Lutherum, comprehensaque articulis Augustanae confessionis, ita adhuc sonat singulari beneficio Dei, in Ecclesijs nostris incorrupta & pura."

[25]*Confessio et Apologia*, B3v: "Decalogi uero leges perpetuae sunt, & omnes omnium temporum homines obligant, sanctos iuxta ac prophanos."

[26]*Confessio et Apologia*, D1: "Cum primis etiam damnamus in Adiaphoristis, quod Missam papisticam magna ex parte restituunt, atque ita quandam actionem huius Sacramenti re & nomine diuersam faciunt a communione. Qua ratione manifestam occasionem omnibus papisticis abominationibus restituendis praebent."

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> We have written this confession with our own name and that of our churches, as well as that of all the pious who are still outside, who have never bent the knee to Baal, who no doubt are with us in spirit, intention, and groaning, first so that we may bear truthful witness of Christ hanging on the cross, and offer the necessary worship which he earnestly demands of all persons; also that we strengthen our brothers in Christ, wherever they are, with our thought and example.[27]

The Confession is, at its boldest, in qualifying the authority of the magistrate, setting limits not made explicit in the language of "worldly kingdom" and "external actions" that Luther and Melanchthon had first articulated. It states that when a ruler begins to be "a terror to good work and an honor to the bad," his power is not from the ordinance of God but rather from the devil; hence "whoever resists such work is not resisting the ordination of God, but rather that of the devil."[28] Thus, one is following the divine command by protecting the state from the contamination of pious practice. The devil wants to destroy laws and divine promises through wicked rulers, and thus "it is right for minor and limited magistrates to repress such a prince or monarch in his unspeakable attempts."[29] The Magdeburg theologians had in mind Luther's 1531 *Warning* in invoking Luther in defense of resistance to those who threatened the piety of a community; yet, in this case, the adversary was not the Empire, but late-1540s Wittenberg theology and the "Philippist" concept of adiaphora.

## IV. The Authority of the Church Rests in Its Continuity

When we turn to the Catholic side in this era of controversy, we recognize that one of the more common arguments that Romanist polemicists made was that, in contrast with the Reformation churches, the Roman tradition was continuous and consistent. Novelty and conceptual incoherence were marks of heresy. In their own defense, the Reformers insisted that their teachings were those of the best of the church fathers, and that it was necessary to distinguish levels of value within the Patristic corpus because the tradition was not, in fact, unitary and unanimous.

[27]*Confessio et Apologia*, E2: "Hanc ergo confessionem iam scripsimus cum nostro & Ecclesiarum nostrarum nomine, tum etiam omnium qui foris adhuc sunt piorum, nondum flectentium genua Baal, quorum nobiscum iam spiritu, uota gemitusque coniuncta esse non dubitamus, primum ut Christo iam pendenti in cruce tamen reddamus ueritatis testimonium, ac praestemus necessarium cultum, quem ab omnibus ipse nunc uehementer flagitat, deinde ut & fratres nostros in Christo, ubicunque locorum sunt sententias nostra & exemplo confirmemus."

[28]*Confessio et Apologia*, F3: "Magistratus est ordinatio Dei, ut sit honori bono operi, & terrori malo operi Rom. 13. Ergo quando incipit esse terrori bono operi, & honori malo, non est iam in eo, quod ita facit, ordinatio Dei, sed ordinatio diaboli: Et qui resistit tali operi, non resistit ordinationi Dei, sed ordinationi diaboli."

[29]*Confessio et Apologia*, G1.

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Among defenders of the claim to continuity and consensus, Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) stands out. Bellarmine's preoccupation with heresy (he was a professor of polemical theology at the Roman College of the Society of Jesus) brought him into opposition with those Romanist theologians who sought reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants. With moderates and reactionaries contending in their attempts to define the tradition, a unified Catholic front in the sixteenth century was a fiction, and for Bellarmine a problem. The idea that the church fathers were in agreement about all important matters gave urgency to Catholic theologians' efforts to stand in unison. *Consensus patrum* in the early church implied *consensus theologorum* in the early modern one. Disagreements among the Reformers were prima facie evidence of their instability and unorthodoxy. Among theologians of the Counter-Reformation, internal disagreements were a scandal to be eliminated.

Mediating theologians are absent from Bellarmine's catalogue of ecclesiastical writers, his 1613 *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*. He mentions some elsewhere, accusing them of error. For example, Georg Cassander (1513–1566), author of works seeking a path toward peace between the churches, held that a pious prince should try to find peace among the churches, and failing that, to allow each person to follow his or her own faith. Bellarmine calls this a "manifest error" already condemned by the Louvain theologian Jean Hessels (Joannes a Lovanio).[30] "Error" had a special meaning for Bellarmine: in the case of Cassander, it was the mistaken belief that conciliation is possible between Catholics and "heretics."[31] Not having stated a false doctrine, Cassander was not guilty of heresy; but he had fallen prey to an erroneous sense of the elasticity of the Roman tradition. "It is not possible," says Bellarmine, "for true members of the church to be called Lutherans and Calvinists, even if they agree with us in the creeds; for in addition to that faith, they need to be subject to the legitimate head of the church established by Christ and to be in communion with other members."[32]

Another problematic theologian was Albert Pighius (1490–1542), a Catholic—and Bellarmine considered him one—with pronounced sympathies to the Lutheran doctrine of justification. Bellarmine cited Pighius in his discussion of *duplex iustitia*: that is, the imputation of righteousness (the Lutheran idea) combined with the concept of virtue central to the Catholic

[30]Robert Bellarmine, *Opera Omnia* (Naples: Giuseppe Giuliano, 1857), 2:335.
[31]Bellarmine, *Opera Omnia*, 2:335.
[32]Bellarmine, *Opera Omnia*, 2:336: "Fundamentum Cassandri est falsum; non enim possunt vera membra Ecclesiae vocari Lutherani el Calvinistae, etiamsi in symbolo nobiscum convenirent; nam praeter illam fidem requiritur subjectio ad legitimum caput Ecclesiae a Christo constitutum, et communicatio cum aliis membris."

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doctrine of justification. Pighius is credited with formulating this doctrine, with which Martin Bucer, according to Bellarmine, sought to "seduce" the Catholics.[33] However, Bellarmine exonerates Pighius by (1) clarifying that what the Lutherans call virtues are not what the Catholic Church calls righteousness, and (2) explaining that Bucer and the other evangelicals were not willing to acquiesce to the judgment of the Roman Church: "Thus, they are rightly called, not erring, but heretics."[34] Submission to the authority of the church, as we have seen in the case of Cassander as well, was what determined whether one was heretical or merely errant.

Looming behind Cassander and Pighius was Erasmus, never identified with "the heresies of our time," but nevertheless singled out for errors, some of which were adopted by the Protestants. For example, Bellarmine raised the question whether it is permissible for an innocent spouse to move on to another marriage on account of their spouse's infidelity. Bellarmine pointed out that Erasmus (on 1 Corinthians 7) held that this is permitted and stated it two years before Luther—so it is possible, according to Bellarmine, that Luther drew this error from Erasmus.[35] Yet, Bellarmine qualified, Cardinal Thomas Cajetan and Ambrosius Catharinus (both strident opponents of Luther) agreed with Erasmus. Neither of these can be suspected of being heretics, according to Bellarmine, since they were in accord with the teachings of the church. Erasmus stands alone in being suspect.

Elsewhere, without calling him a heretic, Bellarmine aligned Erasmus with Anabaptists by construing the preface to Erasmus's paraphrase of Matthew as recommending that adults who had been baptized in infancy should be questioned, as they grew older, to make sure they still had the faith. Bellarmine cited Juan Luis Vives's comment (which he made in a note to Augustine's *City of God* [1.27]) that baptism should be administered to adults who ask and understand.[36] On the practice of fasting, Bellarmine called Erasmus the precursor of the heretics of Bellarmine's own time: by not mentioning the practice, Bellarmine claimed, Erasmus was in the same camp with Luther, Martin Brenz, the Magdeburg clergy, Calvin, and Martin Chemnitz.[37] This is an instance of condemnation by association, an attempt to align Erasmus with those whom Bellarmine sought to refute unambiguously.

[33]Robert Bellarmine, *Contradictiones doctorum nunc-Romanae Ecclesiae* (Strasbourg: Heirs of Bernhard Jobin, 1597), Z4v.
[34]Bellarmine, *Contradictiones doctorum nunc-Romanae Ecclesiae*, Aa1.
[35]Bellarmine, *Contradictiones doctorum nunc-Romanae Ecclesiae*, S4v–T1.
[36]Robert Bellarmine, *Opera Omnia* (Naples: Giuseppe Giuliano, 1858), 3:172.
[37]Robert Bellarmine, *Opera Omnia*, 3:676.

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## V. The Patristic Record Became Ground for Dispute

Given the premium placed on Patristic authority by Protestant and Catholic theologians alike, it stands to reason that a dispute over a church father would occasion one of the most virulent episodes of mutual denunciation of this period. In his posthumously issued *Augustinus*, Cornelius Jansenius (1585–1638) took on the "Pelagians" of his day with the same fervor that Luther did against the supposed Pelagians of his. Jansenius was bishop of Ypres and for him the Pelagians were, principally though not exclusively, the Jesuits. Jansenius was Augustine to the heretics within the Roman Church; his correspondence indicates that he had little interest in the uses or misuses of Augustine by the Reformers.[38] The Pelagian heresy is common, he states, among those who have lingered in the Catholic Church and who call themselves the gravest and holiest defenders of divine grace. "Whoever wishes to preserve the whole truth of the Catholic faith," he adds, "is guilty of violating all of it if he is false in one point."[39] Jansenius, moreover, accuses these alleged Pelagians of pride (*superbia*) for attributing to human faculties the ability to merit salvation: "What could Lucifer, the architect of all heresies, contrive or persuade more arrogantly or detestably than the insanity of the Pelagians who think themselves equal to God in virtue, if not superior?"[40]

Jansenius's claim to orthodoxy was lodged in his conviction that he conformed to the thought of Augustine on the question of grace and that attributing merit to works without the aid of grace is so grave a heresy that any who hold it are not legitimate members of the church or heirs to salvation. Jansenius was, in his own way, doing the same thing that Bellarmine was: applying Patristic testimony to the controversies of his own time and letting ancient condemnations of heretical positions stand against the later forms of those heresies. For Bellarmine, for whom one cannot be both a Catholic and a heretic, those opponents were Protestants and the Catholic theologians in sympathy with them. For Jansenius, they were members of Bellarmine's own order.

[38]As early as 1617, Jansenius was concerned about "the pope and the Jesuits"; see Jansenius to Duvergier, 13 September 1617, in *Correspondance de Jansénius*, ed. Jean Orcibal (Louvain: Bibliothèque de la Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique, 1947), 1:21.

[39]Cornelius Jansenius, *Augustinus, seu doctrina Sancti Augustini de humanae naturae sanitate, aegritudine, medicina adversus Pelagianos et Massilienses* (Paris: Michel Soly, 1641), A8: "Quicunque totam doctrinae Catholicae veritatem seruauerit, offendat autem in vno factus est omnium reus."

[40]Jansenius, *Augustinus*, I2: "En tandem limitem insaniae Pelagianae & culmen gyganteae superbiae, esse natura, hoc est essentia, consortes, virtute pares, si non superiores Deo. Quid ipse Lucifer haereseon omnium architectus, arrogantius & detestabilius comminisci & persuadere potuisset?"

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Reaction was swift and aimed at the leaders of the movement—from Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694) to Blaise Pascal. Arnauld, patriarch of the family that made Port Royal the stronghold of Jansenism, was a vociferous defender of the Jansenist position. In response to a charge from Isaac Habert (1598–1668), theologian at Notre Dame, that this version of Augustinianism should be called "Dogmata Calvino-Janseniana," Arnauld (whose family had converted from Calvinism) stated that this term dishonors Jesus Christ, all the church, and all the Catholic bishops more than it harms Jansenius. Such an association would, Arnauld claimed, create a shameful and tyrannical alliance between the living and the (spiritually) dead, an alliance of a minister of the Demon with a minister of Jesus Christ, between a father of heresy and an excellent child of the church, and an alliance of "an abominable heresiarch with a bishop renowned for his lofty piety."[41] To condemn Jansenism, in Arnauld's view, was to attack Saint Augustine himself and reveal oneself as a heretic. The cycle of mutual heresifaction escalated, with no resolution, to condemnations at almost every level of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in the decades that followed.

The multiplicity of Augustinianisms, more precisely the emergence of divergent appropriations of Augustine's thought by Protestants and Catholics alike, undermined early modern assertions that the Bishop of Hippo, when understood correctly, would be a clear and stable source of solutions to the theological problems of the day. Similar claims had been made regarding the Bible a century before by the Reformers.

## VI. "Heresy" and "Heretic" Were Not Used Carelessly

In contrast to the frequent accusations of heresy that we find in the mutual condemnations of Catholics and Protestants, within the Catholic Church the term tended to be used sparingly, as we might expect given the formal censures and condemnations in which it was officially applied. As we have seen in the case of Bellarmine, theologians like Erasmus were grouped with Luther, the Anabaptists, and sometimes Zwingli and were never mentioned with praise—but Erasmus and his circle were not labelled heretics. Heretic and Catholic are mutually exclusive terms. For Bellarmine, one either

[41]Antoine Arnauld, *Apologie de Monsieur Iansenius evesque d'Ipre de la doctrine de S. Augustin, expliquée dans son Liure, intitulé, Augustinus* (s.l., 1644), a3–3v: "Sans considerer que ce mot injurieux ne des-honore pas moins Iesus-Christ, l'Eglise,& tous les Euesques Catholiques, que Monsieur l'Euesque d'Ipre, puis que c'estoit faire vne alliance honteuse & semblable à celle du Tyran, qui joignoit les corps morts auec les viuans, d'vn Ministre du Demon auec vn Ministre de Iesus-Christ, d'vn pere de l'Heresie auec vn excellent Enfant de l'Église, & d'vn abominable Heresiarque, auec vn Euesque plus recommandable encore pour sa haute pieté, que pour sa grande suffisance."

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submits to the authority and judgment of the church or separates from it. In 1597, Bellarmine issued his *Contradictions of the Doctors of the Now-Roman Church*, an effort to support the unity of the church "in all dogmas of the faith."[42] Bellarmine distinguished error from heresy, as we saw above, in order to vindicate Catholic authors who sought "to defend the truth with the best intention."[43]

In a letter to King James I of Scotland, Bellarmine acknowledged that many heretics wish to be called Catholics, but endorse the definition that Augustine uses against the Manichaeans. "There are many things that rightly keep me in the embrace of the church," states Bellarmine, quoting Augustine. "The consensus of the people and the nations; the power begun in miracles, nourished by faith, augmented in charity, and confirmed in antiquity; the See of the Apostle Peter, to whom the Lord commended the care of his flock."[44] The very name "Catholic," he adds, is suited to the Roman Church and no sect can claim it for itself.[45]

One notable exception of the mutual vilification by means of the heresy label is found in disputes between Jesuits and Jansenists, for example, in the response by Pasquier Quesnel (1634–1719) to a Jesuit tract accusing Antoine Arnaud of being a heretic. Quesnel's response capitalizes on the irony of the suggestion that a doctor of the Sorbonne could be a heretic. "Our laughter," he writes to the bishop of Liège, "would be sufficient response, if the question were not being posed seriously."[46] Quesnel offers passages from Arnauld in parallel columns with excerpts from Augustine and Chrysostom as evidence of Arnaud's orthodoxy, offering to prove that the Jesuits are the true heretics.[47] As indicated above, to accuse a Jansenist of heresy was to attack Augustine himself.

Perhaps the most flagrant use of the charge of heresy is found in the work of the Augustinian Eremite Fulgenzio Bellelli (1675–1742), a professed Augustinian in thought as well as in his religious order. For Bellelli, Jansenism was heretical in its misunderstanding of Augustine; Jansenism is

[42]Bellarmine, *Contradictiones doctorum nunc-Romanae Ecclesiae*, *2.

[43]Bellarmine, *Contradictiones doctorum nunc-Romanae Ecclesiae*, *4.

[44]Robert Bellarmine, *Epistolae familiares* (Rome: Dominicus Manelphius, 1650), A2: "Multa sunt, quae in Ecclesiae gremio me iustissime teneant: tenet consensio populorum, atque gentium: tenet auctoritas miraculis inchoata, spe nutrita, charitate aucta, vetustate firmata: tenet ab ipsa Sede Apostoli Petri, qui pascendas oues suas post resurrectionem Dominus commendauit."

[45]Bellarmine, *Epistolae familiares*, A2v–3: "Denique ipsum Catholicae nomen ita eminet, ac semper eminuit in Ecclesia Romana; vt nulla secta, illud sibi tribuere vnquam ausa sit."

[46]Pasquier Quesnel, *Question curieuse, si M. Arnauld docteur de Sorbonne est hérétique* (Cologne: Nicolas Schouten, 1690), A2v: "Nous rions vous & moy de tout cela: & c'est tout de qu'il y auroit à faire pour répondre à la question, si elle ne se faisoit qu'à l'un de nous deux. Mais je voy des gens qui la font d'un ton fort serieux, & d'autres qui y respondent de même."

[47]Quesnel, *Question curieuse*, D6v, K2.

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condemned, says Bellelli, by the very authority that Jansenius embraced.[48] He argued that: "The Jansenists would have the best model to follow if they came to their senses and returned on their knees to the Apostolic See."[49] In the meantime they are "false, captious, evil sounding, offensive to pious ears, scandalous, pernicious, audacious, injurious to the church and her practice, an outrage not just to the church but to secular powers as well, seditious, impious, blasphemous, heretical, schismatic, erroneous, multiply damned," and the like.[50] These terms became headings in his discussion, for Bellelli offered evidence in support of every specific term. This degree of invective, however, is notable for being an exception to the rhetorical norm.

## VII. Disputes Were Resolved According to Ecclesiastical Culture

Appealing as it might be to say that the disputes between Lutherans and Lutherans and between Catholics and Catholics were eventually resolved, core points in the controversies were in fact intractable. It is more accurate to say merely that they came to an end. In the case of Magdeburg versus Wittenberg, divisions endured for two decades before the Formula of Concord and the codification of doctrine in the Book of Concord. But, as noted above, the Magdeburg Confession of 1550 was a statement of doctrine and an exhortation to defend the pure practices of the Evangelicals. In the discussion of the right of defense, Nikolaus von Amsdorff stated that the magistrates of "our Confession" took care to ensure that the churches held true dogma and practiced true rituals, and refused to allow "falsa dogmas, idolomania, and blasphemies."[51] Protestant communities identified themselves by statements of faith, each new one, like a palimpsest, canceling what had preceded.

Among the Catholics, submission to the authority of the church was both the criterion for communion and the means of discipline. The *Augustinus* was condemned within two years of its appearance for, among other reasons, not having the prior approval of Rome; a decade later, five core propositions were condemned, and a decade after that, Antoine Arnauld was condemned by thirty-eight bishops and, shortly later, by the theologians of the Sorbonne (his own university). In the next century, the Jesuits would themselves be suppressed.

[48]Fulgenzio Bellelli, *Mens Augustini de modo reparationis humanae naturae post lapsum*, part 2 (Rome: Rochus Bernabo, 1737), M3.

[49]Bellelli, *Mens Augustini*, Xxx2: "Habent itaque Jansenislae optimum, quod imitentur exemplar, si resipiscentes ad Sedem Apostolicam supplices regrediantur."

[50]Bellelli, *Mens Augustini*, b2.

[51]*Confessio et Apologia*, E3v.

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All of the parties involved in the religious disputes of this period were contending for an unassailable claim to be the one Christian Church. Questions of definition, authenticity, lineage, and conformity both to an ancient precedent and an abstract ideal are the byproducts of a conviction that there is only one church, a certainty inherited from their medieval forebears. Efforts to claim that identity, and in the process, to deny the name Christian to those outside the communion, drew the energy and erudition of some of the best minds of two centuries. For historians of Christianity, interpreters of episodes and movements in a global tradition, the efforts of these early modern thinkers endure as evidence of the importance of setting boundaries for the Christian Church in the West.

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