Ross Keelan Downton
B.A.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE NATURE OF AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH IN THE SIXTEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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<u>DECLARATION</u>

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

DECLARATION FORM FOR
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<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>

It is my deepest hope that this study will prove itself to be a gift to the Church, for the strengthening of mutual ties of love and the healing of old wounds. So with that in mind, I offer it to the churches, that it might contribute to a common reflection on authority as we journey together on our pilgrim way.

ABSTRACT

This research examines the nature of authority through analysis of major reform movements of the sixteenth century and major ecumenical events of the twentieth century. Chapter one introduces major pre-reformation models of authority and catalysts of sixteenth century change. Chapter two explores how Martin Luther came to emphasise the importance of scripture through the phrase *sola scriptura* and his subsequent disagreements with other reformers. Chapter three considers John Calvin's understanding of authority in terms of conflict with the conservative theology of Paris and civil authorities in Geneva, noting how the *Institutes* served as a tool for consensus-building. Chapter four addresses the Anabaptist contribution to authority through their radical application of *sola scriptura* and their subsequent conflicts with the state. Chapter five investigates Thomas Cranmer's Erastian view of authority and his unique retention of the episcopate as a part of a Protestant programme of reform. Chapter six analyzes the Council of Trent's depiction of scripture and tradition as separate sources and deference to the authority of the pope. Chapter seven traces the history of the ecumenical movement, focusing on changing perspectives on scripture and tradition. Chapter eight examines how Vatican II's description of the relationships between scripture and tradition, and between the episcopal college and the pope, may be viewed as expressions of different aspects of authority. Chapter nine assesses the progress and problems revealed by various responses to BEM in terms of ministry and hermeneutics. Chapter ten analyzes the bilateral dialogues of the late twentieth century according to three categories derived from the previous chapters: textual, existential, and ministerial aspects of authority. Finally, chapter eleven suggests how recognition of the link between these three aspects may serve as a useful tool for articulating remaining problems and possible ways forward.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The word 'authority' has as many meanings as it has contexts. Therefore, in undertaking any study of the nature of authority, it is necessary to set out what is intended by the term. This thesis takes as a working definition what might be described as 'hermeneutic authority' or 'foundational authority': that which delineates the conceptual boundaries of a particular set, in this case, that set denoted by the term 'Christian'. More simply, it asks the question: Who or what properly defines what Christianity is and what it is not?

In an attempt to articulate a common ecumenical expression of authority, this thesis has adopted a three-fold model in which authority is composed of textual, existential, and ministerial aspects. This model follows various historical emphases on scripture, an experience of faith, and the role of a teaching office. Though the terms 'textual,' 'existential,' and 'ministerial' have not featured prominently in ecumenical dialogue, there is good reason to suppose they represent enduring categories. John Henry Newman identified three temptations related to authority: rationalism in theology, superstition in popular piety, and abuse of power in ruling offices.[1] Similarly, Baron Friedrich von Hügel divided historical religion into three categories: critical-historical, mystical, and institutional.[2] Finally, there is Avery Dulles' division of theological, prophetic, and apostolic forms of ministry, each of which need the others to compensate for inherent weaknesses.[3] These aspects are continually interacting with each other, but relatively little attention has been directed to the nature of such interaction. It is precisely this which must form the central consideration for developing an ecumenical understanding of authority.

Additionally, each aspect is comprised of distinct elements whose relation to each other must also be considered. Textual authority includes scripture, conciliar decisions, creeds, and confessions of faith. Existential authority includes personal experience, *sensus fidelium*, and those who have been recognised as living an exemplary life. Ministerial authority includes bishops, teachers, and other offices which articulate faith on behalf of the institution, what some churches term 'magisterial' authority. It would be a mistake to read these categories too strongly into previous centuries, but this thesis will attempt to demonstrate that such a model reflects the direction in which ecumenical dialogue has been moving and that it represents a constructive synthesis from which further progress concerning common expressions of authority may be made.

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[1] Tracey, D. 'Roman Catholic Identity amid the Ecumenical Dialogues' in J. Provost and K. Walf (eds.), *Concilium: Catholic Identity No.5* (1994), p.110.
[2] Ibid., pp.111-112.
[3] Dulles, A. 'Successio apostolorum – Successio prophetarum – Successio doctorum' in J. Moltmann and H. Küng (eds.), *Concilium: Who Has Say in the Church? October* (1981), pp.62-64.

The thesis is comprised of two parts, making use of somewhat different methodologies. The first part examines five major expressions of authority in the sixteenth century through historical analysis in an attempt to derive the theoretical model which each group applied. Each chapter traces the development of a particular view of authority and considers its practical manifestations within the immediate context. For instance, how Luther came to understand authority and how he applied that understanding to other reformers. The second part examines how these expressions of authority have changed in twentieth century ecumenical dialogue through theological analysis of ecumenically significant documents. The documents produced by Vatican II, the *World Council of churches*,[4] and various bilateral discussion groups display an entirely different character than the polemical exchanges of the sixteenth century. Because they represent a conscious attempt to engage in constructive inter-church dialogue they merit exploration of a different sort. The first part serves to ground such analysis in the historical context of sixteenth century schisms. It is apparent that there is some degree of arbitrariness in this choice. The sad history of the Church makes it difficult to determine the appropriate starting place from which to examine authority. This thesis is primarily concerned with expressing a coherent and ecumenically viable description of authority and exploits historical method expressly for this purpose. While it would be constructive to trace authority from the days of Christ to the present, a work of this size could not possibly deal adequately with the relevant issues. Rather, it focuses attention on the unique period of history referred to as 'the Reformation' or more recently 'the European Reformations' in an attempt to determine the versions of authority which helped to generate and were propagated by various sixteenth century groups. It is in this crucible that the competition between different understandings of authority became most vividly apparent. The history through which competing versions of authority became figureheads for divided factions is an indispensable perspective from which to view contemporary ecumenical dialogue since most communions continue to make use of sixteenth century paradigms. Thus, the shift from historical development to theological explication is a natural outworking of the stated goal of this study: a common ecumenical expression of authority. In this light, each part is necessary, and in fact, complimentary.

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[4] **Note on capitalisation:** The customary use of capitalisation in English to designate a special kind of emphasis gives the use of the term 'Church' universal overtones which recent ecumenical discussion suggests are inappropriate to collections of local churches. Therefore, this thesis uses the capitalised form exclusively to refer to the universal Church, designating proper names with italics (*Evangelical Lutheran church in Bavaria*, etc.) but leaving quotations unedited. In a similar way, the lowercase forms 'scripture' and 'tradition' are used except when making intentional use of the definition promulgated at Montreal 1963 in which 'Tradition' was defined as a single entity which includes both scripture and tradition. See 7.3 Changing perspectives on scripture and tradition.

But what use is there in such a common ecumenical expression? The ecumenical movement has brought diverse Christians together in a variety of ways for nearly a century. It was born out of a desire to live up to Christ's prayer that his followers would be *one* so that the world would *believe*.[5] Thus it has always been both confessional and missional. The *World Council of churches* quickly discovered that even theories of unity varied widely, but has only recently begun to address the foundational issue – the hermeneutic basis of such theories. Similarly, many countries have found ecumenical cooperation indispensable to missions, but such cooperation is confusing without a common understanding of *what* converts are being asked to believe – again a hermeneutic issue. Understanding the nature of authority is essential to ecumenical dialogue in so far as it forms the basis for any propositional assertions – whether in determining appropriate models of unity or in delineating the boundaries of Christian community.

It would be a mistake to assume that a common *model* of authority meant the same thing as a common *expression* of authority. Quite the contrary. Acceptance of the model this thesis suggests would not mean universal agreement about what Christianity is and what it is not. It would only establish a common language in which to continue to wrestle with the problem. Though consideration is given to constructive steps churches could take to move towards a common expression of authority, it remains for the churches to take them. Thus, this thesis attempts to be both historically descriptive and eschatologically prescriptive.

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[5] John 17:21.

CHAPTER 1:   DEVELOPMENTS LEADING UP TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

1.1 <u>MAJOR PRE-REFORMATION MODELS OF AUTHORITY</u>

Three major models of authority may be observed among European Christians in the centuries prior to the sixteenth century. The papal model of authority could be described as monarchical. It depicted a hierarchy in which authority proceeded from God to the pope and thence to the bishops and higher clergy – and alternatively on occasions from God to the pope to secular rulers and the various ranks of clergy. The history of the papal office may be read as a series of advances and delays in the realisation of that conception. The conciliarist model understood authority as something which had been entrusted to the pope by the body of Christ, the *congregatio fidelium*, and which had a superlative expression in a general ecumenical council. The third model, which may be termed Wyclifite, though portions of it predate the fourteenth century, focused on scripture as the record of what was best in the church and therefore upon an individual's authority through encounter with it. It is useful to trace them briefly to establish the historical framework from which to examine sixteenth century models of authority in greater detail.

When Constantine proclaimed religious freedom with the *Edict of Milan* in 313, Pope Miltiades (c.310-314) found himself not only the head of an organised Christian body,[1] but a state-supported leader whose monarchic tendencies were propped up by the Emperor's desire to unite a fracturing empire. The growing bureaucracy might have proceeded in a relatively benign manner, except that the movement of the imperial capital to Constantinople, coupled with the assertion that the church there was the 'New Rome,' led to a bitter reassertion of the primacy of Rome in 382. Pope Damasus I (366-384) derided the synodal foundation of Constantinople and emphasised the uniqueness of Rome's dual *apostolic* origin in Peter and Paul.[2]

Damasus' claim to the 'apostolic see' as the 'heir of Peter' was furthered by the discovery of the spurious *Epistle of Clement*, which provided official documentation for the power of 'the keys.'[3] Far from the watchful eye of the

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[1] It had over 100 church officials at that time. Ullmann, W. *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages*, p.5.
[2] Ibid., p.10.
[3] 'I (that is, Peter) impart to him (that is, Clement) the authority of binding and loosing in order that whatever he (Clement) will decide upon earth will be approved in heaven, for he will bind what must be bound and will loose what should be loosed.' *Epistle of Clement* (as quoted in Ullmann, p.14.).

imperial government in Constantinople, the Roman church was able to recreate itself in the image of the empire, modelling its 'decretals' after Roman 'rescripts,' and claiming they possessed the same authority.[4] Pope Leo I (440-461) concretised the conception of the pope's inherited authority by framing it in legal terms, distancing the papal office from the individual personalities of its occupants.[5] Furthermore, the theological formulation presented in his dogmatic letter to Flavian[6] proved an acceptable solution for both sides at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, eliciting the sentiment that the pope truly possessed apostolic power.[7]

Despite Leo's influence, the Council of Chalcedon asserted the importance of Constantinople more strongly than previous councils and so culminated in a challenge to papal power. In response, the Western Emperor Valentinian III declared that 'nothing should be done against or without the authority of the Roman church'[8] (a sentiment which was patently ignored in the East). Thus, disobedience to the pope became an imperial crime in the West.

Papal claims were advanced more subtly by Pope Gelasius I (492-496). He developed the idea that the pope was a spiritual guide to aid the emperor in using the divine gift of secular power in accordance with the divine will. However, the influence of this idea was cut short in 527 when the new Emperor, Justinian, asserted his superiority over the papacy. Drawing from sacred rule mythology,[9] Justinian argued that the emperor was directly responsible to God for overseeing the priesthood.

Pope Gregory I (590-604) made no direct attempt to assert his jurisdictional primacy, but focused on developing papal interests in Spain, Gaul, and Britain to build power in the West while submitting meekly to the Emperor in the East.[10] This strategy was effective in securing temporal interests, and shortly before the Council of Constantinople (681), Pope Agatho (678-681) attempted to do the same for Rome's spiritual interests by presenting a formal claim to magisterial primacy. Papal authority was not absolute, however, as the posthumous condemnation of Honorius I (625-638) *by the council* demonstrated – a fact which would have later import for conciliar theorists.[11] Constantinople responded to the assertion of primacy with a council of their own in 692, which no Roman clergy were invited to, and the papacy countered with a declaration that the council's decrees were invalid. When Emperor

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[4] Barraclough, G. *The Medieval Papacy*, p.24.
[5] Ullmann, p.20.
[6] Sometimes referred to as *St. Leo's Tome*.
[7] Beet, W.E. *The Rise of the Papacy: 385-461*, p.246.
[8] Ullmann, p.27.
[9] In addition to Roman and Babylonian mythology, a contemporary writer, known as Pseudo-Denys, had combined the terms 'ιερευς (priest) and αρχος (ruler) to describe a divine ordering of powers as *hierarchy*. Ullmann, p.36.
[10] Richards, J. *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages: 476-752*, p.174.
[11] Ozment, S. *The Age of Reform 1250-1550*, p.161.

Phillipicus Bardanes came to power in 711, Pope Constantine (708-715) refused to acknowledge him. It was a mark of increased influence to make such a bold move, but since Rome still lacked the military machinery with which to defend its claims, influence was all it had until Pope Zacharias (741-752) won the protection of the Franks by helping Pippin the Short to gain the throne.[12]

Tension between Rome and Constantinople dominated papal policy from the mid-eighth to ninth centuries. The *Donation of Constantine*[13] had claimed that Pope Silvester I (314-335) intentionally sent the imperial crown to Constantinople with the Emperor. The document was used to assert that granting or withholding this symbol of secular authority was a papal prerogative.[14] Thus, when Pope Leo III (795-816) crowned Charlemagne 'Emperor of the Romans' in 800, he implicitly asserted authority over both secular rulers and Eastern patriarchs.[15] This trend continued as Pope Stephen IV (816-817) crowned Emperor Louis I and Paschal I (817-824) crowned Emperor Lothar.[16] By the 850's, Pope Nicholas I (858-867) was giving orders regularly to secular rulers and insisting particularly on papal jurisdiction in the East. After the dubious ascension of Photius as patriarch of Constantinople, Nicholas I challenged his legitimacy and the two mutually excommunicated each other in 867 with the backing of their respective governments.[17] Despite the complications that ensued as Photius was first deposed and then later restored to the patriarchate, papal power continued to grow in the West. By the end of the ninth century, popes were not only crowning emperors symbolically, but 'electing, nominating, and postulating'[18] candidates for imperial succession.

From that period of time to the middle of the tenth century, court intrigues so limited the popes' time in office[19] that they were able to accomplish very little, though rival secular powers gained some leverage in their appointment of some and dismissal of others. The only reason the papacy survived this period was 'the unquestioned historicity of its Petrine claims…. [and] the highly effective distinction between the person of the pope and the papal office itself.'[20] This distinction made it possible to revere the objective office of pope despite the apparent moral lapses of individual popes.

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[12] Richards, p.231.
[13] A fabricated document purported to be a record of Emperor Constantine's conversion that had originally been used in 774 to justify the expansion of papal territories.
[14] Ullmann, p.77.
[15] Ibid., p.83.
[16] In both instances, these were subsequent ceremonies designed to authenticate an earlier coronation. Barraclough, p.55.
[17] Ullmann, p.107.
[18] Ibid., p.95.
[19] From 896-1048CE there were 44 popes.
[20] Ullmann, p.115.

The eleventh century saw several alternate theories of authority made explicit. From the Synod of Orleans (1022), the Albigenses rejected much of Catholic tradition and grew into a significant challenge to the dominant meaning of the term 'Christian.'[21] Berengar of Tours (c.1010-1088) resisted the authority of Rome regarding his convictions about the eucharist. At the same time, Patriarch Kerullarios of Constantinople (1043-1058) aggressively rejected the primacy of Rome on the grounds that the Latin rites were erroneous, prompting equally aggressive assertions of papal supremacy from Pope Leo IX (1049-1054). By 1054, the two formally excommunicated each other, solidifying the division between Greek and Latin Christianity.[22] The Lateran Synod's (1059) regulation of papal elections demonstrated the growing concern to protect the papacy from becoming a tool of politicians. Viewed in this light, it is not surprising that Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) found support for his monarchical policies. 'He activated the programme of the institution as it had evolved and matured throughout the centuries, and he ruthlessly applied it to concrete reality.'[23] Styling himself as the reincarnation of both Peter and Paul, he made demands of absolute obedience from secular rulers, asserting that anything which proceeded from Rome was sanctioned by God.

A similar pattern emerged in the following century. From 1176, Peter Valdes took a vow of poverty and began to preach, gathering a movement to himself.[24] In 1140, the canonist Gratian argued that a pope's authority was supreme, but he could be deposed for deviating from the faith.[25] This qualification made it possible to use his writings as a foundation for both papal and conciliar theories of authority.[26] Some forty years later, the canonist Huguccio made an explicit list of what might be considered 'deviation', including 'notorious fornication, robbery, and sacrilege…. [but] added the qualification that such a pope must be his *own* accuser before a process against him could be legal.'[27] Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) answered such bids for alternate versions of authority by consolidating papal authority through a programme emphasising Christian unity and the eradication of heresy. He revamped the curia, secured the papacy's control over the emperor, claimed Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade (1204), unleashed the Dominicans and Franciscans as weapons against heresy, and drew together the first universal gathering of Christians in the West with the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). As Walter Ullmann described it,

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[21] Their Neo-Manichean doctrine appeared at the Synod of Orléans (1022). *Catholic Encyclopedia: Albigenses.*
[22] Barraclough, p.75.
[23] Ullmann, p.147.
[24] *Catholic Encyclopedia: Waldenses.*
[25] Ozment, p.161.
[26] Gordon, B. 'Conciliarism in late mediaeval Europe' in A. Pettegree (ed.) *The Reformation World*, p.33.
[27] Ozment, p.161.

> the programmatic ideas of the papacy had now grown to full maturity, culminating in the official function of the pope who from now on was and remained the vicar of Christ…. he was placed between God and man and thus less than God but more than man.[28]

The conciliar idea latent in the decision of the Council of Constantinople (325) and expressed to a limited extent by twelfth and thirteenth century canonists was radically applied by Marsilius of Padua (c.1290-1343). His *Defender of the Peace* argued that authority proceeded from God to people to rulers and contrasted sharply with the papal version which placed rulers, but especially popes, as direct recipients of God's authority.[29] While William of Ockham (c.1280-1349) did not go so far as to assert a council's superiority, he argued that, in times of crisis, a council might be called without the pope's consent.[30] In 1381, Henry of Langenstein argued in *Letter on Behalf of a Council of Peace* that a council might take independent action if cardinals were unable or refused to elect a new pope or if the pope persisted in asserting heresy or some doubtful teaching.[31]

On the heels of these proto-conciliarists came John Wyclif (c.1330-1384) with yet another version of authority. His commitment to the explication of scripture in terms of Augustinian theology led him to challenge the authority of Rome essentially as an individual. Wyclif's reforming career began after a surreptitious removal in 1374 from an English delegation meant to secure King Edward III's economic interests from papal taxation. After Wyclif was not invited back for final negotiations, the other delegates conceded the better part of Edward's cause and received significant promotions from the papacy as a result. He began to write vehemently against the corruption of the clergy and quickly grew in popularity, attracting John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, who wished to strip bishops of their power and money in order to augment his own estates. Duke John's protection kept Wyclif safe from charges of heresy or sedition for many years, but that was withdrawn along with the rest of his support when the reformer attacked the traditional eucharistic teaching associated with the doctrine of transubstantiation, replacing it with the doctrine of 'remanence' arising from his philosophical realism. Innocuous without his popular backing, Wyclif was permitted to live out the final two years of his life in the remote parish of Lutterworth.

Wyclif's teachings can be divided into five categories which summarise the thrust of his call for reform: lordship, the bible, the Church, the eucharist, and priests/popes.[32] Since lordship derived from God, he reasoned that could be

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[28] Ullmann, p.223.
[29] Ozment, p.156.
[30] Gordon, p.34.
[31] Ozment, p.161.
[32] Estep, W.R. *Renaissance and Reformation*, pp.64-67.

possessed only on the condition of righteousness. Thus, if a clergyman was found to be corrupt, the secular government had the responsibility to remove his lordly property from him. Wyclif's 1378 treatise, *On the Truthfulness of Holy Scripture*, asserted the ultimate authority of the Bible and his belief that the Holy Spirit would illumine its meaning to even the dullest layperson. By 1380, he and his colleagues had translated the Bible into English. Drawing largely from Augustine's *City of God*, Wyclif's vision of the Church distinguished between the visible *Roman Catholic church* and the invisible community of the redeemed. Augustine's influence can also be seen in his rejection of transubstantiation and assertion that Christ's presence was nevertheless real in a spiritual sense. Wyclif's critique of priests focused on how they had forsaken Christ's teaching for the sake of money. In his work, *On the Power of the Pope*, he argued that the papal office should be abolished since it was not of God's design and declared the pope the Antichrist. He advocated a theology centred in encountering God through scripture and an explicitly decentralised ecclesiology.

The conciliar ideas of the fourteenth century found concrete expression in three major fifteenth century councils shaped by the embarrassing spectacle of the previous century: for seventy-two years, popes had resided in Avignon, but it 1377 the seat of the office was restored to Rome. In the following year, after electing Pope Urban VI, many of the same cardinals removed themselves to France and elected Antipope Clement VII to rule from Avignon[33] – thus creating the Papal Schism.[34] The University of Paris suggested both popes should abdicate, but neither was willing, and the schism continued. Finally, a group of cardinals convoked the Council of Pisa (1409) as an emergency measure, giving Jean Gerson (1363-1429) and Pierre D'Ailly (1350-1420) a practical forum in which to apply their conciliar ideas.[35] The schism between Avignon and Rome was, in their view, an emergency situation in which conciliar arbitration was clearly justified. Therefore, the council declared both popes invalid and elected Alexander V[36] as a replacement – a move which only served to complicate matters by adding a third candidate claiming legitimacy.

Meanwhile, in Bohemia, Jan Hus (c.1372-1415) had combined his teaching career at the University of Prague with a preaching appointment in 1402 and grown in popularity for his radical calls for reform. He and his Czech colleagues found

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[33] The cardinals supporting Clement VII claimed to have been unduly influenced by Italian politics when they elected Urban VI, but some authors have suggested it was dissatisfaction with the earlier popes' austerity which prompted their objections. See Gordon, B. 'Conciliarism in late mediaeval Europe' in A. Pettegree (ed.) *The Reformation World*, p.32.

[34] Sometimes termed 'the Great Schism'.

[35] Gordon, pp.33-34.

[36] The *Roman Catholic church* has not yet determined whether Alexander V was a true pope or not. *Catholic Encyclopedia Vol.I:Alexander V*.

much to appreciate in Wyclif's teachings and came to represent a similar understanding of authority. The four *Articles of Prague*, written by his followers five years after his death, summarise well the intent of Hus' reforms: people were to be allowed to preach freely; the laity were to be given both the bread and the cup in the eucharist; clergy were to be punished when they committed serious sins; and the secular power wielded by church officials must be abolished.[37] Though King Wenceslas supported Hus through multiple excommunications amidst the political tangle of three popes vying for recognition, Hus' opposition to a papal indulgence in 1412 made him nearly indefensible.[38]

Again in 1414, a group of cardinals managed to secure a council – this time at Constance. Though John XXIII, the successor of Alexander V, summoned the council, it was Emperor Sigismund who provided the necessary political pressure.[39] Indeed, it is likely that some understood the imperial presence to grant the council legitimacy when even the semblance of papal support disappeared in 1415. It was Jean Gerson, however, whose elucidation of conciliarism gave the council the theoretical basis from which to resolve the schism: a legitimately convoked council did not depend upon a pope *and* regular councils of this sort were the only effective way to reform the church.[40] The Council of Constance successfully deposed all three rival popes, elected Pope Martin V in 1517 and set forth those two principles in the decrees *Sacrosancta* and *Frequens*. It must be remembered, however, that part of Sigismund's role in making the council possible had been securing the presence of Jan Hus, whom the council burned as a heretic in 1415. The persistence of Wyclifite teachings had undermined the credibility of the conciliar movement.[41] It was necessary, therefore, to demonstrate that the conciliar commitment to reform did not include unbridled license to interpret theology as one pleased. Jean Gerson portrayed Constance as putting an end to both the harmful teachings of Wyclif and Hus and the harmful teaching that the pope could not be challenged on any grounds whatsoever.[42] This claim to express the moderate position between two extremes would be repeated by nearly every reform movement of the sixteenth century.

Martin V (1417-1431) obediently convoked the poorly attended Council of Pavia in 1423 whose only major decision was that the next council should be held at Basle in 1431.[43] When Martin V died, Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447) attempted to dissolve the Council of Basle, approving its decisions only 'in so far as it was not

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[37] Cameron, E. *The European Reformation*, p.72.
[38] See Poole, R.A. *Wycliffe and Movements for Reform*, pp.156-160.
[39] Gordon, p.36.
[40] Gordon, p.37.
[41] Oberman, H.A. *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, p.208.
[42] Ozment, p.170.
[43] Gordon, p.39.

prejudicial to the rights, dignity, and supremacy of the papacy.'[44] The council's refusal to adjourn was a clear assertion of conciliar supremacy and initiated a prolonged struggle between pope and council.[45] Tensions mounted as the council negotiated with the Hussites and set limits on papal authority.[46] When Eugene IV dissolved the council a second time in 1437, he summoned an alternate council at Ferrara designed to restore communion between Constantinople and Rome.[47] Though only a minority of bishops left Basle to join Ferrara, Nicholas of Cusa, whose conciliar tract *De concordantia catholica* had formed the basis for the earlier continuation of the council, was among them. He argued that under such circumstances Basle could not be considered a legitimate council.[48] Again, attempts to reunite Greek and Latin Christians and to combat heresy featured prominently in the papal programme. The papal council was transferred from Ferrara to Florence in 1439 long enough to declare such reunion in *Laetentur coeli*, but the bull had little practical effect.[49] The council of Basle persisted for another decade in which it moved to Lausanne and elected Antipope Felix, but accepted the election of Eugene IV's successor Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455), effectively ending the conciliar bid for power.[50] This papal victory was solidified by Pope Pius II (1458-1464) who issued *Execrabilis* in 1460, declaring any appeal to a council over the pope heresy.

Nevertheless, conciliar ideas persisted in France and formed the foundation of Gallican thought.[51] They continued to find limited appeal in German universities and among individuals in England, Spain, and Italy, but it could hardly be called a movement.[52] Though Pope Julius II (1503-1513) was forced into calling the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517), it focused only on practical reforms, not authority.[53]

Thus, it is apparent that prior to the sixteenth century, there were several competing versions of authority. The system of patriarchates favoured by Eastern cities had diminished in importance after the Schism of 1054 and ceased to be relevant altogether after Constantinople was overrun by Turks in 1453. Nevertheless, among Western Christians, three different understandings of authority were clearly in competition from at least the turn of the millennium. Though Wyclifites and conciliarists both sought papal reforms, they should not be confused. Conciliarists failed to implement their belief in the congregation fidelium and

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[44] Lindberg, C. *The European Reformations*, p.49.
[45] Ozment, p.173.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., p.174.
[48] Ibid., p.175.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., p.176.
[51] Gordon, B. 'Conciliarism in late mediaeval Europe' in A. Pettegree (ed.) *The Reformation World*, p.45.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., p.46.

remained part of a hierarchical system within the church. Wyclifites emphasised the lay character of the church and resented the lack of institutional response to their calls for reform.

1.2 <u>CATALYSTS OF CHANGE</u>

The theological changes of the sixteenth century came suddenly, but not without cause. They were made possible by three major non-theological factors which served as catalysts: the printing press, humanism, and the emergence of the state. The development of the printing press was actually a synthesis of two technologies which had begun to spread through Europe in the twelfth century: block printing and paper.[54] First and foremost among its properties was that it made it possible to disseminate ideas at a formerly unprecedented level. Fifteenth century clergy hailed the press as a gift from God when it was used effectively to garner support for the ongoing struggle with the Turks.[55] It made the Bible and patristic authors accessible to nearly everyone who could read.

Such an increase in the amount of information available generated several secondary effects of printing. It changed the style of learning. When texts were difficult to get, learning consisted of memorisation – their prevalence meant it was possible to keep volumes on hand for reference.[56] It contributed to conflicts because disagreements were more apparent when recorded as text.[57] It furthermore gave rise to the real possibility of uniformity, and because some understood unity to be dependent on uniformity, less diversity was therefore tolerated.[58] The fact that attempts to repress various movements were frequently directed at bookshops reiterates the importance of printing as the primary medium of sixteenth century ideas.[59]

A second important catalyst was the intellectual developments of the renaissance period broadly classified under the term 'humanism.' Its original attempts to renew the ancient art of rhetoric blossomed into a penchant for 'writing a classical Latin style, purifying the original source texts of classical and Christian antiquity, and emphasising individual moral uprightness rather than communal ritual purity.'[60] As far as Church reform is concerned, the last two items are of paramount importance.

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[54] Rice, E.F. *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe, 1460-1559*, p.3.
[55] Eisenstein, E.L. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, p.303.
[56] Rice, p.9.
[57] Eisenstein, p.319.
[58] Ibid., p.313.
[59] McGrath, A.E. *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, p.15.
[60] Cameron, p.64.

The Crusades exposed Western Europe to ideas which had been circulating in the Eastern world, fuelling a renewed interest in Greek texts and the ancient world in general. Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274) fostered a new appreciation for Aristotle through his response to the Arabian philosopher, Averroes.[61] In 1312, the universities of Paris, Bologna, Salamanca, and Oxford had established chairs of Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic.[62] Their importance as academic subjects grew particularly under the patronage of Cardinal Ximénes in the late thirteenth century and the pioneering efforts of Lorenzo Valla in the mid-fifteenth. In addition, the fall of Constantinople in 1453 caused the migration of numerous Greek scholars and libraries to the western universities. Gillian Evans noted that 'The work of the philologists of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was directed in the first instance to checking and correcting the Vulgate'.[63] Criticism of the work that had been held up by the Church as absolutely authoritative for a thousand years raised questions about the legitimacy of the principles derived from it. Furthermore, the variations between texts implied that the Church had been irresponsible; not just in an academic sense, but in its sacred duty of preserving God's truth for future generations.

It is useful, therefore to explore the significance of linguistic differences between East and West. In an article titled, *Luther: Theologian For Catholics and Protestants*, George Yule argued that the disparity between theological conceptions in Western and Eastern Europe was due to a fourth century shift in ecclesial language from a predominantly Greek vocabulary to a predominantly Latin vocabulary.[64] Though Latin proved extremely useful for presenting articles of faith with precision, in the process it coloured theology with the juridical overtones of Roman law. Thus, the Greek word for 'repent' (μετανοιε) implying a moral change of direction became 'penance' (*poenitentiam agitur*), meaning an obligatory action performed essentially as a punishment after one had broken the law. Similarly, Latin presents 'sin' not as an affront to God's person, but a violation of God's rules. Yule summarised the implications of deriving nearly all of Western spirituality since 400 from Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible:

> This has given the devotional life of the Western Church and its theology a legalistic and moralistic twist and has led to a higher emphasis being placed on the juridical metaphors of the Bible than on the more appropriate personal ones in its understanding of the way of salvation…. Under the rigorous and exact process of

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[61] *Catholic Encyclopedia Vol.XIV:Thomas Aquinas*, III.A.3.
[62] Evans, G.R. *Problems of Authority in the Reformation Debates*, p.39.
[63] Ibid., p.41.
[64] The impact of this shift was compounded by the fact that the project of describing theology with Latin terminology was carried out predominantly by Tertullian. While he deserves immense credit for the mass of fruitful theological terms he coined, it remains the work of a single person and thus inherently limited in perspective.

mediaeval scholasticism, theology took on a strangely impersonal ring which tended to obscure the love of God behind impersonal logical categories and so tended to drive a wedge between theology and piety.[65]

The shift had a profound effect on understandings of salvation. Once repentance and forgiveness were drawn into the realm of legal proceedings, a disproportionate amount of emphasis was placed on role of the sinner. To be saved 'legally' required that the proper procedures be followed. A person could only be forgiven for what she confessed. After confession, restitution must be made for each act of sin in order to complete the transaction.

The Greeks, by contrast focused on the person of Christ. Instead of asking *how* salvation was brought about, they asked *who* brought it. The paradigms of Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Cyril were 'essentially personal so that the very statement of the theology is doxological in character, which means that a divorce between theology and piety is less likely to occur.'[66] From this perspective, the scholastic distinction between justice and righteousness (echoing Arius' distinction between God's being and Christ's actions) falls away.

It was not merely language that humanists were concerned with, but also the existential qualities the ancient Greeks described as 'virtues.' The lack of such qualities among church officials prompted the mockery of the clever and the despair of the pious. To cite two brief examples within the memory of the reformers, Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) was known for his eight illegitimate children and Pope Julius II (1503-1513) earned the title *terribilita*[67] for his violent political initiatives. Desiderius Erasmus took up the themes of exploitation and moral depravity in *Praise of Folly*, criticising both the moral failings of clergy and the irrelevance of their ceremonies. Other wits suggested that if the church was an ark of salvation it paralleled 'Noah's ark without benefit of shovelled stalls.'[68]

The third important catalyst was the social and political changes out of which a modern idea of statehood began to emerge. Unlike previous centuries, the sixteenth saw a steady increase in population across Europe.[69] Populated urban areas created new forums for spreading ideas and facilitated the education which would allow people to make use of the reading material which the printing press made available. A growing middle class which valued economic and social mobility seemed to favour the naked individualism Protestant formulations seemed to emphasise.[70]

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[65] Yule, G. *Luther: Theologian for Catholics and Protestants*, p.5.
[66] Ibid., p.6.
[67] 'the terrible man'
[68] Lindberg, p.54.
[69] Ozment, p.191.
[70] Ibid., p.198.

In the Middle-Ages, universities matriculated students according to geographic-linguistic groupings corresponding roughly to the national boundaries of present-day Western Europe. These 'national' categories had been embraced by the Council of Constance as a political expediency to counteract the attempts of Antipope John XXIII to overwhelm the voting with scores of Italian prelates. By setting up voting as nations, Emperor Sigismund was able to wrest control from the cardinals and the pope. Joseph Gill noted that during the Council, the nations displayed attitudes that would characterise their responses in the sixteenth century: 'the German and English Nations wanted first to reform the Church in head and members and then to elect a new pope. The cardinals with the Italians, French and Spaniards placed the unity of the Church first, i.e. a new pope, and then reform.'[71] After the Council of Constance, Martin V set up concordats with each nation, dealing with them through their own sovereign. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the influence of burgeoning nationalistic ideas was constantly offset by the looming armies of the Turk. 'Until the late seventeenth century the Turk was regarded as a fearsome threat to the Christian world. For this reason the idea of the unity of Christendom remained meaningful for the European community, irrespective of nationality'.[72] The memory of Sultan Mahomet II's violent seizure of Constantinople in 1453 served as a vivid reminder of the consequences of political division.

Prompted by renewed interest in Greek texts, made widely available through printing, sixteenth century theologians began to reconsider their understanding of faith in light of critical linguistic scholarship. Their ideas were taken up by educated laity who had enough leisure time to follow theological developments and politicians who saw an opportunity to further their own interests alike. In this way, many of the trends prior to the sixteenth century functioned in a reflexive way, augmenting and amplifying other catalysts of change.

These catalysts altered the rival conceptions of authority already noted. For instance, the use of printed words as a public reference doubtless prompted certain sentiments that text, especially printed text, had a peculiar property of preserving not just shapes on a page, but *meaning*. The humanist notion that the greatest of human arts were to be found in the past produced an incessant drive to find (and trust) the *earliest* texts. The growing moral critiques reinforced the idea that authority was intimately connected to the virtuous life – to holiness. With changing social structures and the realistic possibility of revolution – whether by peasants or nobility – trust in institutional authority must have been undermined. Perhaps the sixteenth

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[71] Gill, J. 'The Representation of the *Universitas Fidelium* in the Councils of the Conciliar Period' in G.J. Cuming and D. Baker (eds.), *Studies In Church History Vol.7 – Councils and Assemblies* (Cambridge, 1971), p.186.
[72] Bush, L.M. *Renaissance, Reformation and the Outer World*, p.24.

century questioned authority no more than any other, but amidst such catalysts, the answers it posited had far reaching implications.

CHAPTER 2:   MARTIN LUTHER'S CONCEPTION OF AUTHORITY

2.1   LUTHER'S EARLY YEARS

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany, in 1483 to Hans and Margaret Luther, who raised him in the growing town of Mansfeld. As a boy, Luther excelled in school and was sent on to a boarding school in Eisenach. He lived as any other poor student in Germany, begging his food at night and making what merriment he could with music and debate.[1] Following the wishes of his father for him to pursue a career in law, he passed quickly through his bachelor's and master's degrees at Erfurt University. One day Luther had a close brush with death in which he vowed to become a monk.[2] As a result, he joined the Augustinian monastery where his journey as a reformer began.

Some speculation has been made as to the influence of corporal punishment upon the young Luther, since he recorded incidents of being hit by both his parents and being beaten in school for failing to decline Latin nouns.[3] To make psychological evaluations of Luther upon this basis does not appear to offer any reliable insight into his uniqueness as a figure in the sixteenth century. If his upbringing was harsh, there is no reason to suppose it was any more acrimonious than most of his colleagues.

The real point of interest is that the German cities in which Luther grew up were undergoing an economic revolution. Peasants like Luther's parents were moving away from agricultural subsistence to become prosperous entrepreneurs.[4] Though people did not have a great deal of financial security, they had extra money to spend and used it to educate their children. Thus, the economic development of Germany paved the way for Luther's ideas to take root in two significant ways: First, it placed a large portion of the population in a transitional phase which encouraged them to welcome change as improvement. Second, it created a base of educated youth who were interested in obtaining and discussing the reformer's works.

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[1] His classmates called him 'the philosopher.'
[2] Gordon Rupp discussed the conflicting accounts of being overtaken by a thunderstorm near Erfurt in 1505 and that of severing an artery on his own dagger in the same locale in 1503. He suggested the stories may be similar enough to be simply a confusion of Luther's mind, but left open the possibility that the young scholar faced two near death experiences within as many years. Rupp, G. *Luther's Progress to the Diet of Worms* pp.14-15.
[3] Brendler,G. *Martin Luther: Theology and Revolution* pp.24-25.
[4] Lindberg, C. *The European Reformations*, p.56.

2.2 LUTHER'S DEVELOPING SPIRITUALITY AND CONSEQUENT CHALLENGE TO AUTHORITY

The progression by which Luther became estranged from the *Roman Catholic church* occurred with three successive realisations. It began with a profound change in his personal spirituality, developed into a pastoral concern that all Christians should be given the opportunity to have a similar experience, and culminated in a decision to oppose the supreme spiritual and political authorities in Europe. This progression raises several questions. In what ways did Luther's struggle serve to legitimate his challenge to authority? Was Luther's personal formulation of salvation a necessary precondition of his challenge, or an incidental issue exploited as rhetoric?

Much debate has been generated concerning the time and nature of a powerful spiritual experience that Luther referred back to many times in his later life as a personal turning point. The debate has been clouded by a number of phrases which attempt to mark the difference between Luther as a loyal priest within the *Catholic church* and Luther as a committed reformer with incompatible theology. Unfortunately, 'tower experience,'[5] 'reformation discovery,'[6] 'reformation breakthrough'[7] and 'reformation consciousness'[8] have been used in different ways by different scholars making it difficult to discern whether the discussion is about a single event, two separate events, or a process of many years. For the sake of clarity, 'tower experience' will refer to Luther's new understanding of Romans 1:17[9] and relief from his spiritual anxiety, but not necessarily his developed theology of justification. The term 'reformation discovery' will be discarded and 'reformation breakthrough' will refer to the emergence of Luther's mature theology characterised by the conviction that scripture could be the only sure guide in matters of faith. 'Reformation consciousness' will refer to Luther's awareness of being in opposition to the institutional church, that is, his consciousness of the reformation as a movement.

While some scholars dismiss Luther's claims to have worked harder at 'monkery' than any of his fellows, few question the reality of the spiritual difficulties which emerged for him during his time in the monastery. The solitude and meditation only served to make him more aware of his sinfulness. No matter how many vigils he held, no matter how many fasts, Luther felt he could never really be

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[5] See Thompson, W.D.J.C. *The Problem of Luther's 'tower-experience' and its Place in his Intellectual Development.*
[6] See *Martin Luther – Witness to Jesus Christ, Kloster Kirchberg* (1983), 8.
[7] See Bizer, E. *Fides ex auditu* (cited in Thompson, p.195.).
[8] See Atkinson, J. *Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism.*
[9] 'For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."' NRSV.

certain his efforts were approved by God. Though the novice master, Johann Greffenstein tried to direct Luther away from a focus on his own failings, the young monk still confessed compulsively.[10] In 1511, Luther gained some amount of solace from vicar general Johann von Staupitz's advice that he should meditate on the mercy of God and the suffering of Christ,[11] but his troubles endured for a long time after that. The older Augustinian's encouragement to become a doctor of the holy scripture and take a lectureship at Wittenberg in 1512 drove Luther to the intense study of the Bible in which he would finally find peace.[12]

It is at this point that scholarship remains divided regarding the tower experience. The traditionalists have been inclined towards an early date for the tower experience and have tended to conflate it with conceptions of the reformation breakthrough. For example, while describing events in 1513, James Atkinson summarised:

> When Luther broke through to the dawn of his reformation consciousness, he realized (1) that the Gospel of freedom in Christ had been transmuted into a new law of servitude, (2) that the kingdom of all believers was now a quasi-spiritual tyranny and (3) that the true evangelical theology had been smothered under a human scholasticism which was no more than idolatrous intellectualism.[13]

It is difficult to discern how much Atkinson meant to include as part of the tower experience since he followed the above passage with the ambiguous statement, 'Of course, Luther was not fully aware of all this at the time.'[14] Nevertheless, Atkinson clearly believed Luther gained these insights before 1517.

The revisionist approach, on the other hand, has tended to push the tower experience until sometime after the eruption of the indulgence controversy in 1517. This approach relies on Luther's own account in the 1545 preface to his collection of Latin writings which placed the date at 1519. The difficulty arises upon consideration that Luther's spiritual anxiety seems to have abated long before that time and that his 1515/16 lectures on Romans treated Romans 1:17 with the same language as his description of the tower experience.

Cargill Thompson's helpful summary of Ernst Bizer's *Fides ex auditu* noted a similar merging of the tower experience with Luther's reformation breakthrough:

> According to Bizer, the essence of Luther's new insight into the meaning of Romans 1:17 lay in the realisation that the words *Iustitia Dei in illo* meant not merely the righteousness of God is revealed *in* the gospel, but that it is revealed *through* the

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[10] One time he did so for six hours straight.
[11] Barkley, J.M. 'Luther Quincentenary, The Significance of Luther Today' in E.A. Russell (ed.), *Irish Biblical Studies Vol.5* (1983), p.176.
[12] Lindberg, p.66.
[13] Atkinson, J. *Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism*, p.80.
[14] Ibid.

gospel…. what the 'tower-experience' consisted of-was the idea of the Word as the essential means of grace.[15]

Nevertheless, such merging of these key moments in Luther's development is avoidable. Thompson proposed a third option which regards the tower experience and the reformation breakthrough as two separate moments of illumination. The former served largely to prompt his attack on scholastic theology around 1514/15 while the latter emerged out of the tumult of the indulgence controversy around 1518/19. Though Thompson suggested that there is no concrete evidence for this formulation, it seems to cohere remarkably well with the difference between Luther's use of the fathers and canon law in his initial attacks on scholasticism and the exclusivist view of scripture he displayed at Leipzig.

The importance of determining a precise date for the tower experience is apparent in the distance between the traditionalist and revisionist approaches. The traditionalist tendency to date the tower experience early has been supported by their interest in establishing it as a cause of Luther's reformation consciousness. The revisionist tendency to date the tower experience later results in part from their interest in highlighting the emergence of Luther's reformation consciousness after the indulgence controversy. Neither has managed to present significantly compelling evidence for combining the concepts of tower experience and reformation breakthrough.

Therefore, in the following analysis of Luther's encounters with his opponents this third formulation is taken as a tentative thesis for largely pragmatic reasons. In the first place, it avoids the tendency to frame history as a collection of precise moments where the reality of it was almost certainly more ambiguous. More importantly, it leaves the question open as to whether Luther was proposing new theology to support his opinions or returning to an earlier, more accurate understanding of faith. Such an approach seems appropriately consonant with George Yule's attempts to understand Luther as a 'theologian for Catholics and Protestants.'[16] Finally, the tower experience in itself had value for Luther but his reformation breakthrough related directly to his conflict with the church. It is more useful to leave the specifics of the tower experience aside and focus on the development and implications of Luther's breakthrough.

As meaningful as the tower experience must have been to Luther's personal faith, there is surprising lack of evidence in his lectures of a dramatic shift in thought, particularly if one holds to an early dating of it. This should not be surprising given

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[15] Thompson, p.206.
[16] Yule, G. *Luther: Theologian for Catholics and Protestants*, pp.1-18.

Luther's powerful combination of conservatism and stubbornness.[17] Throughout his life, he refused to accept change for its own sake or modify his own opinions unless presented with a thoroughly compelling argument. If we take Luther's experience in the tower as an initial illumination, it began an incubation of his ideas about scripture which would appear in 1517 as a critique that the current practices of the church were obscuring people's means of encountering God. If there was a second moment of illumination, it came in 1518 or 1519 as his ideas came together in a way that 'inherently threatened the whole fabric of medieval piety.'[18] That materialisation was Luther's reformation breakthrough. It began with his criticism of scholastic theology and later spread to the wider life and practice of the church. Nevertheless, it can be distinguished from the conscious awareness of acting in opposition to the hierarchy of the church.

Luther's first publication in 1517, *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, received almost no public attention,[19] but demonstrated both his concern to enable others to encounter God as he had and his lack of revolutionary intent. In the disputation, he challenged the notion that the will was free to do good, opposing the earlier work of John Duns Scotus and Gabriel Biel. He denounced Aristotle saying, 'no one can become a theologian unless he becomes one without Aristotle…. the whole Aristotle is to theology as darkness is to light'[20] and rejected the use of syllogisms to understand divine terms. All this was intended to help people escape the spiritual economy which demanded the unassailable standard of 'doing one's best.' Most notable, however, was Luther's closing line which declared unequivocally, 'In all we wanted to say, we believe we have said nothing that is not in agreement with the Catholic church and the teachers of the church.'[21] He thought of himself as opposing a mistaken popular teaching rather than church itself.

When Luther published the *Ninety-five Theses* two months later, he was surprised at the negative reaction to them as a challenge to papal authority. He considered such accusations an attempt by Tetzel and Eck to cover up the weakness of the theory of indulgences.[22] Luther's reaction seems justified upon consideration that the *Ninety-five Theses* assumed the authority of the pope and his good will towards Christendom. Thesis five stated, 'The pope neither desires nor is able to remit any penalties except those imposed by his own authority or that of the canons.'[23] Later on Luther wrote, 'That power which the pope has in general over

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[17] Even at the height of Wittenberg reforms, Luther continued to try to change as little as possible. Barkley, pp.182-183.
[18] Cameron, E. *The European Reformation*, p.173.
[19] Ibid., p.100.
[20] *Luther's Works*, 31:12 (theses 44 and 50).
[21] LW, 31:15.
[22] Hendrix, S.H. *Luther and the Papacy*, p.37.
[23] LW, 31:26 (thesis 5).

purgatory corresponds to the power which any bishop or curate has in a particular way in his own diocese or parish'.[24] In thesis thirty-eight, he equated papal remission and blessing with divine remission. Most glaring of all, however, was the naïveté of theses fifty and fifty-one;

> 50. Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence preachers, he would rather that the basilica of St. Peter were burned to ashes than built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep.

> 51. Christians are to be taught that the pope would and should wish to give of his own money, even though he had to sell the basilica of St. Peter, to many of those from whom certain hawkers of indulgences cajole money.[25]

Luther was apparently completely ignorant that the mass sale of indulgences as a fundraiser for the basilica had been primarily Leo X's idea. At that point in time, Luther still considered the papal office the legitimate embodiment of Christ's power on earth. Those who forbid the preaching of the Word of God are called, 'enemies of Christ and the pope'.[26] Luther was so sure of Leo X's agreement with him that he could state, 'It is certainly the pope's sentiment'[27] and 'much more does he [the pope] intend to thunder against those who use indulgences as a pretext to contrive harm to holy love and truth.'[28] The harshest critiques against the theory of indulgences were diplomatically presented not as Luther's own opinions, but as 'shrewd questions of the laity' prompted by 'unbridled preaching.' Luther suggested that this preaching needed to cease because it 'makes it difficult even for learned men to rescue the reverence which is due the pope'[29]

It is important to consider that Luther received a favourable hearing from his fellow Augustinians when he met with them at Heidelberg in 1518. As he attempted to explain his original theses in the same way publicly, he clearly articulated his reformation breakthrough:

> I testify that I desire to say or maintain absolutely nothing except, first of all, what is in the Holy Scriptures and can be maintained from them; then what is in and from the writings of the church fathers and is accepted by the Roman church and preserved both in the canons and the papal decrees. But if any proposition cannot be proved or disproved from them I shall simply maintain it, for the sake of debate, on the basis of the judgement of reason and experience, always, however, without violating the judgement of any of my superiors in these matters.[30]

It was possible for Luther to assert his support for scripture and 'what was accepted by the church' in the same sentence because he, like everyone else,

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[24] LW, 31:27 (thesis 25).
[25] LW, 31:30.
[26] LW, 31:30 (thesis 53).
[27] LW, 31:30 (thesis 55).
[28] LW, 31:31-32 (thesis 71).
[29] LW, 31:32 (thesis 81).
[30] LW, 31:83.

perceived no distinction between them. Yet, the lines of conflict began to emerge in his demand that he should not be viewed as a heretic simply for disputing scholastic opinions.[31] After all, he was a doctor of the church, and therefore duty bound to ask such questions of it. His distinctions between the person and office of the pope allowed him to deny certain historical actions of popes while affirming the valid authority of the office.[32]

Luther's acceptance of the three-tiered support of theology with scripture, the fathers, and canon law appeared again in his response to Sylvester Prierias. The Inquisitor's *Dialogue* was one of the first works against Luther and had prompted the initial summons to Rome for a heresy trial in 1518. Though on the surface, the argument was about the authority of scripture, the real issue was the underlying assumptions drawn from church fathers.[33] Prierias drew largely from his fellow Dominican, Thomas Aquinas, while Luther used St. Augustine of Hippo's view that only scripture could be properly called 'infallible.' The lack of any serious argumentation on the part of Prierias served only to illustrate the ideological distance between he and Luther and exacerbate the situation.

The papacy's first official conflict with Luther came in the person of Cardinal Thomas Vio, the papal legate better known as Cajetan. Unlike Prierias, Cajetan had spent a significant amount of time developing a reasoned critique of Luther's position. The meeting at Augsburg challenged Luther with two specific examples of his errors in the *Ninety-five Theses*. Thesis 58 directly contradicted the 1343 definition of the treasury of the church as the merits of Christ in *Unigenitus* and thesis 7 presented a new teaching on absolution. Luther's response that *Unigenitus* was an invalid decree because it contradicted scripture reveals a great deal. By the time of this meeting, he had already begun using scripture as measure of what was truly Christian and what was not, but this was his first admission that scripture sometimes differed from the church's historical teaching. It is important to realise, however, that his rejection of *Unigenitus* did not represent a wholesale rejection of papal decrees. In a subsequent meeting with Cajetan, Luther intimated that he had ignored *Unigenitus* because he did not wish to draw attention to a decree that could not be justified. As Scott Hendrix observed, this revealed Luther's understanding that:

> honor is not preserved by the naked assertion of papal authority but by the establishment of the pope's credibility. That credibility does not depend on the

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[31] The dogmatic status of the doctrine of indulgences did not emerge until Cajetan orchestrated its legislation after meeting with Luther in 1518.

[32] This was in accordance with what had been asserted by the Roman church since at least the tenth century.

[33] Hendrix, pp.46-52.

demonstration that prior papal decrees have never been erroneous but on the willingness of the reigning pope to give justifiable reasons for his own rulings.[34]

In defence of his teaching that receiving absolution with uncertainty meant condemnation, Luther attempted to explain his new understanding of Romans 1:17 and introduced the argument he would later use at Worms. He was acting according to his conscience and could not recant unless he was convinced otherwise. The three days of meetings did not conclude well for either party. Cajetan was irritated by Luther's arrogance and began proceeding against him as a heretic. Luther concluded that Cajetan was not a Christian since he taught heretical statements.[35]

The importance of these two encounters was how Luther's perspective changed in response to the antagonism of Prierias and Cajetan. Instead of dealing with the theological difficulties of indulgences, Prierias turned the discussion to Luther's right to challenge church teaching. Cajetan took it for granted that Luther had stepped beyond his rights and hoped to win Luther back to the church by frankly pointing out his errors. Luther's first and persistent response was that he was a doctor of the church and therefore responsible to challenge faulty theology. These initial conflicts moved Luther to develop a formal argument for the authority of scripture based on Augustine and canon law. Though he would later discard the argument since scripture was authoritative simply by virtue of being God's Word, its development enabled him to make a case for his foundational premises according to his opponents' framework.

Some scholars find it significant that Luther's early opponents were Dominicans. There is nothing to suggest that some central body was directing various members of the order to target Luther, but perhaps there was something of a mendicant rivalry in the early years of the Luther affair. J.M. Barkley argued that part of the reason the curia did not address it with more energy is that they viewed it 'as a monkish quarrel between the Augustinians and Dominicans to be settled by monastic discipline.'[36]

The Dominicans' origin as the opponents of the Albigenses gave them an identity as an order whose function was to study and preach *for the purpose of eradicating heresy*. They comprised the majority of the papal inquisitors, bolstered by an occasional Franciscan. The Augustinians, on the other hand, had begun as a contemplative order which 'little by little abandoned its contemplative purpose to become directed towards an ideal of pastoral service.'[37] It made sense that Luther's

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[34] Ibid., p.61.
[35] Brecht, M. *Martin Luther – His Road to Reformation*, p.257.
[36] Barkley, p.176.
[37] Bouyer, L. *A History of Christian Spirituality Vol.1*, p.499.

position would be carefully considered and largely accepted by his Augustinian colleagues while challenged vehemently by the wary Dominicans.

Tensions between orders became apparent on two separate occasions just prior to the Luther incident. In 1497, the Dominicans and Franciscans secured a bull confirming all the privileges granted by previous popes, but their representatives in Rome succeeded in stopping the Augustinians' attempt to do the same until 1507.[38] F.X. Martin noted, concerning the Parisian reforms initiated in the early sixteenth century, the 'bitter, and at times ludicrous, opposition which [the Augustinian Cardinal, Georges] d'Amboise met from the Dominicans and Franciscans'.[39] If what has been construed as 'Luther's break with Rome' was simply a manifestation of petty infighting among rival monastic orders, some serious rethinking may need to be done. Certainly, such a perspective is too simplistic, particularly regarding the later stages of the conflict, but acknowledgement that facets of the reformation were the natural result of incongruous theological perspectives between orders of a single church may be useful in a later consideration of ways to articulate an inclusive narrative for the theological descendants of Leo and Luther. If the differing group identities and loyalties of Dominicans and Augustinians can be held in tension under the collective term 'Catholic,' it is conceivable that a similarly acceptable tension may be found for considering the collective identity of Catholics and Protestants.

The discussion thus far has tracked Luther's personal spiritual revelation in the tower experience and how his concern for the spiritual needs of his congregation led to a conflict over the issue of authority. The third stage of Luther's development was characterised by his first abandoning the authority of the pope and then the authority of councils. His conviction that these popes and councils had often been mistaken in the past led him to the conclusion that they needed to be opposed for the sake of truth.

Up to his meetings with Cajetan, Luther does not appear to have been conscious of potential estrangement from Rome. He was greatly disturbed to learn afterwards that Cajetan's orders had already labelled him a heretic. His belief that Pope Leo X was on his side began to dwindle and he filed an appeal to a council in November 1518.[40] Though it could not postpone the measures taken against Luther, it did function to increase public awareness, a factor which Luther considered to be in his favour since he believed his cause so self-evidently true that if people only knew about it, they would support him. Martin Brecht cautioned that such an appeal does not necessarily rank Luther as a conciliarist. 'Luther recognized that *the*

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[38] with the *Bulla Aurea* obtained by Giles of Viterbo.
[39] Martin, F.X. *The Augustinian Order on the Eve of the Reformation*, p.94.
[40] There was some hope of this appeal being successful since the University of Paris had appealed to a council over the pope earlier that year.

authority in the church was that which correctly interpreted Scripture, and this is why he was now hoping in the council.'[41]

Before attending to the events at Leipzig, however, there is one figure who merits some note, if only for the uniqueness of his encounter with Luther. Sent as a political envoy to Frederick the Wise, Karl von Miltitz became enchanted with the notion of mediating a fortuitous end to the Luther affair. By the time he and Luther met in January 1519, Luther had given up on the possibility of conciliation. Nevertheless, he wrote a letter of apology to Leo X as the envoy asked. Miltitz gained credibility as a negotiator by attacking Tetzel and Albrecht for their greed and in doing so was the only papal representative to acknowledge that Luther's critique of indulgences had some merit. Though Luther's proposals for resolution did not include the recantation Rome required, Miltitz must have managed to salve some opinions in Rome since he was able to report to Frederick on 5 February that if Luther remained silent, there was a good chance of bringing a peaceable conclusion to the controversy. It is impossible to say whether the envoy's optimism was exaggerated since Luther broke silence after Johann Eck introduced the topic of papal authority into his upcoming debate with Andreas Karlstadt at Leipzig.

In May, Miltitz tried to solidify arrangements for the hearing Luther had requested for so long, but the reformer turned it down, demonstrating his increasing awareness of distance from Rome. He was not looking so much for a hearing now as a list of points he was expected to recant. Furthermore, the scholars involved in the upcoming debate at Leipzig would be in a much better position to judge him than cardinals or colloquies. Luther had come to distrust the Roman hierarchy and what must have appeared as deceit on the part of Cajetan. He hoped to find vindication among the educated, and prevailed upon the officials to be included in the debate.

It is important to note that while his efforts toward reconciliation seem laudable, Miltitz was functioning outside of his sphere of influence. In proposing the hearing to Luther, he behaved as if Cajetan had granted him authority over the Luther affair, but there is no evidence to suggest this. Furthermore, Miltitz also appears to have been less than forthright in reporting the January meeting with Luther to Leo X. The pope had written to Luther in March suggesting that the reformer should visit Rome to make a formal recantation in person, seemingly unaware that Luther had expressly refused to recant unless his errors were demonstrated to him. This episode cautions against attempts at irenic dialogue that do not take into account the limitations of the current situation – a theme which would become significant for many communions engaging in ecumenical dialogue in the twentieth century.[42]

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[41] Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, p.263.
[42] See Chapter 9: Authority in Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry.

In the theses published prior to Leipzig, Karlstadt was careful to avoid the issue of papal authority, but Luther focused on it. The other Wittenberg professors believed Luther had taken things too far and encouraged him to concede that point and return to the original dispute. Nevertheless, it should not be supposed that Luther was acting as a revolutionary at this time. He seemed to conceive of his work in academic terms, believing it necessary to illuminate the short history of the idea of papal supremacy in order to counter Eck's debate strategy. Luther expected his opponent to attempt to defeat him by establishing that the *Ninety-five Theses* were opposed to historical theology. Thus, it seems that Luther was more interested in furthering his side of the debate than in contesting papal power as an institution. Unfortunately, in the midst of his historical study, he also came to the disparaging realisation which he shared with Spalatin, 'I know not whether the pope is the antichrist himself or whether he is his apostle, so miserably is Christ (that is, the truth) corrupted and crucified by the pope in the decretals.'[43] While Luther did not present this opinion publicly, it is clear that his distance from Rome was increased not only by his encounter with Eck, but by his intense historical study in preparation for the debate.

Johann Eck's role in the Leipzig debate would suggest that he is not without some responsibility for the developing schism. Though the tone of the debate had never been conciliatory, it became an attack when Eck declared Luther a Hussite. That comment transformed Leipzig from an abstract discussion of authority to a sort of trial where Luther had to defend himself against the charge of heresy. The shock was that Luther did not try to remove himself from association with the teachings of Hus, but rather defended them as 'truly Christian and evangelical' since they were in accordance with scripture.[44] When Luther read the teachings that had been condemned by the Council of Constance a century earlier, he concluded they must have made a mistake. Eck seized on this implication and forced Luther to verbalise it. Thus, Luther's breakthrough became visible with all its implications: scripture could be used as a measure of not only papal decrees, but also conciliar ones.

The official decision concerning the outcome of Leipzig was more than a year forthcoming, but that ruling had little to do with the changes effected upon Luther's understanding or the polarisation which took place as a result. Many who were present at the debate were rightly shocked by Luther's declaration that councils could err. They made no distinction between Luther's concern for the injustice of

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[43] LW 48:114.
[44] Luther identified even further with the followers of Hus in 1520 declaring, 'Up to now I have unwittingly taught and held all the teachings of John Hus. John Staupitz has taught them equally unawares. In short, we are all Hussites without knowing it. Even Paul and Augustine are in reality Hussites.' LW 48:153

Hus' condemnation and the implication that the Council of Constance, renowned for ending the Great Papal Schism (1378-1415), was mistaken. With his denial of the divine foundation of papal authority and the infallibility of councils, Luther challenged the most basic medieval assumptions about the church. In their place, he erected the threefold structure of 'the authority of Scripture, responsible private judgement, and faith, all of them to be attested to by sound, rational, historical, informed judgement.'[45] He now realised explicitly that such a structure must supersede decrees, popes, and even councils.

Despite having arrived at these seemingly far-reaching conclusions, Luther still declared his allegiance to Rome and acknowledgement of Roman primacy in his *Resolutions* published shortly after the debate. He did not intend to tear down the hierarchical structure, but merely to establish that its origin was political in nature rather than divine. The change in Luther's attitude towards his opponents following the debate suggests that he was very close to seeing himself as an enemy of Rome. Though he may have stumbled into stating that the Council of Constance had erred, Luther discovered upon further reflection that he really meant it. With that acknowledgement, Luther lost his connection with the institutional church. His emphasis on personal judgement left him responsible to no one but himself.

Almost immediately after the debate, Luther began to demonise his enemies, calling them names and warning of God's punishment.[46] Jerome Emser's calamitous attempt to defend Luther against the charges of being a Hussite in August 1519 earned him the title 'Goat of Leipzig.' A year later, Augustine Alveld was dubbed the 'Ass' because his arguments were like the irritating braying of a donkey. Luther stopped calling the pope the apostle of the Antichrist, suggesting that Leo X was probably the great enemy of Christians himself. A riot in Wittenberg in July was named a work of the devil- a strategic tactic to distract the reformers. In a sermon, he described his enemies as pigs they should fatten up for God to slaughter. An oft-quoted passage was enclosed at the end of Luther's reprint of Prierias' *Epitome*:

> If we punish thieves with flogging, robbers with the sword, and heretics with fire, why should we not all the more attack with arms these teachers of perdition, these cardinals, these popes, all the dregs of the Roman Sodom, who have corrupted the church of God without ceasing, and wash our hands in their blood [Ps. 58:10] in order to free ourselves and those under our care from the conflagration that threatens to engulf all? O happy the Christians, wherever they are, if they are not under such a Roman Antichrist as we unlucky ones are![47]

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[45] Atkinson, J. *The Great Light*, p.55.
[46] Such a perspective followed naturally from Luther's tendency to view the world in terms of actual conflict between God and the devil. If he was working for God, his opponents must be working for Satan.
[47] *Martin Luther's Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 6:347, lines 22-28 (trans. by J.L. Schaaf in M. Brecht's *Martin Luther – His Road to Reformation*, p.347.)

In 1520, Luther published his three major works, *Appeal to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *The Freedom of the Christian*, all of which followed the same trend. They proved extremely effective in articulating Luther's views to the masses and galvanising popular support for him in Germany. Together they serve as a finely crafted argument for Germany's separation from the spiritual jurisdiction of Rome. All Christians are priests because of their faith and are not bound by the external signs of faith. Furthermore, the sevenfold sacramental tradition had been used by the church to maintain power over people, even though most of it was not based on scripture. Therefore, the German princes had the right and responsibility to initiate their own program of reforms outside of the influence of Rome. Luther's consciousness of the reformation had come to full bloom. He saw himself as a man who had glimpsed the truth and was calling others to act upon it.

The clearest articulation of Luther's view of authority, however, did not appear in these three major works, but rather in *On the Papacy in Rome, Against the Most Celebrated Romanist in Leipzig*, also published in 1520. It is helpful to consider this work in depth to understand Luther's justification for his actions. The argument had two main thrusts: the first made a case that Christendom was not limited to those under Rome and the second challenges the biblical basis for the divine authority of the pope.

On the basis of Ephesians 4:5, Luther defined Christendom as 'an assembly of all the people on earth who believe in Christ… not a physical assembly, but an assembly of hearts in one faith.'[48] It was evident to him that many who were in the physical assembly were not in the spiritual assembly because of their sin. If 'external Roman unity created true Christians, there would not be a sinner among them,'[49] but there clearly were sinners within that unity. Since Roman unity could not create Christians, being outside such a unity could not make a person a heretic or a non-Christian. If membership in Christendom was contingent on belief, the pope had no way of determining who really believed and who did not. A ruler could not rule over a group if he did not know who belonged to it, therefore the pope could not rule over Christians. Though Christ had promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against the church, the gates had often contained the papacy. Therefore, Christ's Church was something different from the papacy and the external church.

The second part of the argument analysed the use of Matthew 16:18-19, the passage in which Jesus declared, 'on this rock I will build my church' and 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' The papacy had traditionally attributed

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[48] LW, 39:65.
[49] LW, 39:67.

the power of the keys to Peter alone, but Luther considered that in chapter 18 Jesus told all the disciples that they had the power of binding and loosing. Furthermore, in John 20:22-23, Jesus said to all the disciples, 'If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven.' Luther presented the exegetical principle that in areas of ambiguity, two passages should be used to judge the one passage. Therefore, all the apostles were given power equal to Peter. Furthermore, if Peter were lord of the apostles, he would have been the one to make Matthias and Paul apostles, but scripture stated clearly that they were made apostles by heaven.[50] Furthermore, the power of the keys was described only as the power to bind and loose sins (that is, having to do with penance), but the pope has tried to extend the claim as power to rule. Finally, Luther declared that even if Peter had been given a special mandate in the command to 'Tend my sheep,'[51] Romanists knew more about 'wolfing' than about 'tending' since they burdened the people with laws and extort their money.

Despite these arguments, Luther still maintained that Christians should 'let the pope be pope'[52] since he had arrived at his position of power through God's permissive providence and since his continual presence was probably chastisement for the world's sins. In closing, Luther laid down an ultimatum:

> First, I will not tolerate it that men establish new articles of faith and scold, slander, and judge as heretics, schismatics, and unbelievers all other Christians in the whole world only because they are not under the pope.… Second, I shall accept whatever the pope establishes and does on the condition that I judge it first on the basis of Holy Scripture.… If these two things are granted, I will let the pope be, indeed, I will help to elevate him as high as they please. If they are not granted, then to me he shall be neither pope nor Christian.[53]

These sentiments demonstrate once more that Luther had nothing against papal authority as such. He was content for the pope to rule like a prince so long as he agreed to be bound by scripture and reason. However, since his conditions were by no means granted, Luther thereby declared himself an enemy of the institutional church.

By that time, Luther's excommunication was really just a matter of course. James Atkinson highlighted the morning Luther burned *Exsurge Domine* as the first true act of rebellion, but this perspective ignores the significant shift which took place after Leipzig. While it remains a significant symbolic action, it most closely parallels a declaration of war after a number of battles had already been fought. By that time, Luther had already vilified the pope in writing and encouraged others to

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[50] Acts 1:23-26 and Acts 13:2.
[51] John 21:15-17.
[52] LW, 39:101.
[53] LW, 39:101-2.

ignore his authority. The only surprising thing about Worms is that Luther managed to escape alive.

The final subject which must be assessed before coming to any conclusions about the break with Rome is what exactly Luther was proposing when he suggested that scripture ought to be the supreme authority for Christian life. What began as one authority among a consensus of authorities became for Luther *the* authority by which all assertions might be gauged. As noted previously, the rise of Greek and Hebrew studies had raised new questions about historical understandings of scripture. This created an opening for linguistic scholars to present radical challenges to Latin-based theological formulations. As such, a high view of scripture became Luther's means of escape from the spiritual economy of scholasticism, but also the trap by which he was encumbered in his own opinions.

Gillian Evans offered a helpful analysis of medieval methodology in which she highlighted three criteria by which a text was considered to hold authority.[54] The first and most basic authority derived from the text's intrinsic power to convince the reader by way of laying out arguments. This sort of authority would be viable only when both parties could come to agreed-upon premises and seems to be the sort of authority claimed by Luther in the presentation of his *Ninety-five Theses*. He did not challenge canon law or the authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but merely sought to demonstrate that a true understanding of orthodox doctrine was incompatible with the current practice of indulgences. The second kind of authority referred to the fundamental importance of certain propositions to a body of knowledge. Like Euclid's rules for geometry, all areas of medieval scholarship were thought to have 'first principles' on which the field of study was based. As his theology developed, Luther came to regard his understanding of the gospel, particularly the idea of justification by faith, as such a proposition. Reference to the gospel enabled him to dismiss critics on the basis that they had no understanding of the issues most basic to theology. The third type of authority was that derived from the authority issuing it. As such, a decree issued by the *Roman Catholic church* was to be seen as authoritative not merely for the compulsion of its argumentation or the fundamental nature of its content, but because it had the tacit approval of an ancient and 'universal' institution.

Though Luther's deep interest in scripture preceded his meeting with Staupitz,[55] the tower experience seems to be the psychological origin for favouring its authority more than other traditional sources. There was never mention that, as a monk, he held scripture in any higher esteem than his brethren did, but Luther's

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[54] Evans, G.R. *Problems of Authority in the Reformation Debates*, p.28-29.
[55] Gerrish, B.A. *The Old Protestantism and the New*, p.53.

personal spiritual difficulties were resolved by an encounter with God mediated by scripture. After the tower experience, Luther was convinced that the essentials of Christian faith were present for a man sitting alone in a room reading his bible. Therefore, when the pope and other church officials began to lose credibility in his eyes, he did not have to alter his essential understanding of Christianity, but only to reevaluate their place in it.

Luther understood scripture not merely as a version of God's message to humanity, which may have taken other forms, but as an exact duplication of what God actually said.[56] In this belief, Luther placed scripture in Evans' third category: It issued directly from God and therefore carried proportional authority. While the decrees of councils were merely the words of men, scripture contained the very words of God. Luther further believed that scripture's meaning was simple, obvious, and particular.[57] Its primary content was the gospel of Christ embodied in the idea of justification by faith. This became *the* fundamental theological proposition for Luther and functioned within Evans' second sphere of authority. If his opponents did not grant it, they were ignorant of theology or denying their consciences.

It is easy to imagine how dangerous such beliefs about scripture could be. It gave Luther, in many ways, exclusive access to the message of God. The abuse of this was tempered by Luther's emphasis on 'sound, rational, historical, informed judgement',[58] but Luther's use of this formula left much to be desired, particularly in the view of other reformers. The failings of his reliance on scripture as the primary authority are discussed in the following section.[59]

The years Luther spent struggling in his own relationship with God provide the basis for making three claims about his challenge to authority. First, it could be argued that he was a true son of the church, not merely a pretender who sought to do damage to the church as an outsider. He had not only lived according to the highest calling of the church, but had suffered intensely in it and persevered. Second, that he did not plan to rebel, but was merely following the call of God as had the prophets of old. Like the prophets, and like Christ, he had to suffer for proclaiming the truth. Finally, that his sole intention was the care of the poor laity whose access to God had been obscured by the misbegotten theology of the late middle ages. Luther tried to make the case that everyone should have the opportunity to encounter God as he had.

The personal nature of Luther's tower experience suggests the possibility that it was not integral to his challenge to the church. While within Luther's development it played a significant role in birthing an understanding of scripture as the primary

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[56] Ibid.
[57] Davies, R.E. *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers,* p.40.
[58] Atkinson, *Great Light*, p.55.
[59] See 2.3 Luther's relationship with others who challenged authority.

means of encountering God, accepting scripture as the supreme Christian authority need not have anything to do with such an experience. The idea of justification by faith was rarely discussed in Luther's significant encounters with the curia. Though it may on occasions represent an actual difference between Protestant and Catholic theologians, it had a relatively insignificant role in the schism that ensued. For this reason, its use in maintaining the distance between Christians of those respective camps should be understood as rhetoric rather than an important facet of Luther's separation from Rome.

2.3   LUTHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS WHO CHALLENGED AUTHORITY

It is possible to grow comfortable with Luther's estrangement from the *Roman Catholic church* as an unfortunate result of two clearly different points of view about the source of authority in the church. It would be a mistake, however to conceive of non-Catholics as a homogenous group which subscribed to a single understanding of authority. Though many of them could agree that scripture was the sole source of authority, they soon discovered that such an agreement meant little because it did not consider the epistemological difficulty of determining what scripture asserted. In the years following his excommunication, Luther tried to deal with a wholly different set of questions than had occupied him before. Where he had formerly been in the position of asserting a Christian's right to challenge the authority of the church, his attempts to reign in radical reformers and negotiate theological politics placed him in a position of authority which he did not wish to be challenged. It is to his responses to these challenges which raise two questions. Did Luther succeed in his attempts to ground authority in the objective content of scripture? Is the breakdown which occurred between Luther and other reformers simply a manifestation of Luther's intolerant temperament, or is it the result of an inherent flaw in his conception of authority?

There were two significant figures who read Luther's works and attempted to put his ideas into practice in ways he never intended. Both Thomas Müntzer and Andreas Karlstadt were once followers of Luther in some fashion until it became clear that he had no intention of instituting the sort of reforms they thought his theology demanded. Their separation from Luther demonstrated the Protestant tendency to splinter as well as Luther's inability to reconcile himself with those who had once been allies in reform.

Thomas Müntzer had preached Luther's teachings in Jütenborg until conflict with a group of Franciscans forced him to flee to Prague in 1521. Within a year, he was expelled from Bohemia for his dangerous propaganda and returned to Saxony.

He began attracting large crowds to his church in Allstedt with his German liturgy and energetic preaching. Luther was disturbed by the mystical relationship Münzter advocated with the Holy Spirit as well as his fierce apocalypticism and rejection of infant baptism.

Luther's demonisation of his opponents only escalated after his excommunication. His *Letter to the Princes of Saxony Concerning the Rebellious Spirit* in 1524 declared quite blatantly that Satan was behind Münzter and the gathering at Allstedt who were trying to 'make themselves lords of the world'[60] by force of arms. Luther criticised them because they refused to be examined by a body of believers[61] or enter into theological debate. He challenged their claim to be led by the Holy Spirit on the grounds that 'I do not perceive any particular fruit of the Allstedian spirit, except that he wants to do violence and destroy wood and stone. Love, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, have been very little in evidence so far.'[62]

These two critiques would be more credible coming from anyone but Luther. Though the first was obviously a reference to Luther's willingness to defend his case before almost any fair gathering, it failed to acknowledge that Luther ignored the official verdict of Leipzig and refused in principle to submit to the decision of a council. The second critique was a strange challenge coming from a man who always separated the failings of his personal life from his teaching and excused those in his own faction on the basis of Galatians 5:17, saying that the flesh and spirit will always struggle with each other. Thus, Luther's encounter with Müntzer revealed that once he was in a position of authority, Luther had no qualms about using arguments which had formerly been directed against him by his own enemies.

Long-time friend and colleague of Luther, Andreas Karlstadt, was left largely in charge of the reformation while Luther was hiding in Wartburg. When Luther finally returned, he berated Karlstadt for trying to institute unnecessary and hasty reforms and refused to allow him to publish his reasons for doing so.[63] In the years following, the older scholar withdrew from Wittenberg both ideologically and physically. After he published a series of tracts in 1523 beginning with *Why Has Andreas Karlstadt Kept Silence so Long?*, Luther accused him of being one of the rabble-rousing Allstedtians.

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[60] LW 40:51.

[61] Müntzer refused to meet with a party from Wittenberg saying he would only make his case before the whole world; he wanted to convert rulers, Turks, and heathen at the same gathering.

[62] LW 40:56.

[63] The evidence of an academic rivalry between Karlstadt and Luther makes this reprimand seem particularly unfortunate. Clearheaded thinking about the implementation of reforms was unnecessarily clouded by the issue of who would take the lead in the Wittenberg reforms.

As with Müntzer, Luther spared no insult for Karlstadt. In *Letter to the Christians at Strassburg in Opposition to the Fanatic Spirit*, he compared Karlstadt to Judas, called him a false prophet outright, and suggested that he lacked the ability to treat theological issues properly. Luther's tone of self-assurance in closing is revealing. 'I know and am certain that they [Karlstadt and the Allstedtians] have never prayed to God the Father or sought him in initiating their movement; nor do they have a sufficiently good conscience to dare to implore him for a blessed completion.'[64]

In *Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments,* Luther accuses Karlstadt of pharisaically heaping laws upon the masses and exclaiming

> 'Word of God, the Word of God,' just as if it were therefore to become God's Word as soon as one could say 'Word of God.' Usually those who make a great ado in praising God's Word do not have much to back them up, as unfortunately we have previously experienced under our papistic [sic] tyrants.[65]

Following that assertion, Luther offers nothing to convince his readers that he has properly grasped the Word of God where Karlstadt has not.

The major thrust of Luther's vehemence against Karlstadt was that he was one of those 'preachers who do not teach peacefully, but attract to themselves the mobs and on their own responsibility wantonly break images and destroy churches behind the backs of the authorities.'[66] It seems almost inconceivable that Luther, or at the very least a local satirist, failed to make the connection that such sentiments were little more than an echo of the papacy's perspective of Luther: a rebellious monk who attracted power-hungry princes to himself and wantonly attacked the authority of popes and councils, writing dangerous propaganda while in hiding. Luther's self perception that he had always striven to deal with the issues in open debate does little to dispel the ironic poignancy of his attack. A few pages later comes a second astonishing attack that could be about Luther as easily as Karlstadt. 'Whoever differs from them is a papist twice over who crucifies or murders Christ…. Whoever agrees with them, however, is up to his boots in the spirit and is a learned light.'[67]

Luther envisioned himself treading the middle way between equally disastrous alternatives:

> The profile of the factious spirit differs from that of the pope. They both destroy Christian freedom, and they are both anti-Christian. But the pope does it through

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[64] LW 40:70.
[65] LW 40:91.
[66] LW 40:103.
[67] LW 40:148.

> commandments, Dr. Karlstadt through prohibitions…. We however take the middle
> course and say: There is to be neither commanding nor forbidding.[68]

Though Luther may have been correct in differentiating between the sorts of prohibitions he propagated and those Karlstadt presented, the important thing to notice is how Luther drew clear lines of division which offered no possibility for inclusion. This tendency to regard those with differing perspectives as 'anti-Christian' rather than merely alternate (and benign) formulations emerged in a similar way among subsequent Protestant groups.

Apart from the radicals, a number of reformers pursued their own ideas of church reform with no intention of combining their efforts with Luther. Two such examples are Desiderius Erasmus and Ulrich Zwingli, both of whom were committed to the principles of humanism. Joseph Lortz noted that opposition from this quarter was almost inevitable given Luther's denial of humanity's ability to play an active role in their salvation.

Erasmus is one of the most intriguing characters of the reformation era. When tensions were beginning to mount, he urged that an impartial hearing for Luther would be beneficial for everyone. After Leipzig he remarked, 'The Lutherans threaten me openly with their abusive writings, and the emperor is as good as convinced that I am the source and head of the whole Luther tumult. So I run into greatest danger on both sides, while having made them both indebted to me.'[69]

Luther felt betrayed by the humanist's lack of support and let him know. For his part, Erasmus did his best to avoid involvement of any kind,[70] but under pressure from Luther's enemies, he eventually produced *Freedom of the Will* in 1524. This work challenged Luther on two levels. On the one hand, it brought into question Luther's pastoral motivation. Erasmus' rightly noted that Luther's doctrine of 'bondage of the will' made no sense pastorally. Even if it were true, it would be not be helpful to teach people that they could not do anything good.[71] On the other hand, *Freedom of the Will* was also a critique of Luther's formulation of salvation based on a passive interpretation of 'the righteousness of God.'[72] The significance of Erasmus' argument was that he used scripture and reason to disprove Luther. When faced with an argument according to the terms he had demanded for years, Luther was as dismissive of Erasmus' case as he had been of Cajetan's and more insulting:

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[68] LW 40:128 and 40:130.

[69] *Opus Epistolarum Erasmi*, 5: no. 1268 (trans. by E.T. Bachmann in H. Bornkamm's *Luther in Mid-Career 1521-1530* , p.342.)

[70] Erasmus suggested in private that he and his humanist friends would be of most use to the cause of reformation if they remained free of encumbering association with Luther. Brendler, G. *Martin Luther: Theology and Revolution*, pp.186-187.

[71] Rupp, E.G. and P.S. Watson *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, pp.40-42.

[72] Ibid., pp.89-91.

> your book struck me as so cheap and paltry that I felt profoundly sorry for you, defiling as you were your very elegant and ingenious style with such trash, and quite disgusted at the utterly unworthy manner that was being conveyed in such rich ornaments of eloquence, like refuse or ordure being carried in gold and silver vases.[73]

In this encounter, Luther demonstrated that it would not have made any difference if the *Roman Catholic church* had approached him on the terms he demanded. Luther was so thoroughly convinced of the rightness of his position that even a reasoned argument based on scripture and consideration for the common man seemed ignorant to him. Luther was certain that scripture's meaning was absolutely straightforward and therefore could not identify with Erasmus' belief that there were things in scripture which were obscure because 'God has not wished us to penetrate more deeply'.[74] The central question Erasmus posed for Luther is best expressed in his own words: 'what profit has there been so far from these laborious inquiries, except that with the loss of harmony we love one another the less'?[75]

Like Luther, Ulrich Zwingli began his career as a reformer with a protest against indulgences, but did not break with Rome until 1522 when he published his *Architeles*. The father of the Swiss reformation differed greatly from Luther in political outlook, preferring the egalitarianism of his own country to the German hierarchy of princes. Though this played an important role in Zwingli's conception of secular authority as different from Luther's, the real point of controversy between the two was the eucharist.

When the Marburg discussions were arranged by Philip of Hesse, Zwingli was enthusiastic about the meeting while Luther approached it with great misgivings. The reason for this may be found in Atkinson's assessment that 'Luther had always thought of Zwingli as a socialist and enthusiast, interested primarily in social and national reform rather than in theological reform.'[76] Luther's prejudice was likely reinforced by the fact that Zwingli had not faced the sort of struggle he had and therefore lacked the credibility he saw himself possessing through suffering.

The meeting of Swiss and German reformers was encouraging in the sense that they came to agreement on fourteen major doctrinal points, but ultimately signified the great problem of Protestantism. Disagreement on a portion of the fifteenth point was enough to prevent the groups from entering into full unity. Luther saw in Zwingli's description of the eucharist the same irreverence as Karlstadt's formulation because it interpreted the 'is' in 'this is my body'

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[73] Ibid., p.102.
[74] Ibid., p.38.
[75] Ibid., p.40.
[76] Atkinson, *Great Light*, p.96.

metaphorically.   Again, Luther could not accept the arguments of potential allies because he was certain they were abusing the clear meaning of scripture.

As Luther's encounters with other reformers demonstrate, there are significant problems with his reliance on scripture as supreme authority. Even those who took scripture to be authoritative in essentially the same sense often failed to reach agreement concerning the particulars of faith or the nature of reform. While Luther may have believed he reached an objective ground for faith and practice,[77] he actually engaged in a large amount of subjectivism.[78]

Though not part of his initial theology, Luther began to differentiate between 'scripture' and 'the Word of God,' likely as a result of the tower experience. He began to evaluate books on the basis of whether or not they preached Christ.[79] On these grounds, he was able to set the individual books of the bible on a qualitative scale with Romans at the top and Jude, James, and much of the Old Testament at the bottom. The concept of 'the Word of God' defined as 'that which preaches Christ' enabled Luther to treat the objective content of scripture (i.e. the text itself) in an entirely subjective way.

Even if Luther's argument for the qualitative differentiation of books were compelling, the problem of interpretation would still remain.[80] Though the 'Word of God' may have objective content which should inform faith and practice, it does not offer specific guidelines regarding contemporary issues and therefore requires interpretation to be relevant. The criterion of 'preaching Christ' does not seem to provide substantial defence against the sort of subjectivism with which arises in a process of private interpretation.

Luther gave the church a tremendous gift in his attempt to ground authority in the objective content of scripture. In response to the pervasive corruption and deceit he observed in the Church, he sought to separate the essence of Christian life from the politics and greed which can plague institutional life. The idea that each person must be responsible to God for evaluating the substance of his or her faith ushered in the modern era, but did not lead to a categorically superior perspective on authority. The ascendancy of Luther's subjectivism demonstrates that he did not offer a more reliable authority than the Roman curia, but merely transferred the authority to interpret the content of faith from a medieval context to a modern one. He rejected the totalitarian control of Roman church officials only to set up a system where linguistic scholars held complete authority and he was supreme pontiff.

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[77] Davies, R.E., p.55.
[78] Joseph Lortz's suggestion that this question has been largely ignored by Protestant scholarship seems particularly apropos considering how often the idea *sola scriptura* is raised without mention of Luther's selective valuation of the biblical canon. Lortz, J. *The Reformation in Germany: Vol.1*, p.330.
[79] Davies, R.E., p.33.
[80] Ibid., pp.57-58.

Nevertheless, the papacy during this period was not above criticism. The traditional church made no serious attempt during Luther's lifetime to examine the content of his protest or to alter the practice of indulgence sales. The negativity with which it responded played a role in escalating animosity and thereby contributed to the schism which eventually occurred.

By the end of Luther's life, his intolerance had increased considerably. Certainly his declarations that religious officials, rebellious peasants, and Jews should be destroyed without mercy are inexcusable. Perhaps if he had not been so stubborn or opinionated, or if the curia had handled his case with more care, the great tragedy of Christian schism could have been averted. The real difficulty with Luther, however, was that once he stepped outside of the traditional authority of the historical church, he created the opening for others to make similar moves *ad infinitum*. If a single individual may be right where an international gathering of Christians is wrong, those who disagree can always withdraw claiming they are in the right because their conscience tells them so. It is from this uncomfortable position that all following reformers must be considered.

CHAPTER 3:   JOHN CALVIN'S CONCEPTION OF AUTHORITY

3.1   CALVIN'S EARLY YEARS

John Calvin, born in Noyons, France in 1509, lost his mother a few years after his birth. He made no mention of how this affected him, but he was not long the child of a single parent since his father soon remarried. At school, his memory and intelligence gained him the respect of his teachers. Around 1520,[1] Calvin went to Paris, passing quickly through perfunctory grammar studies and moving on to the educational monastery of Montaigu, which was part of the University of Paris. The strict school rules may have contributed to Calvin's ideas about church discipline which would emerge in Geneva. The rigorous schedule during such formative years helped to build the self-discipline which would enable him to accomplish extraordinary amounts of work, even during difficult times of his life.

In 1525 or 1526, however, Calvin's father decided that his son would be better off with a career in law than in theology and accordingly transferred him from the University of Paris to the University of Orleans.[2] The death of his father in 1531 may have had some influence on John Calvin's perception of the *Roman Catholic church*. Gerard Cauvain had been excommunicated over a conflict with two priests he was working for in 1528, and was therefore refused burial.[3] Though a brother was able to get the ban lifted, the process could not have left Calvin with a pleasant impression of the church. The most important result of his father's death was that he could now direct his life however he chose. He finished his law degree that same year and decided to pursue an academic career beginning with the publication of *De Clementia*.[4]

3.2   CALVIN'S STRUGGLES WITH FRANCE AND ROME

Three features characterised Calvin's movement away from Rome. Though Calvin was not an original reformer in the sense of being prior to all others, his 'conversion' merits exploration as a personal account of his disillusionment with the 'superstitions of the papacy' and subsequent shift in ecclesiastical loyalties. In addition, Calvin's articulation of appropriate withdrawal from Rome was written freely without the pressure of charges of excommunication. Finally, much of

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[1] A comprehensive discussion of the dates for Calvin's schooling may be found in Parker, T.H.L. *John Calvin: A Biography,* pp.156-158.
[2] Parker, p.13.
[3] Hunt, R.N.C. *Calvin,* p.20.
[4] Hunt, p.33.

Calvin's work was prompted by concern for fellow Protestants suffering in France. Thus, Calvin's struggles with France and Rome raise the following questions: In what ways did Calvin's conflict with Rome differ from Luther's? Did Calvin offer an innovative view of authority or merely adopt that of earlier reformers?

As was the case with Luther, much debate has been generated concerning Calvin's oblique reference to his 'sudden conversion' (*subita conversione*) since it is difficult to determine with precision its content or the time it occurred. That Calvin did not mention such an experience until near the end of his life suggests that he might have indulged in a certain amount of retrospective interpretation. There was a growing tendency in contemporary circles to consider the practices of the papal church analogous to those of post-exilic Judaism. Therefore, in Calvin's time, the idea of conversion carried with it references to Paul's experience on the road to Damascus and Augustine's renunciation of paganism.[5] Whether or not the mild-mannered scholar considered his shift in loyalties in such grandiose terms is a matter worthy of exploration.

The concept of Calvin having a 'conversion' is based almost entirely on the preface to his commentary on Psalms, written in 1557.

> …God at last turned my course in another direction by the secret rein of his providence. What happened first was that by an unexpected conversion [*subita conversione*] he tamed to teachableness a mind too stubborn for its years- for I was so strongly devoted to the superstitions of the papacy that nothing less could draw me from such depths of mire.[6]

Alexandre Ganoczy drew attention to the fact that the Greek equivalent of Calvin's *convertere*, ἐπιστρέφειν, has close connections in the New Testament to μετανοειν (repentance), the word that had been so significant for Luther.[7] He further suggested that Calvin's conception of 'conversion' meant 'conversion as repentance' with its highest formulation being 'conversion as miracle', as in Paul's conversion. This idea was supported by T.H.L. Parker's consideration of the similarity between the language of the 1557 preface and that used to describe entry into a monastic order.[8] Such analysis raised the possibility that Calvin spoke of leaving his legal studies to pursue the call of God rather than of moving from a Catholic to a Protestant mindset. As Ganoczy concludes, there is no reason to suspect that 'conversion, this experience of repentance, ever necessitates a break of an ecclesiastical or "confessional" nature, in the modern sense of the word.'[9]

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[5] McGrath, A. *A Life of John Calvin,* pp.69-70.
[6] Parker, p.163.
[7] Ganoczy, A. *The Young Calvin,* pp.245-6.
[8] Parker, p.165.
[9] Ganoczy, p.252.

Theodore Beza recorded that Calvin favoured the change in his studies from theology to law

> because, having been made acquainted with the reformed faith, by a relation named Peter Robert Olivet… he had begun to devote himself to the study of Holy Scriptures, and, from an abhorrence at all kinds of superstition, to discontinue his attendance on the public services of the Church.[10]

It is difficult, however, to say whether this was Beza's conjecture or Calvin's own appraisal of his experience.

Thomas Dyer recorded that Calvin was openly preaching Reformed doctrines before 1532,[11] but R.N.C. Hunt indicated that the first sign of Calvin's gravitation towards Protestantism appeared in 1533 when he sent his friend, Francois Daniel, a treatise of Gerard Roussel's, along with other documents regarding reform activities in Paris.[12] Whether or not he had become properly Protestant at the time, the clearest change of direction in Calvin's life came when his collaboration with Nicholas Cop in 1533 earned them both a fearful flight from Paris. Calvin hid for a time in Angouleme, but his departure to Protestant Basel in 1534 probably indicated that he held opinions which would be unsafe in a Catholic area.[13]

In Basel, Calvin produced the first edition of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, but surprisingly, it dealt very little with his departure from Rome. Ganoczy made the case that this document was more concerned with healing what Calvin saw as degenerated doctrine of the church and defending those persecuted in France, than with articulating a manifesto of rebellion: 'His most ardent desire is not to suppress, but to purify, heal, and save.'[14] Calvin's perspective of his alleged separation from Rome was best captured in his responses to Cardinal Sadoleto and the Council of Trent dealt with below.

It is appropriate to conclude with William Bouwsma's comments concerning the 1557 preface to Calvin's commentary on the Psalms:

> He [Calvin] said nothing about any *belief* that would later be associated with him, indeed nothing incompatible with the evangelical humanism of a whole generation of students at Paris, most of whom remained faithful to Rome in spite of their antagonism to what they commonly described as 'superstitions' in the church.[15]

Thus, there is no reason to conclude that Calvin's conversion had any direct bearing on his understanding of authority as different from Catholic reformers in Paris. To

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[10] Beza, T. 'Life of John Calvin' in T.F. Torrance (ed.), *Tracts and Treatises on the Reformation of the Church Vol. 1* (W.B. Eerdmans, 1958), p.lx.
[11] Dyer, T.H. *The Life of John Calvin*, p.9.
[12] Hunt, p.37.
[13] Olin, J.C. *Calvin and Sadoleto: A Reformation Debate*, p.16.
[14] Ganoczy, p.194.
[15] Bouwsma, W.J. *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait*, pp.10-11.

understand his break with the Roman church, it is necessary to look at the critiques which he levelled against it.

Calvin faced the theological challenges of Rome on three major occasions. The first was the debate between Catholic and Reformed theologians held at Lausanne in 1536. The second came in a letter to the city of Geneva from Cardinal Jacopo Sadoleto, after Calvin's exile in 1538. The most important, however, was that which involved the Council of Trent.[16] The unique thing about Calvin's encounters with Rome is that they took place on the level plane of academic argumentation which Luther had requested so many times. Such discussion was certainly facilitated by the fact that Calvin lived in an independent Protestant city, but it seems likely that his mild temperament served the same end.

Though it appears only rarely in accounts of Calvin's life, the 1536 disputation at Lausanne deserves attention. For several days Calvin's colleagues, Guillaume Farel and Pierre Viret, disputed vigorously without comment from Calvin, until their opponents accused them of despising the church fathers.[17] When his fellow ministers were silent, Calvin stood up and contradicted the Catholic position soundly, quoting a wide variety of ancient texts from memory. His oration was met with a stunned silence in which one Franciscan was moved to convert publicly to Protestantism on the spot amidst murmurs suggesting similar changes of mind.[18] Thus, Lausanne was one place where Calvin was able to win over his opponents simply by the power of his arguments.

With Calvin's exile from Geneva, the time was ripe for the *Roman Catholic church* to encourage the Protestant city to return to Rome. In 1539, Cardinal Sadoleto, a bishop known for his work towards reform,[19] took the opportunity to draw up a formal invitation. His letter was conciliatory in the sense that he acknowledged the need for reforms, but insisted that those reforms ought to be carried out under the auspices of the *Catholic church*.

Calvin's reply from Strasburg revealed a great deal about his understanding of authority and his conception of Geneva's role in the reformation. In the first place, Calvin took the letter as a personal affront suggesting that his ministry was invalid. Furthermore, he viewed Sadoleto's diplomatic approach as the 'craft and trickery' of Rome.[20] He defended his colleagues against the charge of avarice and

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[16] Though here it is only discussed in reference to Calvin's response, its content is dealt with in full in chapter 6.
[17] McGrath, p.96.
[18] Stickelberger, E. *John Calvin*, p.53.
[19] Knox, R.B. 'Continuity and Controversy: Before and After Calvin and Sadoleto' in *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society Vol. 4, No. 7* (1990), p.409.
[20] Calvin, *Reply to Cardinal Sadolet's Letter* in T.F. Torrence *Tracts and Treatises on the Reformation of the Church Vol.I*, p.28.

greed by highlighting how all of them were less well off than papal ministers[21] and against the charge of rebellion for the sake of 'unbridled licentiousness' by comparing Reformed discipline to that of the *Catholic church*.[22] He agreed with Sadoleto's comment that 'there is nothing more perilous to our salvation than a preposterous and perverse worship of God',[23] but suggested the Cardinal was 'mistaken in supposing that we desire to lead away the people from that method of worshipping God which the Catholic Church always observed.'[24] In fact, Calvin claimed, the reformers in Geneva were much closer to antiquity than Rome.[25]

Despite its well-reasoned construction, Calvin's response was not without teeth. He suggested that though the Pope and the Anabaptists were quite different in approach, they were both manifestations of Satan.[26] He attacked Sadoleto's misrepresentation of the reformed doctrine of justification by faith and cited numerous errors which arose from the Catholic understanding of justification and accused them of 'overthrowing the ministry, of which the empty name remains with you, without the reality.'[27] Nevertheless, Calvin's criticisms did not prevent him from regarding Sadoleto or his followers as Christians. 'We… deny not that those over which you preside are Churches of Christ, but we maintain that the Roman Pontiff, with his whole herd of pseudo-bishops, who have seized upon the pastor's office, are ravening wolves.'[28] The reflective prayer he included in the text demonstrated his own understanding of his break with Rome:

> Always, both by word and deed, I have protested how eager I was for unity. Mine, however, was a unity of the Church, which should begin with thee and end in thee. For as oft as thou didst recommend to us peace and concord, thou, at the same time, didst show that thou wert the only bond for preserving it. But if I desired to be at peace with those who boasted of being the heads of the Church and pillars of faith, I behoved to purchase it with the denial of the truth…. [I did not] think that I dissented from thy Church, because I was at war with those leaders[29]

Calvin argued that it was the leaders in Rome, not the reformers, who had departed from the doctrines of the early Church. He lamented that the enemies of the reformers flew instantly to 'fires, swords, and gibbets' instead of trying to find peace.[30] If other sects, such as the Anabaptists had arisen proposing new doctrines, his associates could not be blamed for that. As such, he considered himself a theological opponent of both polarities, but closed his comments to Sadoleto with the

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[21] Ibid., pp.31-32.
[22] Ibid., pp.54-55.
[23] Ibid., p.34.
[24] Ibid., p.35.
[25] Ibid., p.37.
[26] Ibid., p.36.
[27] Ibid., pp.48-49.
[28] Ibid., p.50.
[29] Ibid., p.59.
[30] Ibid., p.60.

wish that Christ would gather them so that 'we might join together with one heart and one soul.'[31]

In 1540 and 1541, Calvin joined the conferences at Worms and Ratisbon seeking some kind of reconciliation between Protestants and Roman Catholics,[32] but such attempts were short-lived. He was severely disappointed by the proceedings of the Council of Trent and denounced it in 1547 as being composed of ignorant bishops who were puppets of the pope.[33] His *Acts of the Council of Trent with The Antidote* comprehensively repudiated the decrees of all seven sessions with a few notable exceptions for which he simply wrote 'Amen.' It will suffice here to mention the overarching objections he highlighted in his first antidote.

Calvin considered the efforts of the Roman party arrogant and misguided, saying, 'should any one have attempted to change one tittle of their customs, they hold him as already condemned.'[34] They were in the wrong where they drew doctrine from tradition, where they held the apocrypha in the same esteem as canonical scripture, where they refused to allow the Vulgate to be corrected by scholarship, and where they claimed the right to interpret without being challenged.[35]

The Council of Trent dashed Calvin's hopes of reconciliation with Roman Catholics:

> every one who is wise will in the future disregard their decrees, and be in no dubiety
> about them. It were indeed most desirable that the dissensions by which the Church
> is now disturbed should be settled by the authority of a pious Council, but as matters
> are we cannot yet hope for it. …each cannot do better than hasten to rally round the
> banner which the Son of God holds out to us.[36]

Calvin's first strategy with the *Roman Catholic church* was to debate with its members. At Lausanne, he succeeded in winning opponents to his point of view simply by the strength of his argument, but never managed to repeat the episode. In dealing with Sadoleto, he attempted to make the case that the *Catholic church* lost its authority because it refused to reform. By failing to enact reforms, leading members of the hierarchy demonstrated that they were not part of the true church and therefore not authoritative.[37] When dealing with opponents in Rome, he tried to frame himself as a reformer rather than a rebel. He persisted in reminding them 'how great the difference is between schism from the Church, and studying to correct the faults by which the Church herself was contaminated.'[38] Unfortunately, the decrees of the

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[31] Ibid., p.68.
[32] Cadier, J. 'Calvin and the Union of the Churches' in G.E. Duffield (ed.), *Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology 1: John Calvin* (Sutton Courtenay, 1966), p.121.
[33] Dyer, p.229.
[34] Calvin, *Acts of the Council of Trent* in Torrence *Vol.II*, p.40.
[35] Ibid., p.67-68.
[36] Ibid., pp.187-188.
[37] Ganoczy, p.284.
[38] Calvin, *Reply to Cardinal Sadolet's Letter*, p.63.

Council of Trent proved too conservative and intransigent for Calvin and he despaired of ever renewing fellowship with the *Catholic church.*

Although Calvin's work in France arose out of his success in Geneva, it seems appropriate to look at his relations with his countrymen here as a significant part of his relationship with the *Roman Catholic church.* Persecution appeared in France in 1521 when Jean le Clerc was whipped and branded for attaching a critique of the papal pardon system to the cathedral of Meaux[39] and found poignant expression again in 1529 when Louis Berquin was burned for recommending translations of the New Testament which had been condemned in Paris.[40] The main proponent of the persecutions was the University of Sorbonne under Noel Beda.[41] It was this same faction who had reacted so acerbically to Nicholas Cop's address in 1533.

Calvin's efforts to win his homeland for the reformation began in the literary realm. The influence of the French translation of the *Institutes* in 1541 cannot be underestimated, but even before that, Calvin was corresponding with *évangéliques* to offer them advice and a sense of direction. As Alister McGrath put it, 'Without Calvin, French Protestantism would have been little more than an inchoate fissiparous sect, prone to introspection and internal dissent, lacking any real political power.'[42] One of his major contributions was to emphasise the line of demarcation between Catholics and Protestants. He had no kind words for those who, during times of persecution, went to Catholic masses though they did not believe in them. In such cases, Calvin recommended martyrdom or exile as the only honest options.

After 1555, Calvin began to send out members of the *Venerable Company of Pastors* to minister secretly in France. Groups which began as casual meetings for prayer, worship, and study soon developed into organised structures. While the lesser roles of the congregations were filled by local members, the pastors were almost exclusively Genevan-trained. In 1559 the Genevan Academy was founded, but could not keep pace with the growing demand for pastors in France.[43]

Calvin's efforts to proselytise in France demonstrated that he understood his own spiritual authority to be superior to that of the French government. That is to say, Calvin believed his doctrine so essential that it merited defiance of French law and clandestine infiltration by his missionaries. This development, which was doubtless harmful to Catholic-Protestant relations, resulted from his conviction, by

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[39] Dyer, p.16.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] McGrath, p.177.
[43] Ibid., pp.183-184.

that time, that Roman Catholic believers were not properly 'the church' since they had 'departed from the word and introduced impure and idolatrous worship.'[44]

Calvin's upbringing was similar to Luther's in its focus on education, but differed principally in that, although he received some educational funding from the church, he never entered a religious order. For this reason, Calvin was able to function as an outsider to the Roman system and never had a need to make a formal break with Rome. He was a member of a group of Parisian intellectuals who sought to purge the church of its 'superstitions.' Though he was in principle opposed to the concept of schism, he became instrumental in galvanising Protestant reformers in Geneva and France. Unlike Luther, he was able to join an already extant movement and contribute significantly to it simply by relocating from Paris to Geneva.

His perspective of the Roman church over time, however, is disconcertingly familiar. Where he at first considered Sadoleto and other Roman Catholics to be Christians who were overly enamoured of superstitious ceremonies, he seems to have departed from this belief after prospects of reconciliation were destroyed by the Council of Trent's strongly anti-Protestant decrees. That Calvin believed that the doctrines rejected by the council, such as justification by faith, were vital to the church was evidenced by his decrease of dialogue with Roman Catholics and the increase of his missionary efforts in France. Like Luther, his understanding of the breadth of the church seems to have shrunk as time progressed. The existence of persecuted colleagues served to focus his efforts westward towards Paris rather than southwards toward Rome. In this way, Calvin avoided dealing with the papacy directly and most often came into conflict with the hyper-conservatism of the University of Paris. This suggests the possibility that if Calvin had been able to dialogue with the progressive Catholics such as Cardinal Gasparo Contarini, some middle ground might have been found. Such a possibility was eliminated by the apparent defeat of this minority at the Council of Trent.

Calvin's views of authority were not particularly innovative in the sense of providing new reasons to ignore the papal hierarchy. His understanding that it was important for Christians to function as the Church apart from Rome did not differ significantly from previous formulations. The strength of his contribution to Protestantism was the compilation of a spectrum of ideas in the *Institutes* which served as a Protestant analogue to Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*. The translation of his supreme work into French laid the foundation for the first Protestant missionaries.

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[44] McNeill, J.T. 'The Church in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology' in D.K. McKim (ed.), *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition* (1992), p.175.

3.3 CALVIN'S STRUGGLES WITH GENEVA

Up to this point, the discussion has revolved around events outside of the borders of Geneva. Now it is appropriate to focus upon the city which succeeded Wittenberg as the centre of Reformation thought. Calvin's understanding of scripture played a central role as he attempted to reorganise church structures and civic life according to biblical ideals. As Calvin grew in influence, he found himself, like Luther, addressing the issue of religious dissent. Thus, Calvin's struggles with the city of Geneva should be approached in consideration of the following questions: Did Calvin effectively integrate the authority of scripture with the existing government of Geneva? Did Calvin's *Institutes* play a positive role in facilitating a general Protestant consensus, or was his writing merely an instrument for creating uniformity?

The search for 'pure doctrine' dominated Calvin's reform efforts. For him, 'pure doctrine' meant theology derived exclusively from scripture, untainted by arguments based on superstitious tradition. J.K.S. Reid noted:

> It is not the re-establishment of some authority that is in question; it is rather the rehabilitation in its proper authority of something which had always enjoyed some degree of reverence and respect, Holy Scripture itself.[45]

Since the fallibility of the church had been exposed by the criticisms of the reformers, it was necessary to find a ground apart from the church on which scriptural authority rested.

For this, Calvin developed the idea that scripture was authoritative essentially because it declared itself to be authoritative.[46] It was the word of God[47] as given to his servants[48] in ages past and recorded as an infallible guide for all humanity. Though this formulation seems quite empty by itself, its developed form was slightly more robust. Believers were imbued with the Holy Spirit which functioned as an inner-witness testifying to the truth of scripture.[49] This admittedly subjective experience substantiated the claims scripture made about itself with the obvious limitation that only those who believe its testimony ought to have it.

The major way in which Calvin differed from Luther was that he did not set up a weighted hierarchy of scripture. For Calvin, the Old Testament had just as

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[45] Reid, J.K.S. *The Authority of Scripture*, p.32.
[46] Ibid., pp.34-35.
[47] Calvin used the phrase 'word of God' interchangeably with 'word of Christ' and applied it to the entire content of the canon. Ganoczy, p.192.
[48] There is considerable debate centred on the degree to which Calvin believed scripture was spoken directly through the apostles and thus verbally infallible. E. Doumergue's *John Calvin* provided significant consideration of Calvin's specific view of inspiration, but a detailed examination of it seems unnecessary here.
[49] Rogers, J.B. 'The Authority and the Interpretation of the Bible in the Reformed Tradition' in D.K. McKim (ed.), *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition* (W.B. Eerdmans, 1992), p.55.

much to offer Christians as the New. He granted equal authority to both parts, dealing with their differences by suggesting the nature of each causes them to mediate the truth in different ways.[50]

Calvin also held to the idea that scripture was fundamentally simple in nature. It was possible for anyone to understand it because God had specifically sent his message to the humble and poor. Thus, Calvin had grounds upon which to dismiss certain doctrines as too complicated. He made a case regarding the eucharist and the Trinity that Christians should not presume to speculate beyond the simple presentation of those ideas in scripture.

In his understanding of scripture, Calvin improved on Luther's formulation by refusing to make arbitrary differentiations between the authority of certain books over and against others. Calvin's search for an alternative ground for scriptural authority in light of the Church's doctrinal failures must be regarded as circular at best. His uncharacteristic lack of rigor regarding this issue may be attributed to his belief in the inspiration of scripture. If scripture is the very words of God, there can be no further ground for its authority, only demonstrations of its coherence and usefulness in the world. Though his ideas about the simplicity of scripture may seem to suggest a dangerous laxity regarding theological distinctions, they are counterbalanced by the extreme care which Calvin took during his life to articulate points of faith. The ideal of simplicity served to focus theologians' energies on concrete issues rather than abstract speculations.

The facet of Calvin's understanding of pure doctrine contained in scripture that has not yet been touched on is the conception that its contents should have major implications for civic life. Though Calvin began a program with such implications in mind during his early work in Geneva, it was not until his second tenure there that he had sufficient support to implement his ideas on a citywide scale.

Beza recorded that upon returning to Geneva, Calvin said 'that he could not properly fulfil his ministry, unless, along with Christian doctrine, a regular presbytery with full ecclesiastical authority were established.'[51] This marked the beginning of the *Venerable Company of Pastors* and was the first major Protestant endeavour to reassemble church authority for its own purposes. The structure 'of the Genevan Church was made deliberately to conform with the system adopted by the Primitive Church as far as could be ascertained.'[52] In this way, Calvin attempted to establish authority on the basis of an ancient and honourable institution. The Genevans believed that just as the humanist scholars had returned to the pure forms

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[50] Davies, R.E. *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers*, p.113.
[51] Beza, p.lxxvi.
[52] Hunt, p.143.

of the Greek classics, so they had returned to the pure doctrine of the early Church. The major difference between Calvin's first and second tenure at Geneva was the machinery of an institutional organisation. Whereas he formerly had been a scholar preaching for reform with his colleagues, he was now a great reformer with a company of followers. Most important to understanding Calvin's work in Geneva was the constant tension between the church and the Town Council.

Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* described a four-fold structure for the church's regular functioning which divided its authority into the roles of pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons. One of the most significant differences Calvin initiated was a disintegration of the hierarchical division of ministers and laity. Elders who were elected from Genevan Councils met with the ministers once a week to decide on matters of discipline and maintain order in the church.[53] By giving them seats in the Consistory, Calvin 'restored to laymen a position in church government which they had not held since primitive days,'[54] empowering them with equal say in almost every aspect of church life. With the increase of lay involvement in church government, pastors' responsibility became primarily to preach the Word and administer the sacraments.[55] Though Calvin wanted the church to be entirely independent of the state, he required the state's power to support his authority because the church had no means of punishing serious infractions.[56]

Civil discipline was particularly important for Calvin, and for this reason, he described the state primarily in terms of restraining wickedness.[57] His conception of such a quasi-spiritual role for the government blurred the lines between ecclesiastical discipline and criminal offences. This ambiguity generated a significant amount of conflict between Calvin and the Council. As early as 1537, the Little Council had exhibited signs of jealousy and had begun making moves to preserve its authority.[58] Though he was welcomed back with open arms in 1541, this conflict continued to escalate. To portray Calvin as the 'tyrant of Geneva' overlooks the fact that the Little Council possessed significantly more control than he did and, as the struggles with the Libertines revealed, they often did not care to hear his opinion. They ordered the preachers, whose wages were all paid by the state, to preach everyday and make frequent reference to the Ten Commandments, both against Calvin's wishes.[59] Most crucial, of course, was the issue of communion. The

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[53] Calvin, *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, p.70.
[54] Hunter, A.M. *The Teaching of Calvin*, p.204.
[55] Ibid., p.209.
[56] Leith, J.H. *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p.199.
[57] Bouwsma, p.205.
[58] Hunt, p.145.
[59] Hunter, pp.197-198.

excommunication of Berthelier, a key Council member, demonstrated Calvin's resolve, if not his power to put such decisions into effect.[60]

In regard to everyday life in Geneva, Calvin's opinions had a decidedly utilitarian air. He had no qualms about interpreting scripture in light of social realities, and tended to do so in favour of middle-class business practices. For instance, he dismissed Christ's command to lend without expecting anything in return by interpreting it as 'only charge a fair amount of interest.'[61] He focused on the parable of the ten virgins as an exhortation to make necessary provisions for the future rather than the parable of the lilies of the field.[62] He believed that communal living in any form led towards chaos and therefore denied that the apostolic church practised it.[63] Nevertheless, he condemned the rich who gained their wealth unfairly and supported efforts to alleviate poverty. Calvin's application of scriptural injunctions to civic life was doubtless coloured by his belief that 'a society of Christians would never be coextensive with any church in the world, still less with any commonwealth.'[64] Geneva would not be perfect, but Calvin attempted to point it in the right direction.

Of the realms of jurisdiction which comprise authority, few can elicit so impassioned a response as the authority to decide life and death. For this reason, the case of Michael Servetus has often been used as a fulcrum upon which to ply anti-Calvin sentiments. If an analysis of Calvin's understanding of authority is to be complete, it must include his involvement in the infamous Protestant heresy trial.

Servetus had corresponded with Calvin since 1545 under the name Michael Villeneuve. He had written against the Trinity in 1531, though he later retracted that work,[65] and assumed the pseudonym to hide from the Inquisition. Their exchange of letters began with Servetus asking Calvin for advice on three questions of doctrine and continued somewhat abrasively until Calvin terminated the relationship. It might have been a mild footnote in history except for the fact that Calvin made a most unfortunate comment regarding Servetus' expressed wish to come to Geneva, 'I do not wish to pledge my word for his safety. For, if he comes, I will never let him depart alive, if I have any authority.'[66] The fact that Servetus actually did travel to Geneva after narrowly escaping a fiery death in Vienne and was executed by the Council makes Calvin's comment seem murderous.

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[60] It is debatable whether this incident did more to assert Calvin's authority or the Council's since Calvin's decision was preserved (namely that Berthelier did not receive communion), but was only carried out through the Council's private manoeuvring. The Council later voted that the power of excommunication should reside with the church court. Parker, p.124.

[61] Bouwsma, p.198.

[62] Ibid., p.193.

[63] Ibid., p.197.

[64] Höpfl, H. *The Christian Polity of John Calvin*, p.195.

[65] Parker, p.117.

[66] Baum, G. *Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia Vol. 12*, p.283.

It is not necessary here to recount all the details of the case, but only those which seem to make Calvin culpable. First, there is the matter of Servetus' trial in Vienne in 1553. The evidence presented there would have been insufficient if Calvin had not produced Servetus' letters. More importantly, once Servetus arrived in Geneva, it was Calvin who recognised him, arranged his arrest, and furnished well-documented accusations against him. When the Libertines opposed to Calvin sought to use the case to their advantage, it became politically important to ensure Servetus' death rather than exile or some lighter punishment. Furthermore, the case provided an opportunity for Calvin's party to demonstrate their firm opposition to heresy.

Calvin was aware of such accusations and flatly denied them, but scholars such as Thomas Dyer[67] and Mitchell Hunter[68] seemed to dismiss his denials as subterfuge. Therefore, it is necessary also to recount those circumstances which seem to diminish their force. Regarding the letters, it is important to recognise that Calvin only released them to protect the honour of his friend, Guillaume de Trie, who had accused Servetus of heresy.[69] If Calvin had wanted to denounce Servetus, he could have done it in 1552 when information regarding Servetus might have been used as bargaining power to gain the release of five students imprisoned in Lyons.[70] One plausible suggestion regarding Servetus' arrest was that Calvin moved against him because, after considering the implications of the heretical *Restitutes*, he felt it necessary for the sake of uninformed believers.[71]

It should not escape notice that Calvin did not send out a search for Servetus in Geneva, but merely pointed him out for officials to arrest after the refugee from Vienne had the impudence to attend one of Calvin's sermons. Once the accusations had been lodged, the case was in the hands of the Little Council and Calvin attended the proceedings only intermittently to discuss doctrinal points.[72] In regard to the plotting of Calvin's enemies in Geneva, it must be said that it was their own ploy which brought finality to the trial. In hopes that the surrounding cities would advise leniency, as they had in the case of Bolsec, the Libertines arranged to formally request their opinions. This plan backfired when every city begged Geneva to put an end to the notorious heretic.[73]

Overall, Calvin's condemnation of Servetus seemed theological rather than personal because he consistently demonstrated a desire to change Servetus' mind. In a letter to Jean Frelon, a bookseller in Lyons, he wrote, 'I will make the attempt to

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[67] Dyer, pp.360-366.
[68] Hunter, pp.248-254.
[69] Parker, p.120
[70] Hunt, p.208-209.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., p.211.
[73] Stickelberger, p.126.

see whether there might be any means of bringing him back to the truth.'[74] When on October 26 the Little Council announced Servetus would be burned over a slow fire,[75] 'Calvin and the other ministers asked that he should be spared burning and be beheaded instead.'[76] Just before the execution, Calvin expressed regret over their differences and urged Servetus to beg God's forgiveness for his blasphemy.'[77]

Thus, it becomes evident that although Calvin was thoroughly involved throughout the Servetus affair, he does not seem to have instigated it out of malicious intent. For this reason, it is irrational to blame Calvin in a personal way for the death of Servetus. Nevertheless, it is important to put to question the system which made such execution possible. Calvin's strong opinion was that the secular government existed not only to provide for the basic needs of human society, but also 'so that idolatry, sacrilege of the name of God, blasphemies against his truth, and other public offences against religion may not emerge and may not be disseminated.'[78] He believed it was the duty of the state to kill Servetus and never expressed regret over it. Since Calvin bequeathed so few reflections on his own life to posterity it is impossible to say whether he ever considered the parallels between the executions of his colleagues in France and the execution of Servetus in Geneva, and it remains an open question how it would have affected his views.

Calvin's efforts to integrate the authority of scripture with the civil government of Geneva should be regarded at best as a failed experiment. He sought to recreate the church of the first century as far as possible but was limited by the social and political realities of sixteenth century Geneva. This was due in part to the influence of the Little Council, which he constantly struggled with, but also to his own interpretation of scripture. Calvin's acceptance of the Old Testament on equal terms with the New Testament and understanding of piety primarily in terms of discipline resulted in civil regulations which seem to the modern mind a violation of human rights. Though it is impossible to say whether Calvin would have sent guards into private homes to check on church attendance without the council, he seemed to approve of it. Nevertheless, the integration of church and town council served to increase the ecclesiastical power of the laity. The authority of the church was therefore disseminated to the congregation.

In regard to resolving theological conflicts, Calvin presents a very difficult problem. For most of his life, he seemed able to articulate the 'pure doctrine' of the

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[74] Cadier, J. *The Man God Mastered*, p.152.
[75] Though the dramatic picture of Protestants burning other Protestants at the stake should serve as a regrettable rebuke, it is worthwhile to remember that the sentence delivered by Geneva was the same as that of Vienne and was based on legal precedent established before the Reformation.
[76] Parker, *p*p.122-123.
[77] Cadier, *The Man…* p.161.
[78] Barth, P. *Joannis Calvini Opera Selecta Vol. 1*, p.260.

gospel in a way that converted many, but did not insult those that continued to oppose him. He maintained his relationships with nearly all of his colleagues and was able to consistently expand upon the *Institutes* in response to criticisms without changing his opinion. Despite these things in his favour, he played an instrumental role in the death of Servetus. Though Calvin wanted to win converts through sound arguments rather than violence, he believed that those who persisted in serious heresy deserved death. To some extent, the Servetus affair simply revealed that Calvin was a man of his time. When the cities surrounding Geneva used Calvin's *Institutes* as a means of identifying heresy, his work functioned as an instrument of uniformity rather than a mere articulation of ideas.

Calvin offered a stronger foundation for authority in his understanding of scripture but tended to overshadow the text of scripture with his interpretation of it. In this way, the *Institutes* functioned as a gloss which interpreted scripture for people rather than allowing them to encounter and interpret the text on their own. However, the wide-scale acceptance of Calvin's articulation of faith and his development of it in response to criticisms may represent a consensus which Luther never achieved. This understanding of Calvin's work does not solve the problem encountered in the previous chapter, but changes the question slightly. Luther's claim that the individual's conscience must supersede all decrees made councils redundant, but the fact that Calvin could draw together ideas in such a way as to be accepted by a large number of individuals suggests that consensus was not a complete impossibility in the sixteenth century. Perhaps the *Institutes* preserved the ancient idea of ecumenical consensus by transferring it from a physical gathering of a few select individuals to a public document which could be developed in response to popular criticism.

CHAPTER 4:   THE ANABAPTIST CONCEPTION OF AUTHORITY

4.1   EARLY ANABAPTIST INFLUENCES

The Anabaptists were not the first to separate themselves from the positions of Luther and Zwingli. Though Robert J. Smithson has documented the theological similarities between them and various heretical movements throughout the history of the church,[1] this seems more in line with the polemical descriptions propagated by their enemies than a reasoned consideration of their contribution to theological issues. Nevertheless, whatever attempts can be made to give the Anabaptists a sympathetic reading, it cannot be escaped that they were influenced by the infamous Zwickau Prophets and the work of Thomas Müntzer.

Nicholas Storch, Thomas Drechsel, and Marcus Stübner earned their name from the sharp edge of Luther's tongue after migrating from Zwickau to Wittenberg in 1522 to help bring about the radical reforms they considered necessary. Their preaching was strictly anti-authoritarian[2] and displayed numerous theological tendencies which would appear again in Anabaptism proper. They rejected the practice of infant baptism and believed that the Holy Spirit spoke to believers directly.[3] Their dreams and visions had a strong apocalyptic tone which led them to prophesy 'a great Turkish invasion, the elimination of all priests, and the imminent end of the world.'[4]

Thomas Müntzer had encouraged the Prophets as a preacher in Zwickau, but had a much more distinguished career after his dismissal and flight from the city in 1521. In Prague, he published his strongly anti-clerical *Manifesto* which described the 'new apostolic church' of the elect.[5] He laid the groundwork for Anabaptist ideology by developing a theology of suffering and praising the holy layman in contrast to the wicked clergy. [6] In Allstedt in 1523, he implemented an original liturgy[7] and cast himself as the Daniel when articulating his eschatology before the Saxon Princes.[8] His refusal to give up convictions for the sake of quasi-religious governments was amply demonstrated by the numerous cities he left with threats on his heels, but Müntzer did not accept even the possibility that Christianity could exist

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[1] Smithson, R.J. *The Anabaptists*, pp18-34.
[2] Goertz, H.J. *Thomas Müntzer*, p.67.
[3] Lindberg, C. *The European Reformations*, p.104.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Goertz, *Müntzer*, p.80.
[6] Ibid., pp.80-81.
[7] Rupp, G. *Patterns of Reformation*, p.188.
[8] Rupp, *Patterns*, pp.201-203.

under the current governments and met his death in 1525 fighting with Thuringian peasants for the kingdom of God.

Though the Zwickau Prophets and Thomas Müntzer were not properly Anabaptists, they have often been included with them on the grounds of their opposition to the state churches. Such inclusion fails to recognise two essential differences. First, the majority of Anabaptists rejected violence. Second, and more importantly, Anabaptist identity was grounded in an understanding of baptism which did not emerge until 1525.[9] Nevertheless, the violent radicals were important to the rise of Anabaptism because they spread the ideas of supernaturalism, eschatological expectation, and opposition to state religion, all of which held an important place in Anabaptist thought.[10]

4.2   THE EMERGENCE OF ANABAPTISM

Consideration of the Anabaptists in a work of this size requires an amount of selectivity which belies the scope and diversity of the 'movement,' if it is possible to call it such, not to mention the countless other formulations which fall under the auspices of the 'radical reformation.' For this reason, it seems most appropriate to offer an analysis of Anabaptism in a general sense with particular emphasis on the work of a few representative individuals. Three major strains of Anabaptism emerged largely unconnected from the cities of Zurich in 1525, Augsburg in 1526, and Emden in 1530.[11] Though it is possible to consider the Anabaptists as more than twenty separate groups, the issue of authority may be explored most concisely by following the development from these three cities. The first question which must be addressed regarding the Anabaptists is on what grounds they separated from the state churches of their region. The second is whether their various views of authority differed significantly from each other or if they represent essentially the same response.

It has been suggested somewhat flippantly that while the Reformation began in Wittenberg with a set of theological treatises, it began in Zurich with eating sausages.[12] While this is unfair to the theological efforts of Zwingli and his followers, it highlights the tendency to view the Swiss Reformation in terms of symbolic actions of protest. The rise of Anabaptism in Zurich is similarly placed not with the theological discussions of 1524 and 1525, but with the illegal baptism of Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock, and Felix Mantz among others.[13] Though there

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[9] See Smithson, p.42.
[10] Ibid., p.39.
[11] Hillerbrand, H.J. (ed.) *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, p.31.
[12] Lindberg, p.169.
[13] Jones, R.T. *The Great Reformation*, pp.67-68.

had been an attempt to establish a theological and legal basis for believers' baptism, Zwingli's domination of the Zurich Council prevented it. When the Council supported their decision with threats for Grebel and Mantz, if they did not desist their divisive preaching, and the expulsion of all non-citizens who had been 'rebaptised.'[14] While the act of baptism continued to hold particular theological value for the Zurich school, it became the dominant symbol for any protest against state–regulated religion and the term of derision with which conservative reformers labelled them.

With the death of Grebel in 1526 and Mantz in 1527, it fell to Michael Sattler, who had joined the Zurich Anabaptists for a disputation in late 1525,[15] to carry on their work. Expelled from Zurich, he moved to Strasbourg where he met with the Lutherans Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito but failed to come to an agreement with them regarding an extensive list of issues: 'baptism, the Lord's Supper, force or the sword, the oath, the ban, and all the commandments of God.'[16] Sattler's primary contribution, however, was a gathering of Anabaptists at Schleitheim which helped to solidify their identity and grant cohesion to their divisive groups.[17]

Balthasar Hübmaier, the Waldshut preacher associated with Zurich,[18] gave impetus to the first Synod of Augsburg in 1526.[19] After baptising a number of those who were present, Hübmaier travelled east to Nikolsburg.[20] Thus, Augsburg was left to the recently baptised Hans Denck who had been in conflict with the Lutheran preacher, Urbanus Rhegius, since his arrival late in 1525.[21] Denck's mystical theology kept him from trying to organise formal connections between the Augsburg Anabaptists, but the growing enthusiasm of the population was enough to incur the wrath of Rhegius[22] from which he fled to Strasbourg in 1526.

In contrast to Denck emerged Hans Hut, a recent convert to Anabaptism who had been influenced by Müntzer's understanding of the apocalyptic use of force,[23] though it is possible that he renounced such teachings for a time.[24] He departed Augsburg shortly after Denck and travelled to Nikolsburg where he proclaimed that the Anabaptists should destroy the ungodly like the Israelites in Canaan- a curious

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[14] Ibid., p.68.
[15] Yoder, J.H. *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*, p.10.
[16] Ibid., p.22.
[17] Ibid., p.32.
[18] Heath, C. *Social and Religious Heretics*, p.72
[19] Ibid., p.74.
[20] Elton, G.R. *The Reformation: 1520-1559*, p.122.
[21] Coutts, A. *Hans Denck*, pp.39-41.
[22] Ibid., p.44.
[23] Elton, *Reformation: 1520-1559*, p.123.
[24] Cameron, E. *The European Reformation*, p.322.

feature since he 'denied the right of the sword to magistrates and denounced all war as "carnal"'.[25]

For a time, the Augsburg school was divided between the teachings of Denck and Hut,[26] a disparity evident at the second Synod of Augsburg in 1527.[27] It was finally resolved by the dispersion of Hut's followers after a failed attempt to take Erfurt in 1528[28] and the emergence of Pilgram Marpeck who first came to Augsburg in 1528 on the way to Strasbourg.[29] Marpeck 'agreed with Hut in placing love above laws and rules' but rejected his apocalypticism.[30] Not nearly as mystical as Denck, he advocated the preaching of scripture and had less stringent requirements for what constituted the 'true church' than Caspar Schwenkfeld, the Silesian mystic who had rejected justification by faith as morally dangerous.[31] For this reason, he was effective in organising a community of Anabaptists in Augsburg after his return in 1532 which according to Bucer, 'worshipped him like a god.'[32]

The Emden school arose primarily under the leadership of Melchior Hoffman an erstwhile Lutheran preacher with a penchant for apocalyptical interpretation. After undergoing believers' baptism in Strasbourg in 1530, he travelled to Emden where he baptised over three hundred people.[33] As persecution flared up, he claimed to be Elijah and returned to Strasbourg to set up the 'New Jerusalem' only to be imprisoned until his death in 1543.[34]

With Hoffman in prison, Jan Mathijs came to leadership in 1533 advocating the active destruction of the enemies of the Anabaptists.[35] With the help of Knipperdolling, Rothman, and Jan Bockelson, he managed to secure control of the town of Münster by democratic means.[36] This second attempt to create the 'New Jerusalem' included enforced communal living, polygamy, and capital punishment for complainers.[37] Nevertheless, Anabaptist refugees flocked to their holy city and local rulers quickly placed the rebels under siege. Mathijs was killed in a skirmish in 1534, but the people fought on until the summer of 1535 when the city was taken and its inhabitants slaughtered. Thus, Münster served to confirm the worst suspicions about the dangers of Anabaptism.

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[25] Vedder, H.C. *Balthasar Hübmaier*, pp.161-162.
[26] Heath, p.75.
[27] Coutts, p.78.
[28] Goertz, H.J. *The Anabaptists*, p.19.
[29] Smithson, p.155.
[30] Clasen, C. *Anabaptism: A Social History, 1525-1618*, p.33.
[31] Smithson, p.157.
[32] Newman, A.H. *History of Anti-Pedobaptism*, p.249.
[33] Jones, p.94.
[34] Elton, *Reformation: 1520-1559*, p.126.
[35] Heath, p.87.
[36] Ibid., p.80.
[37] Jones, p.96.

In the wake of the embarrassing spectacle of Münster came the Emden school's most respected advocate. The priest Menno Simons converted to Anabaptism after his brother was killed among those who went to Münster's aid.[38] His calm and reasoned application of scripture made the work of Mathijs seem all the more gruesome in comparison. Though Simons continued to identify with the theology of Hoffman,[39] his commitment to pacifism and his efforts to unify the Anabaptist movement gave him more in common with the Zurich radicals than with his violent predecessor.

In the sixteenth century, the pattern of Anabaptist conversion was fairly regular. Like all generalisations, the following account overlooks the experiences of some individuals and captures none of them completely, but the model which emerges is helpful for considering Anabaptism as a protest against magisterial versions of authority. Though the radical reformation has been widely acclaimed as a movement of the lower class, its leaders were primarily disenfranchised scholars or former religious.[40]

An Anabaptist conversion typically began with some form of doubting the current practices of the church. Those who were scholars responded by carrying out their own study of scripture as the mainstream reformers recommended. Major figures like Hübmaier, Denck, and Simons all made contributions to reform before converting to Anabaptism, perhaps from prior exposure to other radicals, but sometimes without outside influence. Grebel and Hoffman actually joined the work of Zwingli and Luther for a time before becoming disillusioned with the limited scope of state-based reforms. All came to reject the practice of infant baptism and submitted to a 'believers baptism' which included a public profession of faith. The persecution which followed served to solidify the opinion that it was not possible for temporal governments to be Christian.

Since Anabaptist theology carried with it an understanding that one could not be Christian without living a holy lifestyle, that is, without being an Anabaptist, missionary efforts became an important facet of faith and practice. The missionary impetus was further strengthened by repeated banishments which forced preachers to create a new support base in each town to which they went and eschatological beliefs which required 144,000 elect before Christ would return.

Ascertaining the grounds on which the Anabaptists separated from their respective state churches seems best considered on a school-by-school basis. For the Zurich school, the divisive issue was clearly infant baptism. Reformers who had

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[38] Heath, p.88.
[39] Elton, *Reformation: 1520-1559*, p.131.
[40] Elton, *Reformation Europe: 1517-1559*, p.86.

been working with Zwingli became convinced that believers' baptism was the only practice demonstrated in scripture and therefore separated from the official Zurich church on the authority of scripture. Denck's ground for separating from the Lutheran church is more difficult to ascertain. He likely understood his personal spirituality to possess an authority of its own which he found first contradicted by church leaders in Nürnberg and then by those in Augsburg. His understanding of the 'inner word' of the Holy Spirit was doubtless reinforced by being baptised by Hübmaier. For the Emden school, the issue was primarily a hermeneutic one. Hoffman's style of biblical interpretation was rejected by Luther as ridiculous and dangerous. Thus, Hoffman claimed the authority of scripture with the same vigour as Luther, but without the academic or federal trappings to back up his opinions. In all, it becomes clear that the Anabaptists shared a conception that they understood the word of God more correctly than their opponents did. This understanding compelled them to withdraw from the world or to rebel against it in order to obey the word of God as they understood it.

There was one major line of demarcation along which the Anabaptist opinions of authority differed. There were those Anabaptists who rejected the idea that the government had any authority in spiritual matters and there were those who concluded that such a rejection impelled them to overthrow the state in order to establish proper spiritual authority. As Claus-Peter Clasen noted, 'It is hard to decide which of these Anabaptists were guided by revolutionary motives and which by a literal interpretation of the New Testament.'[41] Since the relation of Anabaptists to the state was connected very closely to their understanding of authority, it seems appropriate to explore this in more depth in the following section. It is also interesting to note that the leaders who had been priests or monks before conversion, such as Sattler, Hübmaier, and Simons tended towards more organised forms of Anabaptism whereas leaders who were lay converts tended towards more specifically anti-authoritarian initiatives on the fringes of Anabaptism.

4.3   ANABAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

The distinctive features of the Anabaptist view of authority stemmed from their understanding of scripture, their response to suppression by state-sanctioned reformers, and their attempts to deal with division among themselves. Three corresponding questions emerge. First, were the Anabaptists truly seditious in the way that Luther and Zwingli portrayed them or was such vilification merely a tactic to repress religious dissent? Second, what was different about the Anabaptist

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[41] Clasen, p.177.

understanding of authority that caused them to apply scripture so differently from Luther or Calvin? Finally, what role did the Anabaptist conception of authority play in creating the myriad of divisions which arose among them?

An examination of Anabaptist relations to the state quickly reveals two opposing tactics. While the Anabaptists attempted to frame their relation to the state in theological terms congruent with the reformation principles of scripture and conscience, the state-sanctioned reformers tried to hold the discussion in terms of civic responsibility where peace was maintained by the ruler's sword and unity was essential in the face of invasion. The crux of the problem as it relates to the issue of authority was that if the Anabaptists were truly seditious, the state-sanctioned reformers were merely supporting the normal functioning of the state in condemning them. If Anabaptism did not entail violent revolution, then state-sanctioned reformers were denying them precisely that religious authority which Protestantism began with: scripture and conscience.

Like Luther, Zwingli claimed that the issue at stake was primarily civil rather than theological. It was not so much that people were being baptised in a heretical manner, but that people were being encouraged in revolt, factions, and heresy.[42] Zurich needed to adopt this strategy because the accusation of heresy was untenable for a Protestant city which was surrounded by 'hostile Catholic powers.'[43] Such accusations were plausible because the Anabaptists:

> not only rejected fundamental doctrines but introduced a completely new type of church organization, replacing the monopoly of the authoritarian and compulsory state church with independent, voluntary congregation, and the special class of supernaturally endowed or learned pastors with an elected lay ministry.[44]

The modern mind must be reminded that five hundred years ago, not going to church was a revolutionary act. The Anabaptist ideas of non-participation, however, were not limited to church but extended to other forms of civic life. 'The Swiss Brethren… scrupulously denied that a Christian might hold government office, swear an oath, sue in court, or fight in war.'[45] This attitude of separation was reinforced by frequent persecution, but not exclusively created by it. In Moravia, during a period of toleration, many Anabaptists refused to cook or clean with non-Anabaptists. Even separation, however, was not an absolute tenet of Anabaptism since Hoffman at one point advised his followers against it. 'They were not to withdraw from the ruling church, but within it were to form circles in which the expectation of the coming of God in power would be kept alive.'[46]

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[42] Williams, G.H. *The Radical Reformation*, p.224.
[43] Goertz, *Anabaptists*, p.120.
[44] Clasen, p.89.
[45] Ibid., p.32.
[46] Smithson, p.81.

In part, the negative response of the state was created by a failure to differentiate between different strains of Anabaptism. It would certainly have been a mistake to attribute arguments forwarded in the anonymous work, *To the Assembly of the Common Peasantry* to the Zurich school.[47] It seemed to claim that because Christians were bound by Christ's injunction to show love to everyone, true Christians have no need for human authority. Temporal authorities existed to deal with the wicked.[48] The tract went on to claim that rulers who produce 'bad fruit' should be cut down and thrown into the fire: 'to knock down people such as Moab, Agag, Ahab, and Nero from their thrones is God's highest pleasure.'[49]

In contrast to such teaching, Hübmaier wrote *On the Sword*, defending Anabaptism against accusations of sedition for its teachings on the state. He asserted that authorities had the right to wield the sword to 'protect and defend all innocent and peaceful people.'[50] He criticised the hermeneutics of those who thought Christians could not be judges or serve in other positions of authority, describing the place of the sword in God's order. Thus, Hübmaier was engaging his opponents on two fronts; arguing with his Anabaptist opponents about a theology of government while at the same time suggesting that the authorities had a responsibility to protect peaceful Anabaptists, such as himself, who were not involved in revolutions.

Despite the early arguments of Luther and Zwingli condemning the Anabaptists because of their threat to the social structure, the legislation created to repress them tended to focus on theological rather than civil transgressions. Before 1529, many areas had means of differentiating between the two. As Hans-Jürgen Goertz observed:

> In Electoral Saxony… Anabaptists were not prosecuted for their religious beliefs but simply for causing disruption to the community…. Electoral Palantinate… refused to prosecute its resident Anabaptists without prior judgement from an inquisitorial court, since they were only accused of a spiritual and not of a secular or even ecclesiastical offence.[51]

At the second Diet of Speyer, however, Protestant rulers made use of the Anabaptists as scapegoats to emphasise their own loyalty to the empire by contrast.[52] Since the authorities present at the Diet had all been granted the privilege of determining the ecclesiastical practice of their region according to their own

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[47] M.G. Baylor mentioned in a footnote that it was printed in 1525 by Hieronymous Hölzel who had printed some of Müntzer's work. For this reason it is most likely representative of the revolutionary arguments of the Emden or Augsburg schools. *The Radical Reformation*, p.101.
[48] *Common Peasantry* in Baylor, pp.104-105.
[49] Ibid., p.118.
[50] Hübmaier, B. *On the Sword*, p.186.
[51] Goertz, *Anabaptists*, p.123.
[52] Ibid., p.124.

conscience, they no longer had an interest in supporting the principle of personal religious authority which Luther seemed to defend at Worms.

Carl Heath took the resultant legislation condemning Anabaptists to death 'without any trial before the spiritual judge' as evidence that 'they were regarded as more dangerous in a social than in a religious sense.'[53] He neglected to note, however, that the crime for which they were specifically condemned for was the theological issue of 're-baptism.' Rather than illustrating the secular grievances against the Anabaptists, the second Diet of Speyer marked a shift which enabled the state to prosecute people for the act of baptism which had only theological relevance. That is to say, civil governments were granted power to prosecute heresy. This created an uncomfortable paradox for Protestant territories[54] to which they responded with a policy of relative leniency or as Lutherans under Philip Melancthon did by charging them with blaspheming the word of God since blasphemy was a public crime and thus within secular jurisdiction.[55]

As William Estep pointed out, most Anabaptists' 'attitude towards the state was not wholly negative.' It was only the alliance of church and state to which they objected.[56] Peaceful Anabaptists were caught in an unfortunate situation of having no real opportunity to dispel the charges of sedition because:

> every attempt to protest against their judicial persecution was interpreted as civil disobedience or revolutionary conspiracy. Every attempt to persuade them to pledge loyalty to the government was doomed to fail, since it was this very government which was punishing them for their faith.[57]

The failure of the state to differentiate between seditious and non-seditious versions of Anabaptism resulted in unmerited executions and contributed to the Anabaptist rejection of the state's authority in spiritual affairs. It should be noted that the Anabaptists' inability to exert any control over the truly seditious radicals gave the state plausible excuses, and perhaps good reasons, to attempt their eradication. This problem of Anabaptist division is examined in full after consideration of the understanding of scripture which birthed their beliefs.

The question of ecclesiology dominated Anabaptist hermeneutics and ultimately produced a single answer: 'A church of Christ is a congregation of true believers, giving token that they have been born again of the Spirit of God by living in accordance with the precepts of their Lord.'[58] This radical ecclesiology led them to make use of scriptural texts in distinct ways.

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[53] Heath, p.63.
[54] Goertz, *Anabaptists*, p.128.
[55] Ibid., p.125.
[56] Estep, W.R. *The Anabaptist Story*, p.194.
[57] Goertz, *Anabaptists*, p.129.
[58] Vedder, pp.102-103.

The Zurich school concluded early on that 'God's word was not limited to the written word of the Scripture, which they called the Outer Word, but manifested itself also through the Holy Spirit, the Inner Word.'[59] They came to this conclusion quite simply by reading about the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts and how God spoke to the Old Testament prophets. Nevertheless, among the Swiss this did not lead to extravagant claims because they used scripture as a control for ecstatic revelation. In doing so, they adhered to Luther's teaching that scripture was the supreme authority but disagreed as to the specific meaning of certain passages.

This was not true for every Anabaptist, though. The Augsburg school's rejection of this primary tenet was acutely summarised by Alfred Coutts:

> The Roman Catholic position claimed a twofold authority, first to form and guarantee the Canon of Inspired Scriptures, and second to interpret them by inspired Fathers and Councils of the Church. The Reformers seemed to grant the first claim, and to deny the second, for Luther practically asserted that the Scriptures could be understood by any man. To Denck the claims of Roman Catholicism and of orthodox Protestantism were equally indefensible.[60]

In *He Who Really Loves the Truth,* Denck found 'both the true source of authority and the key to right interpretation of the Scriptures in the Inner Word, the Spirit who lives and works in every good man.'[61] Hut's opinion was similarly that God's communication today was more relevant than a record of God's communication from centuries before.[62] In the most extreme rejection of scriptural authority, Denck wrote: 'It is not possible for the Scriptures to make a bad heart good, though they may convey to it better information…. the elect of God can be saved, without preaching and without Scripture.'[63]

The use of scripture by Melchior Hoffman and the Emden school was of a different character altogether. Hoffman revived the allegorical interpretation of scripture and combined it with his own version of 'typological exegesis.' As Klaus Deppermann has concluded, 'He felt that his particular gift was the ability to reveal the "spiritual" meaning hidden behind the "literal" meaning of the sacred texts.'[64] He considered himself an 'interpreter' rather than a 'prophet',[65] echoing Luther's elevation of the *scholar* as the one who reveals the word of God. His search for typological figures in the text of scripture provided the basis for his apocalyptic predictions.

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[59] Clasen, p.121.
[60] Coutts, p.35.
[61] Ibid., p.36.
[62] Clasen, p.121.
[63] Denck, H. *Wideruff*, Art. I, *Von der geschrifft* (as quoted in A. Coutts' *Hans Denck*, p.96).
[64] Deppermann, K. *Melchior Hoffman*, p.241.
[65] Ibid., p.242.

Nearly every social change the Anabaptists sought had roots in scripture. For instance, they stopped going to church because 'the New Testament did not say that the faithful should gather in churches build of wood and stone' and because the temple that God desired was people's hearts.[66] For the majority of Anabaptists, the New Testament served as a comprehensive handbook for everyday living to be interpreted literally. Conspicuously lacking was the sort of discussion Calvin engaged in concerning whether a Christian could charge interest. If a topic was raised by Jesus or the apostles, their straightforward injunctions permitted no argument. If something was not mentioned it was probably to be avoided.

Infant baptism was the paramount example of this 'do only what is written' approach to scripture. Felix Manz argued against baptising children in *Protest and Defense* on the basis that:

> the apostles baptized only those who had been instructed about Christ, and that they baptized no one without external evidence and a certain knowledge or desire. Whoever says or teaches otherwise does what he cannot prove with any passage of Scripture.[67]

There was, however, some dissent from the Augsburg school concerning the use of scripture in such a manner. Marpeck moved away from the legalism of the Swiss Brethren who sought to implement the imperatives of scripture in a strict way. He taught his followers to follow the rule of 'love and faith' rather than merely the letter of scripture.[68] Though mystical Anabaptism seemed to arrive at a comfortable middle way which avoided legalism without leading into unbridled licence, the apocalypticism associated with Emden seemed to take the concept of grace to extremes declaring that it was impossible for them to sin.

In regard to the use of scripture, the Anabaptists bore similarities to Calvin, possibly as a result of their mutual Zurich heritage. While Calvin made use of the state to compel the citizens of Geneva to conform to the pattern of the New Testament, the Anabaptists had no such means. As always, scripture itself provided the answer. *The Schleitheim Articles* suggested, 'These people [who've fallen into sin] should be admonished twice privately and the third time should be punished or banned publicly, before the whole community, according to the command of Christ, Matthew 18.'[69] The regard of even their enemies for their moral lifestyle[70] testifies to the effectiveness of this method under certain conditions.

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[66] Clasen, p.84.
[67] Manz, F. *Protest and Defense*, p.95.
[68] Clasen, p.33.
[69] Sattler, M. *The Schleitheim Articles*, p.174.
[70] Bender, H.S. 'Anabaptist Vision' in M.G. Baylor, *The Radical Reformation* (Cambridge, 1992)., p.44.

Finally, the Anabaptist used scripture to develop a new conception of ministry. In general, the early Anabaptists believed the idea of professional ministry was unbiblical. Their leaders conceived of themselves travelling from place to place like the apostles, preaching wherever their message was received. The offices of 'deacon,' 'elder,' and 'pastor' tended to develop later on.[71] They exhibited a 'predominately lay character as over and against the more clerical and hierarchical structure of the Reformed and the Catholic churches.'[72] Among the Dutch Anabaptists 'each brother and even each sister was entitled to read and explain the scriptures; at least they did so, and baptism was administered by every member of the church who was asked to baptize.'[73] They accepted Luther's idea that all believers were priests, but took the further step of permitting all Christians to exercise priestly functions.

One exception to this was Hoffman. He sharply criticised the egalitarian approaches of Zurich and Augsburg, proposing instead a fourfold hierarchy of 'apostolic messengers,' 'prophets,' 'pastors,' and ordinary members of the congregation.[74] These categories presumably came from Hoffman's characteristic typological reading of scripture. He simply observed the roles he saw present in the New Testament church and arranged them in what seemed to him to be the most sensible way.

The distinguishing mark of Anabaptist ministry was that it intrinsically involved the personal life of the minister. The *Augsburg Confession* 'explicitly condemned the belief held by both the Donatists and the Anabaptists that the efficacy of the pastoral functions depended on the holiness and piety of the pastor.'[75] Thus, though mass offered by a corrupt priest was held to be theologically valid, a corrupt Anabaptist had no place preaching to his brethren.

As apparent even the brief analysis of three schools of Anabaptism, the radical reformation did not possess a natural cohesiveness. Leaders emerged in an overwhelming cacophony of innovation. It is little wonder the variety of Anabaptist sects baffled authorities in an age of limited communication when it remains difficult to make sense of them today.

The Schleitheim Articles were an early attempt to remedy this problem. Though little is known of how the meeting was called or who attended, it is generally agreed that Michael Sattler was the key leader at the gathering in Schleitheim in

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[71] In the case of the Dutch Anabaptists, after 1534. Van der Zijpp, N. 'Early Dutch Anabaptists' in M.G. Baylor, *The Radical Reformation* (Cambridge, 1992), p.71.
[72] Fretz, J.W. 'Brotherhood and the Economic Ethic of the Anabaptists' in G.F. Hershberger (ed.), *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Mennonite Publishing House, 1957), p.194.
[73] Van der Zijpp, p.71.
[74] Deppermann, pp.264-265.
[75] Clasen, p.81.

1527.[76] Two major possibilities have been proposed as the focus of this meeting. The first was that the conservative Anabaptists, mainly of the Zurich school, gathered to define themselves against the criticisms of Hans Denck and others. The second was that they gathered to formulate a pamphlet to help commoners understand the difference between Anabaptist and mainline Protestant beliefs.[77] Whatever the motivation for drawing up the articles, they became the dominant expression of the Zurich school of Anabaptism and were referred to by both Zwingli and Calvin as having nearly universal circulation among them.[78] In this way, the *Articles* had a unitive effect, but were limited to the Zurich Anabaptists.

One serious problem with the *Articles*, however, was that they closely paralleled the peasant demands of 1524-1525. The peasants had presented arguments in term of 'articles,' called themselves a 'Brotherhood,' and practised a ban against those who refused to join them.[79] That these connections were actually a continuation of the attempted revolution is doubtful, but the similarities formed a plausible reason for arresting Sattler as a revolutionary. If the framers of the *Articles* had made a greater attempt to disassociate themselves from the language and aims of the peasants, perhaps Sattler's leadership would have proved a more unifying force.

The Augsburg and Emden schools seem to have similar figures in Pilgram Marpeck and Menno Simons, but it is difficult to determine what the extent of their efforts to 'unify' the Anabaptists actually represented. The community Marpeck raised in Augsburg seems to have been the result of a large number of people attaching themselves to a popular leader rather than a convergence of theological opinion among diverse groups. Simons, however, managed to publish *Foundation of Christian Doctrine* which disassociated his followers from the Münsterites and explained the fundamental doctrines of scripture to them.[80]

As with Sattler and the Zurich school, a central text widely disseminated provided the means for describing unity in concise terms. This allowed both the Zurich and the Emden Anabaptists to organise themselves and preserve their teachings in a way that made it easy to understand and reproduce their unique identities. The limitations of Marpeck's work may be linked to the mysticism of the Augsburg school which tended to reject such codification. It is noteworthy that both Sattler and Simons were former priests. It seems likely that both their education and experience in expressing theological ideas contributed to the effectiveness of their leadership towards unity.

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[76] Yoder, p.30.
[77] Ibid., p.31.
[78] Ibid., p.33.
[79] Lindberg, p.220.
[80] Estep, p.122.

The above analysis runs the risk of suggesting more unity among the Anabaptists than is merited. For the sake of brevity, numerous personalities have been excluded who challenged the unity of movement, but offered no significant contribution to the issue of authority. With so much splintering at its outset, it seems reasonable to consider that there may be intrinsic problems with the Anabaptist conception of authority which resulted in multiplicity checked only by state persecution.

Division among the Anabaptists raises the question of why so little energy was invested in coming to a consensus of opinion. It is possible that the common belief in the immanent end of the world 'made the question of organization relatively unimportant, rather incidental, or even superfluous.'[81] An additional consideration was the sheer impossibility of facilitating consensus among scattered illegal groups. Grebel and Blaurock certainly made attempts to convince Zwingli of their point of view, but Zwingli outmanoeuvred them with civil legislation. Similarly, Hoffman sought an understanding with Luther, but failed to come to an agreement. Once their operations became illegal, it simply was not safe for Anabaptists to be in dialogue with themselves, much less with their opponents. Thus, a vicious circle of isolation and division was created – a circle interrupted only by occasional documents which found widespread popularity under gifted leadership.

Claus-Peter Clasen offered the following piercing analysis of the Anabaptist conception of authority:

> the Anabaptists themselves encouraged an almost unbridled individualism by rejecting all human authority and the use of force in religious matters. If a person received odd inspirations or discovered exotic doctrines and practices in the New Testament, the congregation could not prevent him from voicing his opinions; they could only exclude him, a tactic that hardly bothered the new prophet. He was still free to establish his own sect. The principle that religious activities should be free from secular interference – employed so skilfully by the Anabaptists against the governments– backfired against the Anabaptists themselves, leading to irreconcilable divisions.[82]

It is tempting to assume from Clasen's statement that the Anabaptists rejected the concept of religious authority, but this was not true in the same sense in which they rejected political authority. To reject religious authority entirely would mean an inevitable move towards agnosticism. Whenever theological questions arose, the answer would necessarily be, 'No one has the authority to decide in this matter.' Rather, the Anabaptists were a group of somewhat similarly minded individuals who saw authority as seated within the zealous individual in a way that was reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets.

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[81] Van der Zijpp, p.72.
[82] Clasen, pp.36-37.

The question of whether the Anabaptists were heretics, spiritual savants, or simply rebellious peasants will exercise scholars for a long time to come. Certainly some Anabaptists were involved in directly seditious activities such as inciting the peasants to riot. Certainly Zwingli and Luther benefited from the repression of troublesome Anabaptist questions like, 'If priesthood can be discarded, why can't baptism?' Groups of Anabaptists that were committed to peace, however, were the victims of undeserved suspicion and condemnation. They had a valid point concerning the emancipation of the church from the state, but for precisely that reason, they were not afforded the political protection which aided Hus, Wyclif, and Luther.

The Anabaptist understanding of scripture was unique in its search for the ideal of the New Testament church in that it regarded tradition not merely as an 'unfocused lens' for understanding God, but literally mistaken and perhaps evil. Their strong rejection of tradition emphasised the scripture/tradition dichotomy which has coloured Protestant-Roman Catholic discussions of authority. As has been shown, this distinction did not exist for Luther or Calvin – only the radicals tried to reject traditional forms entirely. By rejecting historic Christian practices in this manner, they were able to create traditions 'from the ground up.' Since they accepted only scripture as an authority, they made use of only those ceremonies they could find evidence for in the New Testament.

If Luther's conception of authority created the potential for unbridled division, the Anabaptist conception exemplified it. With a bible in his hands and a creative mind, anyone could institute a form of Christianity which purported to be founded on the authority of the bible. The teachings of Denck were even more individualistic than that, discarding the control of the scriptural text entirely. Since there was no one who could speak with authority on any issue, each Anabaptist was left to make up his or her own mind, each thus becoming a *de facto* spiritual authority.

The Anabaptist conception of authority culminated *in extremis* with Denck and his claim that all authority rested not even in the text of scripture but in the individual's direct communication with God. Nevertheless, to say that Anabaptism was a movement which responded to the problem of authority by isolating believers into smaller and smaller like-minded groups would be rejected by its descendants. Anabaptism's main contribution was its attempt to preserve the autonomy of the individual conscience within the context of a brotherhood (and sisterhood) of believers. As history demonstrates, this attempt was frustrated by the impossibility of maintaining a cohesive unity without a connecting authority.

CHAPTER 5:   THOMAS CRANMER'S CONCEPTION OF AUTHORITY

5.1   CRANMER'S EARLY YEARS

Thomas Cranmer was born to Thomas and Agnes Cranmer in 1489. His schooling was reputedly cruel, but there is no reason to suppose it was out of character with the age.[1] He began at Jesus College, Cambridge in 1503, though he did not gain his bachelor's degree until 1511.[2] He earned his master's in 1515 and married Joan Black sometime after that.[3] Such a move demonstrated a willingness to relinquish honours for the sake of expediency since marriage required him to surrender his fellowship. After her death within a year or so of their wedding, Cranmer returned to Jesus College, took holy orders by 1520, and earned his doctorate in 1526.[4]

Though Oxford caught most of the contemporary attention for being a bastion of reform thinkers, Cambridge was not without dissidents. It was at Cambridge that Cranmer first met Nicholas Ridley. Biographer Jasper Ridley suggested, presumably on the basis of the friendship the two formed, that Cranmer 'may already have had his doubts as to whether all was well with the state of the Church, and may even have been in contact with Bilney and the so-called Lutherans;'[5] but offers no evidence to support this supposition.

Of other reformers at Cambridge, Gordon Rupp listed Shaxton, Crome, Forman, Lambert, Mallory, Frith, Bilney, Arthur, Paget, Taverner, Heath, Parker, May, Latimer, Ridley, Bale, Fox, and Day, including Cranmer among them as one of those suspected to have met in the White Horse Tavern.[6] William Clebsch claimed, 'Evidence abounds to indicate that English scholars [in the 1520s], especially at Cambridge, read Luther's writings sympathetically, yet the official policy of Realm and Church explicitly supported the papacy.'[7]

It is tempting to draw too many conclusions about Cranmer's loyalties prior to his ascendance as a major public figure. While he certainly seems to have associated with Protestant minded reformers, that did not prevent Diarmaid

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[1] Cranmer's secretary, Ralph Morice, claimed the severity of his teacher actually did harm to his memory, but as noted concerning Luther, such schooling was by no means unique. Hook, W.F. *Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury Vol.VI (Vol.I New Series)*, p.427.
[2] MacCulloch, D. *Thomas Cranmer, A Life*, p.19.
[3] Ibid., p.21-22.
[4] MacCulloch noted the esteem the college must have had to readmit him in such a way. Ibid., p.22.
[5] Ridley, J.G. *Nicholas Ridley: A Biography*, p.35.
[6] Rupp, E.G. *The Righteousness of God; Luther Studies*, p.19.
[7] Clebsch, W.A. *England's Earliest Protestants 1520-1535*, p.24.

MacCulloch from describing him as a 'papalist.'[8] Attempts to describe Cranmer definitively as either Catholic or Protestant during his time at Cambridge will continue to be frustrated by the fact that he managed to make friends and enemies on both sides.

5.2   FOLLOWING THE GODLY PRINCE

Unlike previously noted reformers, Thomas Cranmer did not achieve notoriety as a singular leading figure of a particular branch of the reformation. From teaching at Cambridge with Erasmus[9] to his extensive work under King Henry VIII, he continued to be overshadowed by more ostentatious historical figures. Nevertheless, this tendency to be overlooked has not allowed Cranmer to escape the vilification reserved for reformers of his calibre.[10]

While Luther's reformation was characterised by a series of conflicts, Calvin's by criticism and revision of the *Institutes*, and the Anabaptists' by migration and martyrdom, Cranmer's reformation is best understood through its series of political compromises. Clebsch argued that the only way Cranmer could have survived was by 'adjusting to Henry's ecclesiastical whims'.[11] Yet through all the shifts of policy, Cranmer managed to hold a coherent understanding of authority centred in the person of the king. How did Cranmer reconcile this understanding of 'the godly prince' with his conviction that scripture was the rule of faith?

Whether by genius or ineptitude, Thomas Cranmer managed to outlast the volatile reign and create liturgical forms which have influenced the English church for more than four centuries. His re-reading of episcopacy permitted a continuity with the ancient Church which no other reform party could claim. Caricatures of Cranmer as a political incompetent completely overwhelmed by Henry's charismatic presence or a ruthless manipulator devoid of conscience raise the question of the Archbishop's role in the developments of state. Was he politically naïve or did he follow a shrewd plan?

In the late part of his second decade as king, Henry VIII faced the very real problem of being married to an ageing queen without a male heir. In 1527, he attempted the fairly straightforward solution of applying to the pope to nullify the marriage.[12] Henry even had a plausible case based on his arguments from Leviticus 20:21, but Pope Julius II had already granted a dispensation allowing the marriage[13]

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[8] MacCulloch, p.29.
[9] Innes, A.D. *Cranmer and the English Reformation*, p.42.
[10] For a concise summary, see C.H. Smyth's *Cranmer and the Reformation Under Edward VI*, p.28. J.H. Blunt's *Reformation of the Church of England Vol.II*, p.196 includes a more robust defamation.
[11] Clebsch, p.7.
[12] Moorman, J.R.H. *A History of the Church in England*, p.164.
[13] Ibid., p.165.

and in that light, Henry's use of scripture according to his conscience must have sounded a great deal like Martin Luther to the Roman ear. In addition, Pope Clement VII was at that time hedged in by the military power of the queen's nephew, Emperor Charles V, and stalled for time hoping the political tensions would eventually yield.[14]

Thomas Cranmer would doubtless have remained a minor or even unknown figure in the English reformation if not for his fateful comments to John Foxe and Stephen Gardiner over dinner at Waltham Cross in 1529.

> It were better as I suppose… that the question, whether a man may marry his brother's wife, or no? were decided and discussed by the divines, and by the authority of the word of God, whereby the conscience of the prince might be better satisfied and quieted, than thus from year to year by frustratory [sic] delays to prolong the time, leaving the very truth of the matter unbolted out by the word of God. There is but one truth in it, which the Scripture will soon declare, make open and manifest, being by learned men well handled, and that may be done in England in the universities here, as at Rome, or elsewhere in any foreign nation, the authority whereof will compel any judge soon to come to a definitive sentence: and therefore, as I take it, you might this way have made an end of this matter long since.[15]

If this quote can be taken as reasonably similar to Cranmer's actual statement, it reveals a great deal. From the outset of his career under Henry, he already had formed the central opinions which would guide his conduct over the next years. In the first place, Cranmer relied heavily on the assumption that scripture has a clear answer to the question which is waiting to be 'bolted out' by the honest scholar. In the second, Cranmer denied papal prominence discreetly by denying the corollary belief that the opinions of scholars in Rome ought to carry more weight than scholars elsewhere. If it could be carried off, 'Papal authority [would be] reduced to the level of an expert opinion; ultimate judgement reverted to the king.'[16]

Cranmer was not the first to suggest proposing the question of divorce to the universities,[17] but it must have been novel enough at that time to bring Cranmer directly into the presence of the king. The Cambridge scholar was ordered to put all other projects on hold and address his mind to the question of the divorce. He soon produced a document which asserted, 'the bishop of Rome had no such authority, as whereby he might dispense with the word of God and the Scripture.'[18]

Cranmer went to Rome and Henry's servants implemented the university strategy, obtaining favourable opinions by whatever means necessary. Unfortunately, those opposed to the divorce employed similar tactics so that English universities sided with Henry, and Spanish and Italian against him. Such obviously

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Foxe, J. *Actes and Monuments Vol.III* pp.6-7.
[16] Innes, p.44.
[17] Hook, *Vol.VI*, p.437. See also R.W. Dixon *History of the Church of England Vol.I*, p.154.
[18] Foxe, p.9.

partisan opinions contributed little to the pressure Henry was trying to bring to bear on the pope. In the end, it was Henry's political manoeuvring to pass the *Conditional Restraint of Annates* and *Act in Restraint of Appeals* in 1533 which provided him with the divorce he sought.[19]

Understanding such preoccupation with marriage requires a certain shift for the modern mind. For Henry, the creation of a legitimate heir was of paramount importance, but his opponents were only exercising natural caution regarding a sacrament that was both mystical and sacred. Curiously enough, Luther advised bigamy as a solution and Melanchthon even suggested applying to the pope for a dispensation which would permit it.[20] Oddly, Henry was disgusted by this proposition despite the fact that between January and May 1533, he was technically married to two women.[21]

Cranmer was raised to Archbishop in March 1533, likely because Henry trusted him to complete the divorce proceedings he had been labouring for the past four years. The new archbishop did not disappoint, declaring the Aragon marriage void in May and supporting the public declaration of the Boleyn marriage he had conducted earlier that year. Why Cranmer, though, and not Gardiner? It is possible that Henry saw it as a reward for Cranmer's service, but Gardiner had more experience and had worked on the 'great matter' longer. Cranmer was clearly not expecting it or he would hardly have married shortly before the appointment. It is most likely that Henry saw Cranmer as the least costly way to achieve his ends. With an archbishop unswervingly loyal to him, he could have his divorce without a subsequent struggle for power. It has been speculated that, 'if Cranmer found the royal conscience and his own in opposition he would think his own had made a mistake.'[22] It would be a mistake, however, to construe the Archbishop as a mere tool of those in power. On the contrary, Cranmer demonstrated meticulous concern to garner support before making decisions. For instance, he never pronounced against the marriage until theologians agreed that a marriage to a deceased brother's wife was against divine law and canon lawyers agreed that Katherine and Arthur had consummated their marriage.[23]

The *Act in Restraint of Appeals* granted significant power to the Archbishopric by making all of its decisions final, but after Henry's excommunication, such powers were not sufficient for maintaining the church in England. In 1534, the *Ecclesiastical Appointments Act* empowered the government

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[19] Moorman, p.167.
[20] MacCulloch, p.65.
[21] Moorman, p.167.
[22] Innes, p.46.
[23] Haigh, C. *English Reformations*, p.116.

to appoint bishops and the *Dispensations Act* transferred the powers of dispensations and licences to the Archbishop of Canterbury.[24] The *Act of Supremacy* placed the power to 'define doctrine and punish heresy' in the king alone.[25]

Cranmer did not play an active role in such political manoeuvring. Nevertheless, he quickly found himself possessed of limited papal power, though ultimate authority was clearly outside his reach. His biographers give us no reason to suppose he would have seized such authority given the chance. He did not merely accept the legal fiction of royal supremacy – he believed it. Acting according to this belief was relatively straightforward under Henry VIII, where Cranmer had a clear role as theological *advisor*, but became more difficult as he exercised more significant leadership during the reign of Edward VI and even opposed Mary Tudor.[26]

At present, however, it is necessary to consider Cranmer's relation to the two predominant theological perspectives in greater depth. Cranmer and his associated reformers found themselves struggling like continental reformers against both Rome and radical Protestantism. 'Against Rome they invoked the authority of scripture and the primitive church; against incipient Puritanism they added reason to the appeal to scripture and tradition.'[27] In this way, Cranmer displayed exactly the same strategy employed by Luther.

Though Cranmer has been sometimes portrayed as having a longstanding disdain for Rome, MacCulloch dismissed this opinion as unconvincing.[28] It was based mainly on Cranmer's unspecific intimation in a 1536 letter to Henry VIII that 'these many year I had daily prayed unto God that I might see the power of Rome destroyed.'[29] MacCulloch's analysis of John Fisher's *Lutheranae Confutatio* portrayed Cranmer 'certainly as a papalist, but even more a conciliarist.'[30]

Henry had approved of Cranmer's work on the divorce and sent him to Rome with it, along with a gathering of scholars including Stokesley, Carne, and Bennet in 1530.[31] He was certainly not at that time an enemy of the pope, but rather was received as an honoured representative of English interests.[32] This must have been a significant journey because it allowed Cranmer to meet personally those whom reformers had so vilified. His was a unique chance to argue a position similar to Luther's original crime of denying the pope's authority without personal danger.

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[24] Moorman, p.168.
[25] Ibid.
[26] As addressed in the following section.
[27] Avis, P. *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*, p.36.
[28] MacCulloch, p.25.
[29] Cox, J.E. *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer,* p. 327.
[30] MacCulloch, p.29.
[31] Foxe, p.9.
[32] Hook, *Vol.VI*, p.425.

That there was an element of danger in England's case was evidenced by the demand for Henry's presence in Rome and the specific prohibition of remarriage[33] which was essentially a warning before his eventual excommunication in 1533.[34] An observer preserved the Archbishop's later reflections on his visit to Rome: 'Then [Cranmer] shewed how corrupt the present pope was, both in his person and government, for which he was abhorred even by some of his cardinals, as [Cranmer] himself had heard and seen at Rome.'[35]

When Cranmer was appointed archbishop a mere eight months after the death of Warham, he was still with reformers in Germany.[36] Upon return to England, he took a private[37] oath swearing obedience to the papacy, but followed it with

> a solemn protestation that his oath would not override the law of God and his loyalty to the King, or to act to the hindrance of 'reformation of the Christian religion, the government of the English Church, or the prerogative of the Crown or the well-being of the same commonwealth'[38]

Following that, Cranmer swore public oaths to the pope, each time referring back to his earlier protestation, and was formally confirmed. In this way, Cranmer became the first archbishop armed with a sufficiently conditional oath to actively oppose the pope so long as his opposition was consequent with the 'reformation of the Christian religion.' Viewed in this light, Cranmer's oath evidenced the influence of continental reformers as he effectively limited his obedience to the sphere of his personal convictions. The question may be raised as to whether a person unwilling to function within the parameters of an ecclesial office had a right to the powers conferred by it.

It is possible that Cranmer, ever careful about legal matters, applied the following justification to his own actions:

> Princes also, who, upon a common mistake, thinking the pope head of the church had sworn to him, finding that this was done upon a false ground, may pull their neck out of his yoke, as every man may make his escape out of the hands of a robber.[39]

If his comments may be taken as confessional, it paints a vivid picture of Cranmer's relation to Rome. Though he had sworn an oath to the pope, he found himself throughout his career undermining papal power just as anyone would prevent an evil person from doing them harm.

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[33] MacCulloch, p.49.
[34] Henry's initial excommunication on 9 July, 1533 was provisional and would have been immediately revoked had he put Anne away before October. Ibid., p.97.
[35] Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings…*, p.77.
[36] Dixon, *Vol.I*, p.157.
[37] Civil lawyers Tregonwell, Bedell, Gwent, and Cockes were present as witnesses. MacCulloch, p.88.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings…*, p.78.

After Henry's excommunication, his propagandists began to push for greater limits to papal jurisdiction with sermons vilifying 'the bishop of Rome' and declarations that the excommunication was unlawful.[40] In 1535, Cranmer was instrumental in redirecting this antipapal sentiment and galvanising it into permanent opposition to the papacy as an institution. It was not merely Clement VII, but 'the very papacy and the see of Rome, which both by their laws suppressed Christ, and set up the bishop of that see as a God of this world.'[41] In his 1536 sermon at Paul's Cross, Cranmer unequivocally identified the pope as the antichrist.[42]

It is less easy to see how Cranmer came to this dire conclusion than to understand the invective nature of Luther's personal enmity. Charles Smyth suggested that Cranmer opposed the Roman church because it was 'an essentially undemocratic organisation,'[43] but offered little evidence of Cranmer's concern for mass participation. In the aforementioned sermon Cranmer raised three issues against the papacy: the 'confidence trick' that Rome had played on Christians, the false holiness concealing all manner of vice, and the pretension of regarding canon law on equal terms with scripture.[44] Nevertheless, the pope's behaviour in the divorce suit does not seem sufficient to generate such opinions, particularly given the weakness of Cranmer's biblical arguments in light of Deuteronomy 25:5.[45] It seems likely that this was evidence of Lutheran influence, most probably dating to his time in Germany following his disillusioning visit to Rome.

In 1538, Henry began a reactionary period in which Cranmer and Cromwell were denied their previous level of influence.[46] This reaction, culminating in the *Six Articles* in 1539 can be largely credited to Gardiner's conservative influence. These articles made conservative views on communion, vows, private masses, and confession explicit doctrines of the English church and proscribed legal consequences for their violation.[47] The bishops Latimer and Shaxton resigned immediately, but Cranmer did not. This should not, however, be taken as an indication of wavering theological convictions, but rather one more demonstration of loyalty to his king.[48] Cranmer was not in a position to do much else[49] since he had

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[40] Haigh, p.117.
[41] MacCulloch, pp.141-142.
[42] Ibid., p.150. It is significant that William Tyndale, the only other public figure in England to have made similar identification at that point, was in prison.
[43] Smyth, C.H., p.43.
[44] MacCulloch, p.151.
[45] An Israelite law suggesting that marrying Katherine was Henry's biblical responsibility.
[46] Haigh, p.152.
[47] Bray, G. *Documents of the English Reformation* pp.222-224.
[48] MacCulloch, p.251. It is indicative of the continued positive relationship of Henry and Cranmer that he was given the opportunity to absent himself from the final vote but refused this opportunity to save face.
[49] Ibid., p.151.

founded his protest against Rome on the authority of the prince to be 'vicar of Christ' in his own realm.

It is worthwhile to consider Gardiner here as the paramount representative of conservative religion in England and despite their collaboration on the divorce suit, Cranmer's principal rival. The bishop of Winchester was widely expected to succeed Warham as Archbishop,[50] so the selection of an unknown and previously insignificant scholar like Cranmer must have galled him. His influence regarding the *Six Articles* has already been noted. In 1540 he advised Henry 'to keep Catholicism as England's religion in a Church controlled by the Crown.'[51] The attempts of both men to gain influence bloomed into a rivalry with disastrous consequences in subsequent reigns. The impossibility of reconciliation between Gardiner's conservative stance and Cranmer's Protestant ideals was illustrated by the 1536 letter to Henry in which the archbishop claimed that denying the errors of Rome was 'both treason and heresy.'[52]

Indeed, disagreement with the king's version of antipapalism had unfortunate consequences. The *Succession Act* of 1534 made failure to accept Henry as 'supreme head' an act of treason.[53] Such conflation of treason and heresy makes it necessary to consider to what extent Cranmer was culpable for the deaths of those who remained loyal to the pope. John Fisher was the simplest case. Though he was executed under the *Succession Act*, his 1533 request for the Emperor to intervene militarily was clearly treason.[54] There is greater cause for suspicion in the case of Thomas More because he had been imprisoned for failing to acknowledge Henry's new powers before the *Succession Act* was passed.[55] Though Cranmer later claimed to have opposed More's execution, he was present for the interrogation and kept silent.[56] Nevertheless, Cranmer's lack of malice was clearly illustrated by his politically untenable suggestion that More and Fisher be permitted to make a lesser oath that did not formally condemn the pope or the Aragon marriage.[57] The Archbishop's impotence in this regard is disappointing, but he certainly did not take an active role in their technically legal demise.

For Cranmer and Henry, the issue with Rome was initially jurisdictional rather than theological. In the early period of the English reformation, both emphasised their continuation in the Catholic faith. As Walter Hook observed, 'Henry and Cranmer were neither Papists nor Protestants, but they professed to be

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[50] Dixon, *Vol.I*, p.154.
[51] Clebsch, p.275.
[52] Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings…,* p.328.
[53] Moorman, p.168.
[54] Loades, D. *Politics and Nation: England 1450-1660,* p.137.
[55] Ibid., p.136.
[56] MacCulloch, p.137.
[57] Ibid., pp.124-125.

Catholics.'[58] This changed when Cranmer's early ambiguity was replaced with more forceful language against the pope and papal 'innovations' as early as 1536. In that light, the *Six Articles* should be viewed as a political reality he tolerated with the hope of rendering them ineffectual by maintaining his influence with Henry.

It is important to note that the reformation in England was quite separate in its early stages from the reforms on the continent. Martin Luther's opinions were sometimes of more use to conservatives than Cranmer since they were able to 'brand any attack on traditional practices as heretical if Luther advocated it, irrespective of the fact that its prime movers in England owed nothing to Luther, and were even hostile to many of his ideas.'[59] This situation was not a permanent one, however.

Following his rejection of Rome, Cranmer did not, like other reformers, become immediately dependent on his own authority as a scholar to interpret scripture. He was deeply concerned to draw reformers together in

> a General Council of Protestantism that should establish 'one sound, pure, evangelical doctrine, agreeable to the discipline of the primitive church,' to discover a formula that could unite all the divergent forces of Reformation against the common foe while leaving ample room for differences of interpretation: this was the dominant aim of Cranmer's statesmanship, and one that frequently seemed upon the threshold of success.[60]

After the establishment of royal supremacy, a delegation was sent to Germany, possibly to personal contacts Cranmer had established after his visit to Rome. His Protestant sympathies at that time are evidenced by his marriage to the niece of Andreas Osiander shortly before being selected as archbishop.[61] When the delegates returned from Wittenberg, *The Ten Articles* were drawn up in 1536. Though not in agreement with more extreme Protestants, they certainly moved the English church in a Protestant direction. Most notably, the number of sacraments was reduced from the traditional seven to baptism, penance, and the eucharist.[62] Also in line with Protestant thinking, transubstantiation was not mentioned, justification was described in Lutheran terms,[63] and purgatory was denounced as a tool of the bishop of Rome for maintaining power.[64] Images, prayers to saints, and traditional ceremonies were permitted,[65] but the real difference between continental and Anglican reform was the retention of the episcopate, as addressed below.

In addition to helping to align the crown with continental reformers through diplomacy, Cranmer facilitated his search for consensus by supporting scholarship in

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[58] Hook, p.425.
[59] Loades, D. *Politics, Censorship, and the English Reformation*, p.4.
[60] Smyth, p.36-37.
[61] Clebsch, p.69.
[62] Bray, pp.165-169.
[63] Ibid., pp.169-171.
[64] Ibid., pp.173-174.
[65] Ibid., pp.171-173.

England. Archbishop Warham brought Erasmus to Cambridge,[66] but it was Cranmer who renewed the renowned humanist's pension in 1533.[67] Because of Erasmus' ambiguous loyalties regarding the theological divide, it is difficult to draw any further conclusions about Cranmer, but his patronage did spare the archbishop from negative citation in Erasmus' anti-Lutheran writings.[68]

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that Cranmer was able to bring about 'churchly preferment of Protestants largely as such preferments lubricated Henry's negotiations with Protestant royalty on the Continent.'[69] Because of this, Cranmer's reforms during the reign of Henry were limited to those which worked to the king's political advantage. Any attempt to move beyond that scope would have been his downfall. It was Cranmer's awareness of this fact which kept him alive.

Most significant in terms of his relationship to Protestant reformers was Cranmer's work to recreate Christianity within the English language. He worked toward this on the dual fronts of biblical translation and liturgical reform. Though in 1530 Henry was vehemently opposed to vernacular bible-reading,[70] Cranmer prevailed upon him to permit an authorised English edition. The translation project begun by Cranmer was laid aside when Coverdale published his own version in 1536,[71] and in an interesting compromise, Cromwell required two bibles to be provided for every church so that 'if errors were found in [the English version], they might be corrected by the Latin Bible which lay beside it.'[72] Unsatisfied with that edition Cranmer sponsored a revision of Matthew's Bible[73] and convinced Cromwell to license 'the Great Bible' in 1538.[74]

Though Cranmer did not participate in the translation itself,[75] his patronage of various projects demonstrated a lasting commitment to the idea of vernacular scriptures. This, more than anything else, caused Protestant reformers to count him as one of their own, despite the fact that translation was not anti-Catholic. Through this development, Cranmer was ever cautious to guard the work against the accusation that an English bible would lead to abuse. He warned in his preface, 'There is nothing so good in this world, but that it may be abused, and turned from fruitful and wholesome to hurtful and noisome…. [Therefore, when you read] bring with you the fear of God.'[76]

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[66] Strype, J. *Ecclesiastical Memorials Vol.I*, p.194.
[67] MacCulloch, p.98.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Clebsch, p.275.
[70] d'Aubigné, J.H.M. *The Reformation in England,* p.459.
[71] Innes, p.87.
[72] Dixon, *Vol.I,* p.451.
[73] It was essentially a new edition of Tyndale's purged of objectionable content.
[74] Innes, p.87.
[75] Dickens, A.G. *The English Reformation*, p.156.
[76] Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings…,* p.122.

Nevertheless, Cranmer supported the project of translation because it was essential for the people of God to have access to the word of God.

> the Bible was, in his opinion, not the word of God unless it be rightly interpreted. The Bible rightly interpreted is the rule; but who is to decide what the right interpretation is? …When the Church and the Bible were antagonistic the one to the other, he adhered to the Bible. But when… expressions were doubtful or ambiguous, he appealed from the present to the early Church.[77]

Far from the Anabaptist adherence to an imaginary ideal of the primitive Church, Cranmer attempted to locate writings from before the controversial position solidified.[78] In this, he demonstrated a deeper reverence for early writers and considered writings theologically reliable from a longer period of time than other leading reformers. For Cranmer, the first disciples only chose leaders from among themselves as a temporary measure because they had no sovereign with sufficient authority.[79] Essentially, he was claiming the church was incomplete until Constantine became the first Christian sovereign.

Though Cranmer could not prevent the *Six Articles*, he did not sit by idly while the opposing party under Gardiner attempted to undo his efforts. It is likely that Cranmer and Cromwell sent the message to Martin Bucer at this time begging 'that a fresh Schmalkaldic embassy should be sent to England to neutralise the conservative advantage.'[80] In the years prior to Henry's death Cranmer tried to arrange a gathering of Protestant theologians for a conference in England, a need that became even more apparent once the Council of Trent convened in 1545. He wrote to Melanchthon at least three times and asked Justus Jonas, John á Lasco, and Albrecht Hardenberg to persuade him to come.[81] Though never successful, it is generally agreed that Cranmer's interest in other reformers was not purely political, but motivated at least in part by a genuine desire to 'open the way to further reformations in the church.'[82] Cranmer's efforts demonstrated both an awareness of the necessity of responding to the decrees of Trent and an acceptance of the concept of conciliarism as a viable method of arriving at authoritative statements.

As above, before concluding Cranmer's relation to other reformers, it is necessary to consider to what extent he is culpable for the deaths of those whose ideas of reform differed from his, or more to the point, Henry VIII's. Anne Boleyn came from a strong reformation family and her denouncement came as a shock to Cranmer. In a private letter to Henry, he intimated that he 'never had better opinion

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[77] Hook, *Vol.VII*, p.147.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings…*, p.116.
[80] MacCulloch, p.254.
[81] Smyth, p.39.
[82] Hook, *Vol.VII*, p.25.

in a woman… which [made him] think, that she should not be culpable,'[83] but the king declared the evidence was enough to convince him. Arthur Innes suggested Cranmer did not find the evidence compelling, but rather acquiesced in deference to Henry's opinion.[84] When Cromwell was charged with treason, an almost identical scenario occurred. Cranmer protested the charges in disbelief. Henry declared he was certain of the vicar general's guilt. The archbishop accepted the condemnation and execution.[85]

Regarding the case of John Frith, Cranmer appears to have offered what mercy was in his power to give. The archbishop had been commanded to offer Frith the choice of recanting or being condemned, but instead he had his 'gentleman' attempt to persuade him to 'save his talents and learning for the future by moderating his view of the sacraments enough to allow Cromwell and Cranmer to exercise their favor toward him and to gain his freedom.'[86] When Frith refused, Cranmer's representative arranged the opportunity for escape, but Frith was adamant that he face trial and was subsequently condemned.

The first examples were not theological crimes and so it is understandable for Cranmer's supporters to disavow his responsibility completely. If Cranmer cannot be said to be culpable for the deaths of Anne and Cromwell, he must at least be held responsible for failure to question his loyalty to Henry. Frith was the most encouraging anecdote of Cranmer's career as a spectator of executions. Though Cranmer's political influence seemed as ineffectual as ever, he made provision for the man's escape. In this regard, Cranmer cannot be held responsible for his death.

During the reign of Henry VIII, elevated clergy must have faced the future with some trepidation. Monastic lands had been seized and redistributed. The *Act of Supremacy* (1534) granted Henry a rather vague extension of power and then permitted it to be placed in the hands of a layman.[87] The adoption of the Protestant schema in the *Ten Articles* divested their vows and consecrations of sacramental value. Most glaringly, however, was the replacement of episcopal visitation with royal visitation, thereby depriving bishops of their primary avenue of 'pastoral, administrative, and judicial' action.[88] In short, the royal supremacy's 'immediate effect on episcopal power was disastrous, for it came with an ace of depriving the episcopal office of all spiritual meaning.'[89] Cranmer played a leading role in these

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[83] Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings…,* p.324.
[84] Innes, p.69.
[85] Ibid., p.70.
[86] Clebsch, p.104.
[87] While the spiritual power of the king might be defended with Old Testament examples, the idea that Thomas Cromwell could be accorded similar power was intolerable to many. Davies, E.T. *Episcopacy and the Royal Supremacy in the Church of England*, pp.64-65.
[88] Ibid., p.70.
[89] Ibid.

developments, apparently never questioning that the monarch could act as head of the bishops,[90] but soon his own understanding of episcopacy came into conflict with the reactionary sacramentalism of Henry and the Gardiner party.

Tension between Cranmer's progressive perspective and Gardiner's conservative one was evident even in the preparation of the *Bishops' Book*, a practical handbook to accompany the *Ten Articles* which rejected purgatory but restored the number of sacraments to seven.[91] Thus, the final product in 1537 exhibited considerable conservative influence, but in regard to ordained ministry, it was Cranmer's hand which was most apparent. The sacramental emphasis of the middle ages was replaced by an emphasis on teaching in which bishops and priests were described as part of the same order.[92] This surely was an important part of Cranmer's general assessment of the book as a great success.[93]

In 1538, Cranmer produced a state paper entitled, *De Ordine et Ministerio Sacerdotum et Episcoporum*, addressing three major points relating to episcopacy.[94] First, he attacked papal claims to universal jurisdiction on the basis of scripture and the early councils:

> it is clearly evident that the bishops of Rome have claimed for themselves this false universal primacy, not only in contradiction of all the authority of the scripture… but also by going against all the determinations and decrees of the general councils.[95]

Second, he asserted the right of monarchs to act as supreme head in ecclesial affairs: 'God has thus instituted and ordained that the authority of kings and Christian leaders in the government of the people should be supreme, and it should stand out above all other powers and offices.'[96] Finally, Cranmer asserted that if bishops or presbyters were not caring for the needs of their flock, 'it is the duty of kings to apply their responsibility so that… others can be substituted in their place.'[97]

These assertions had obvious usefulness for solidifying supremacy by ensuring royal control of the episcopate, but reiterated two important facets of Cranmer's understanding of authority. He made his anti-papal argument on the basis of scripture and the early councils, and though not very far from Luther's position, the demand for *sola scriptura* is conspicuously absent. Cranmer's views on episcopacy reflected Jerome[98] more than any New Testament writer. Furthermore, in

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[90] Elliott, M.J. *Episcopacy in the thinking of Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556)*, p.155.
[91] Baptism, eucharist, and penance nevertheless retained a place of predominance.
[92] Elliott, p.138.
[93] MacCulloch, p.197.
[94] See Elliott, pp.260-288.
[95] Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings…*, p.488 (trans. Elliott, p.172).
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., p.489 (trans. Elliott, p.175.)
[98] Elliott, p.134.

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his retention of the episcopate, Cranmer identified with the humanist critiques emphasising the need for holiness without implicating the episcopal structure in clerical failings.

Within two years, *Questions and Answers Concerning the Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests* took a step further in bringing the English episcopate closer to the continental reformers' perspective. Cranmer explained that his conception of a single order including bishops and presbyters had early church precedent, almost certainly drawing from Jerome: 'The bishops and priests… were not two things, but both one office in the beginning of Christ's religion.'[99] Cranmer went on to outline the radical implications for bishops. The right to ordain was no longer their exclusive privilege. The sovereign or even the collective laity might choose to make a priest, as had been historically practiced.[100] Consecration was deemed unnecessary on the basis of scripture.[101] Even excommunication was described as a matter of civil law.[102] In Maurice Elliott's analysis, these entailed a rejection of the Roman idea of an unbroken line of succession and the identification of the episcopate with the apostolate.[103]

The revision of the *Bishops' Book* published in 1543 and deemed the *King's Book* for Henry VIII's influence, was another setback for Cranmer's party. The Archbishop succeeded in limiting the king's more extreme theological fancies, but contributed little more than grammatical corrections otherwise.[104] The result took a more conservative stance than the original *Bishops' Book* on every issue except for purgatory.[105] Nevertheless, Cranmer accepted it because Henry was acting according to a divine mandate.

Before he encountered Henry, Cranmer held a high view of scripture which included the assumption that it's meaning was readily accessible to anyone who looked. Whether he considered himself a loyal subject of the pope while at Cambridge remains a matter of speculation, but he could not have helped being exposed to the Lutheran ideas which animated so many of his fellows. Though heavily involved in the divorce suit, Cranmer had little to do with the development of Royal Supremacy. Once Cranmer had rejected the authority of the pope, he was bound to Henry's difficult shifts of policy. It is important to note that Cranmer did not despise authority; he desperately required it. When the space occupied by the pope left a vacuum, there was no one to fill it but the king. Furthermore, he

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[99] Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings…*, p.117.
[100] Cranmer did not specify whether he was referring to the New Testament or subsequent history. Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., pp.117-118.
[103] Elliott, p.179.
[104] See MacCulloch, pp.210-213.
[105] MacCulloch, p.309.

depended on Henry not so much because the king had the authority to interpret scripture, but because he had the authority to summon a council which would fulfil Cranmer's conciliar hopes. Cranmer understood the king to be bound by scripture, but it never occurred to him that Henry's brutality might be counter to it.

Cranmer's time under Henry VIII was characterised by 'a series of bewildering seesaw reversals of fortune'[106] in which he watched friends as well as enemies go to their deaths. He knew what he needed to do to survive, but he did not know how to save the lives of anyone else. Given his prominence, he had little choice but to wait out the Henrician tempest or retire in seclusion. He would not have been permitted to oppose policies, so he may have considered that his best opportunity to reach the people of England was to keep quiet in public and share his opinions privately with the king. Aside from an instinct for survival, however, Cranmer seems to have believed Henry almost to the point of granting him infallibility. It should be remembered that Cranmer did not stay in power by committing atrocities, but rather by remaining loyal to a king who committed them.

During the reign of Henry VIII, Cranmer consistently argued for an episcopal structure in which bishops differed from priests only in degree or function, not in order. Elliott argued convincingly that this understanding drew significantly from Jerome and found support among continental reformers.[107] The conception of the bishops' administrative duties as part of the political sphere aided an emphasis on pastoral care as their primary ecclesial task. Furthermore, this separation allowed Cranmer to support episcopacy in a way that did not invalidate the ministry of continental reformers.

By the end of Henrys' reign, there was little evidence that Cranmer was following a preconceived plan, only that his personal convictions were always subjected, at least publicly, to the principle of royal supremacy. If Cranmer had an overarching goal for the *church of England*, it seemed to be along the lines of Protestant reforms, but more specific intentions did not become apparent until after the coronation of Edward VI.

5.3   CRANMER'S RESPONSE TO CHANGING RULERS

The death of Henry VIII marked an important change in Cranmer, visibly demonstrated by the beard he grew following it.[108] While the Archbishop had good cause to mourn 'a deeply loved friend,' the king's passing must have also been

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[106] Ibid., p.235.
[107] Elliott, p.249.
[108] Among clergy, beards were seen as a symbol of conversion to reformation thinking and rejection of the old Church. MacCulloch, p.361.

something of a relief because it 'freed him to be himself theologically.'[109]   Only in this period can the quintessential Cranmer be seen and therefore must be given pre-eminence regarding what he intended to do if given the opportunity to define authority on his own terms.   Nevertheless, care should be given to attenuate these actions with those carried out under Henry because the coherence of Cranmer's reformation must be measured as a whole body.[110] In that light, it becomes important to consider how Cranmer's descriptions of authority changed in the face of changing rulers. Do such changes evidenced in his understanding of the eucharist and his use of scripture undermine those descriptions or merely refine them with necessary guidelines?

The violence of Henry VIII's reign may have proved Cranmer's apparent timidity an effective political strategy, but perhaps the archbishop saw greater purpose to his survival than the mere preservation of his own life. Though Cranmer could not be accurately described as Protestant before 1547, 'the promptness with which the first moves [for reform in Edward VI's reign] were made suggests that they must have been part of a prepared plan.'[111]   If Cranmer moved quickly, however, it was not without caution and consideration for a population he was not certain would accept his changes. In the first year of Edward's reign, only three major changes were made to the order of divine service: a limitation of lights in the sanctuary, an increased portion of English lessons, and a dissolution of processions.[112]

Soon after, Cranmer began to take more definitive steps. He brought Peter Martyr to occupy the Regius chair of Divinity at Oxford and Martin Bucer to occupy that of Cambridge in 1548.[113] That same year Cranmer made a public declaration of his doctrinal position at the Great Parliamentary debate in December when he revealed his new liturgy.[114] The document was largely a translation of the *Sarum Use* with a few minor changes and was likely designed on the basis of a clerical survey facilitated earlier that year.[115]

Though not radical in themselves, they represent Cranmer's first work on eucharistic questions following his self-disclosed conversion. Most scholars attribute his adoption of a predominantly Swiss position to the influence of Ridley[116] who had become Cranmer's chaplain in 1546. Cranmer would eventually frame his questions

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[109] Ibid.
[110] Smyth, p.29.
[111] Loades, D. *The Mid-Tudor Crisis*, p.134.
[112] Blunt,pp.81-84.
[113] Loades, *Mid-Tudor...*, p.139.
[114] Buchanan, C. *What did Cranmer think he was doing?*, p.7.
[115] Ridley, J.G., p.142.
[116] Smyth, p.60. There had been some attempt to credit á Lasco with the change that came over the archbishop, but the claim rests on little more than speculation contrary to Cranmer's own description of it.

in *Answer to a Crafty and Sophistical Cavillation devised by Stephen Gardiner* almost identically to Ridley's *Treatise on the Lord's Supper*.[117] It is possible that Ridley's convictions took a firm hold in Cranmer's mind because they resonated with his own discomfort with the doctrine of transubstantiation, but Cranmer's conversion likely included some examination of the church fathers. As Hook asserted, Cranmer continued to accept transubstantiation until 'he found that it had not always been held in the primitive Church'[118] and only afterwards renounced it.

Liturgical scholar Colin Buchanan hypothesised that Cranmer's position was fully developed prior to his composition of the 1548 liturgy, but that he did not draw up a document completely consonant with his views because his liturgical program 'was designed from the first to be a stepped one.'[119] The most significant part of that first revision for Buchanan was its 'devotional approach to the Lord's supper'[120] intended to prepare the communicant for reception. In 1549, this moment of reception became the dominant climax of the service while consecration fell to lesser importance.[121] In the 1552 edition, Cranmer eliminated objective consecration completely, focusing the whole service upon the moment each person ate and drank.[122]

It is a credit to Cranmer's ability that Gardiner 'declared that he could use [the 1548 liturgy] without violation to his conscience' despite the fact that John Hooper and other leading reformers remained unsatisfied with it.[123] The favour of his enemies and impatience of his allies seems to indicate that Cranmer made a concerted effort not to alienate conservatives through his liturgical change. The similarities in language and the gradual progression towards eating Christ 'by faith' from the 1548 liturgy to the 1552 liturgy seem to indicate an overall plan for implementing a radical set of ideas. His management of the project in such a way that it did not provoke a mutinous response while maintaining the purity of his original idea was nothing short of incredible.

Cranmer's liturgical efforts under Edward VI represent an outworking of the theology developed during the reign of Henry VIII, but the question arises: if Cranmer was in a secure enough position to bring the liturgy into conformity with a Protestant understanding of the eucharist, why did he retain the episcopate when continental reformers had discarded it?

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[117] Ridley, J.G., p.98.
[118] Hook, *Vol.VII*, p.149.
[119] Buchanan, p.8.
[120] Ibid., p.12.
[121] Ibid., p.19.
[122] Ibid., pp.22-23.
[123] Loades, *Mid-Tudor...*, p.140.

Again, Maurice Elliott's dissertation provides indispensable guidance. The 1550 *Ordinal* brought many of the arguments presented in *Questions and Answers* into practice. Elliott argued that despite the affirmation of a threefold *pattern*, the phrase 'these orders' was an intentional attempt to deemphasise the separation of bishops, presbyters, and deacons.[124] He suggested this reflected Cranmer's adoption of the hieronymian idea already noted that bishops differed from presbyters only in degree, not in order.[125] Cranmer's inclination to reduce the distinction between bishop and presbyter was reinforced by the verbs used in the *Ordinal*. While deacons were 'made' or 'ordered' and presbyters were simply 'ordered,' bishops were only 'consecrated.'[126] Furthermore, Paul's admonition to Timothy regarding *bishops*[127] was included in the service for priests.[128] Finally, the absence of the question of whether the bishop would be faithful in ordaining others, added later in the 1661 edition, led Elliott to conclude Cranmer had deliberately excluded it because of his conviction that ordination was not the exclusive privilege of bishops.[129]

It is noteworthy that the stepped reform apparent in Cranmer's work on the eucharist was not apparent in his work on episcopacy. Once the Archbishop was given freedom to act, he adapted the episcopate but did not abolish it. Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers made hierarchical models of ministry untenable for many continental reformers and radicals rejected episcopal forms entirely. It is interesting, however, that Cranmer's model met with the approval of John Calvin. Though the suggestion that Calvin may have wished to develop a similar structure in Geneva[130] seems to go too far, the idea of 'a pseudo-civil service for ecclesiastical affairs'[131] is strikingly familiar to the *Venerable Company of Pastors*.

There are three factors favouring the retention of the episcopate which likely motivated Cranmer. First, the clear division between conservative and progressive factions did not disappear when Edward VI came to power. Retention of the episcopate prevented the alienation of conservatives and preserved at least the possibility of reconciliation with Rome.[132] Second, in instituting reforms which did not always garner popular support, the episcopate proved an invaluable tool of control.[133] From Cranmer's Erastian perspective, rebellion was necessarily anti-

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[124] Elliott, p.144.
[125] Ibid., p.145.
[126] Ibid.
[127] I Timothy 3.
[128] Elliott, p.148.
[129] Ibid., pp.152-153.
[130] Ibid., p.249.
[131] Ibid., p.185.
[132] Ibid., p.216.
[133] Ibid., p.228.

Christian. Thus, the conservative rebels and the Anabaptists bore the brunt of Cranmer's anger not as theological dissidents, but as political ones whose theological errors were evident in the fact of their rebellion. In this, Cranmer offered no better solution to dissent than Luther or Calvin. Third, bishops could serve as a constructive example of a holy life. Cranmer's understanding of oversight included setting an example "in both life and doctrine".[134] The emphasis on holiness among members of the episcopate was connected to a general discipline.[135] Without pious clergy, the church as a body could never hope to demonstrate the gospel effectively. Rather than discard such a valuable office, he sought to put it to good use.

Just as Cranmer's program for reform is best understood by considering the liturgical changes surrounding the Lord's Supper and episcopacy, so his view of scripture is best understood by an examination of his defence of his eucharistic opinions in his *Answer*. The text of scripture, though authoritative, was not raised on an isolated pillar from which the linguist alone had access. Rather, Cranmer surrounded his perceptions of scripture with the opinions of reputable scholars who had written before particular controversies arose:

> let the papists shew some authority for their opinion, either of Scripture, or of some ancient author. And let them not constrain all men to follow their fond devices, only because they say it is so, without any other ground or authority, but their own bare words. For in such wise credit is to be given to God's word only, and not to the word of man.[136]

While Luther demanded that his opponents use scripture alone, and the Anabaptists insisted even more vociferously on the harm caused by allowing other sources to influence faith, Cranmer drew abundantly from the ancient fathers. Nevertheless, he was adamant that scripture occupied a unique place in that its 'bare words' need no other verification.

Much as other reformers, Cranmer gave reason an honoured position in his hermeneutic framework. He pointed out to Gardiner that the resurrection stood up to natural proofs such as eating or being touched, therefore the eucharist ought to as well.[137] He carefully explained, 'not that [natural reason and operation] add any authority to God's word, but that they help our infirmity; as the sacraments do to God's promises'.[138] In this way, Cranmer imbued natural reason, or more precisely reasoning about scripture, with an almost sacramental quality.

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[134] Ibid., p.255.
[135] Ibid., p.232.
[136] Cox, *Archbishop Cranmer on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, p.105.
[137] Ibid., p.252.
[138] Ibid.

Attempting to demonstrate that Christ's words 'this is my body' were spoken figuratively, Cranmer recommended Augustine's method of distinguishing literal texts from figurative ones:

> if the thing which is spoken be to the furtherance of clarity, then it is a proper speech, and no figure, so that if it be a commandment that forbiddeth any evil or wicked act, or commandeth any good or beneficial thing, then it is no figure. But if it command any ill or wicked thing, or forbiddeth anything that is good and beneficial, then it is a figurative speech.[139]

Cranmer did not seem aware of the recursive weakness inherent in this rule. If it ultimately fell to scripture to delineate between good and evil (i.e. *it is good to obey God's commands*), then the passages used to define 'good' or 'evil' would have to be declared 'literal.' To use the concept of goodness to assess whether a text is literal or figurative *and* to treat certain texts as literal in order to determine what is good or evil is plainly circular. Furthermore, most cases of literal/figurative ambiguity did not occur within the framework of good and evil. Therefore, by this rule Cranmer would have no means of demonstrating that Christ commanded Peter to take care of the church rather than give oats to livestock,[140] or more pointedly, the meaning of the word 'is' in relation to the eucharist.[141]

Cranmer claimed to base his arguments on scripture, not his own opinions[142] and obviously included other writers as noted above. His change of opinion so late in life at a time it when may have been dangerous to do so[143] demonstrated an impressive willingness to be guided by the text. Nevertheless, Cranmer was not above inserting words into the mouths of the fathers: 'when the old fathers called the mass or supper of the Lord a sacrifice, they meant that it was a sacrifice of lauds and thanksgiving… or else that it was a remembrance.'[144] Such bald declarations about what the fathers *really* meant offered little to Cranmer's argument, but raise suspicion about his purported abstention from private opinions.

Like Luther, Cranmer distinguished between the 'open church,' sometimes called the church of antichrist, and the 'church of Christ.' While Luther described the 'true church' as composed of individuals contained within the 'visible church,' Cranmer's depiction concerns the action of the church as a body.

> the church is to be followed: but the church of Christ, not of antichrist; the church that concerning the faith containeth itself within God's word… that by the true interpretation of scripture and good example gathereth people unto Christ.[145]

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[139] Ibid., p.115.
[140] John 21:15-17.
[141] As in the disagreement at Marburg. Matthew 26:26.
[142] Cox, *Archbishop Cranmer…,* p.14.
[143] The fact that he kept quiet about it is irrelevant.
[144] Cox, *Archbishop Cranmer…,* p.353.
[145] Ibid., p.378.

Cranmer retained a place for the authority of the church as a body by locating it within God's word. When the church remained within those bounds, it manifested the presence of God by gathering people to Christ through the dual functions of exegesis and positive implementation. It was not the individual who possessed authority, but the church through manifesting the presence of God.

Cranmer caused some consternation at the outset of Edward's reign by petitioning for a renewal of his position as archbishop. It was standard practice for political offices, but did not apply to clergy.[146] By doing so, Cranmer asserted his powers as archbishop derived from the king, not the church, and Gardiner protested this vigorously.[147] The tension between the two men intensified as the bishop of Winchester declared himself opposed to any major changes while Edward was still a minor.[148] Though a reasonable suggestion, it was not in line with the intents of the Protestant party. Gardiner and Bonner were quickly imprisoned and Tunstall, Heath, and Day followed a few years after. Such arrests seem more attributable to the political climate of the council rather than any personal enmity of Cranmer's.

Throughout Edward's reign, 'Cranmer was deliberately refraining from too specific a definition of doctrine, concentrating instead upon public worship'.[149] By delaying formal declarations, Cranmer hoped to draw people to his cause who would have been offended by perceived innovation. This technique did not seem initially effective since it tended to attract criticisms from both sides. Hooper's criticisms have already been noted from the Protestant sector. From the conservative wing came the 'Rebels of Devon.'[150]

Cranmer's response to them was unusually harsh.[151] He began with a formulation familiar to Luther, stating they must be ignorant or deceived and went on to deride them for their apparent treachery.[152] Cranmer found the decree 'whosoever doth not acknowledge himself to be under the obedience of the bishop of Rome, is an heretic'[153] and Royal Supremacy mutually exclusive. While Cranmer held great respect for ancient authors, he had no tolerance for the rebels' request to reinstate ancient traditions.[154] Most important, however, was his commentary on how such traditions had come to be practised:

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[146] Loades, *Mid-Tudor...*, p.134.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid., p.135.
[149] Ibid., p.140.
[150] Following the first use of the new service book in the summer of 1549, the people of Devon forced their priest to say mass in Latin. Their boldness inspired subsequent risings in Cornwall and other nearby towns who banded together and prepared to defend themselves militarily in an attempt to force a return to the *Six Articles*. See Dixon, *Vol.III*, pp.45-57.
[151] Innes, p.129.
[152] Cox, *Archbishop Cranmer...* pp.163-164.
[153] Ibid., p.165.
[154] Ibid., p.176.

> by sedition and murder, by confederacies and persecutions, by raising the son against the father, the children against their mother, and the subjects against their ruler; by deposing of emperors and princes, and murdering of learned men, saints and martyrs.[155]

Again, Cranmer emphasised his conviction that when the institutional church acts contrary to clear commands of scripture it possesses no authority to interpret obscure parts of the text.

Though Cranmer had begun to implement his liturgical program, the council was becoming impatient to provide guidelines for the church courts. Such pressure from politicians disturbed Cranmer since he understood the ecclesiastical authority of the king as properly expressed through the clergy. In the end, the *Forty-Two Articles* were passed 'on the authority of the "bishops and other learned and godly men", but in reality without any proper consultation.'[156] Cranmer was always concerned to take into account the opinions of his fellows and must have felt the parliament moved too quickly. The attempts of the Protestant parliament to solidify their position before Edward died may have created discontent which fuelled the conservative backlash of Mary's reign. If the *Articles* had not been published and the succession not tampered with so spuriously, it is possible that Mary's violent policies would have found less support.

The attempts to circumvent the succession of Mary and pass the throne to Lady Jane Grey were initially opposed by Cranmer, but he 'finally yielded to the entreaties of Edward and the authority of the law officers on the technical point.'[157] When the coup failed, Mary acted as swiftly as the reformers had, applying methods reminiscent of her father, imprisoning leading Protestants until their activities could be made illegal.[158] Innes suggested that Cranmer himself might have escaped a sentence to the Tower in 1554 except for his vehement denials of a rumour that he had re-instituted the Mass.[159]

Cranmer was kept in prison until 1555 when he was examined at Oxford by a panel of bishops. At the outset, Cranmer summarises his position succinctly:

> I will never consent to the bishop of Rome; for then I should give myself to the devil: for I have made an oath to the king, and I must obey the king by God's laws…. Christ biddeth us to obey the king, *etiam dyscolo* [δυσκολω]: the bishop of Rome biddeth us to obey him. Therefore, unless he be antichrist, I cannot tell what to make of him. Wherefore if I should obey him, I cannot obey Christ.[160]

Through this statement, Cranmer manifested a puzzling paradox of his thinking. The archbishop had never been forced to consider the implications of

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[155] Ibid., p.178.
[156] Loades, *Mid-Tudor...*, p.144.
[157] Innes, p.144.
[158] Loades, *Mid-Tudor...*, p.146.
[159] Innes, p.145.
[160] Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings…*, p.213.

living under a heretical ruler who demanded heresy from her subjects. He understood scripture as demanding obedience to his sovereign. His sovereign demanded that he obey the pope. The pope, in his understanding, demanded that he disobey scripture. Clebsch suggested Cranmer escaped the paradox by asserting that spiritual authority was so fundamental 'that the monarch who bore it might not, in [his] view, relinquish it!'[161] He seems to misconstrue the point however. A more likely explanation is that when Cranmer came down to it, he trusted scripture above all and could not bear the thought of granting allegiance to those who obviously abused it.

During the course of the examination, two charges were laid before Cranmer by Doctor Martin which require comment here. Cranmer did not respond directly to either charge because the remainder of the interrogation focused on his allegedly irregular teachings on the eucharist. The first charge was that

> you bring in God's word, that you have it on your side, and no man else, and that the pope hath devised a new Scripture, contrary to the Scriptures of God…. So Nestorius, so Macedonius, so Pelagius, and, briefly, all the heretics that ever were, pretended that they had God's word for them; yea, and so the devil, being the father of heresies, alleged God's word for him…[162]

Even the accusations levelled against Cranmer were reminiscent of Luther. The case here seems weaker, however, since Cranmer was so careful to take into account the opinions of others. It would be difficult to find an instance where Cranmer made a definitive declaration without seeking out, 'the most learned men' he could find. Furthermore, he claimed support in the writings of the church fathers from the very men who had condemned early heretics.

The second charge was more serious given Cranmer's understanding of the pure church as the rightful interpreter of scripture. He was told his gospel began with perjury, 'proceeded with adultery, was maintained with heresy, and ended in conspiracy.'[163] Though polemical, the narrative was technically correct, and suggests that the reform Cranmer took part in was guilty of producing 'bad fruit.' By his own model, that would invalidate his party's authority. The argument, however, takes the form of an *ad hominem*. Cranmer's examiners confuse the unsavoury character of the English government with the fruits of reformation teaching. Cranmer had been assured at each stage of the process that his actions were legal. To hold him responsible for more requires using an outside standard which ceased to exist as soon as the Royal Supremacy was promulgated. In this sense, Cranmer is less guilty of immorality than of unreflective obedience to the law.

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[161] Clebsch, p.274.
[162] Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings…,* p.217.
[163] Ibid.

Though hailed as Josiah come to purge the church of her idols, Edward VI never functioned as 'supreme Head' for Cranmer with the dominance of his father. In light of his age, parliament assumed many of the responsibilities concerning the operation of the church. This created a tension for Cranmer because he did not seem to regard a body of politicians as an extension of supremacy. If the king was too young or incapacitated, the responsibility seemed to obviously fall to himself and a body of clergy.

In the case of Edward's succession, Cranmer 'acted as a man who cannot rely on his own judgement when he stands alone.'[164] This was the weakness which prevented Cranmer from intervening in the affairs of state, yet in regard to authority in the church, it was his greatest strength. Cranmer's ability to hold conflicting doctrines in tension and make subtle changes over the course of time enabled him to create liturgical forms which would outlast him by several centuries. He was able to preserve the ambiguity of doctrine which scripture did not make explicit, requiring in his hermeneutics an act of reception not unlike that of his liturgy except that while participation in the eucharist was the domain of the individual, Cranmer suggested the scriptures resided within the domain of the church.

Cranmer's retention of the episcopate during the reign of Edward VI demonstrated a combination of pragmatism and tolerance concerning non-essentials. His separation of episcopal functions in terms of ecclesial and civic responsibilities permitted the retention of an administrative system able to effectively implement a program of clerical discipline. It must be acknowledged that Cranmer used bishops not only to obtain a consensus of opinion, but also to quash dissidents. Nevertheless, his careful treatment of episcopacy demonstrated a concern to accommodate divergent views while avoiding assertions beyond those explicit in scripture. That Cranmer demanded no less holiness of his bishops than continental reformers did of their ministers presented a vision of an episcopal structure consonant with the call for continual, if gradual, reformation.

In the early part of his career, Cranmer did not reject the idea of primacy, merely transferred it. Under Mary, he was forced to reappraise his understanding of authority. Faced with the 'ungodly prince,' he concluded that the content of scripture apart from supremacy superseded that singular command to political obedience. Royal Supremacy was, for Cranmer, ultimately antipapal.

Whereas Calvin's *Institutes* merely functioned as a surrogate form of Protestant consensus, Cranmer worked to bring together a complete and authoritative council. It is regrettable that the archbishop demonstrated no plans to include Catholics from the continent, but such plans would obviously have been impossible

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[164] Innes, p.165.

since the political situation and the absence of Melanchthon prevented even the most meagre of gatherings. Nevertheless, his efforts in this area represent the most concerted attempt by a Protestant at establishing an authoritative community without demanding that his own authority as a scholar take preeminence.

CHAPTER 6:   AUTHORITY AT THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

6.1   OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

The *Roman Catholic church* faced a crisis of authority in the early sixteenth century. The office of the pope still suffered the effects of the Great Papal Schism and the conciliar movement.[1] Religious leaders were widely criticised for their worldliness[2] and those bishops who were interested in reform did not possess sufficient power to enforce obedience among the clergy.[3] Furthermore, the rebellion stemming from Luther's conflict with the church seemed to be spreading. In light of this crisis, the Council of Trent was heralded by many as the solution to the church's most pressing problems: the schism which divided the western Christian world and the widespread moral failure of the clergy.[4]

The massive work of reform took place over eighteen years (1545-1563) under five different popes. Its twenty-five sessions were divided into three periods separated by lengthy suspensions of the proceedings. The first period (1545-1547) spanned sessions one through twelve in which the council issued decrees concerning the canon of scripture, original sin, justification, the sacraments, and reformation. Sessions nine through twelve took place in Bologna rather than Trent. The second period (1551-1552) included sessions thirteen through sixteen in which the council issued decrees concerning the eucharist, penance, extreme unction, and reformation. This period was notable for the dual promises of safe-passage issued for Protestant representatives, the first in session thirteen and the second in session fifteen. The third period (1562-1563) included sessions seventeen through twenty-five in which the council issued decrees concerning choice of books, communion under both species, the sacrifice of the mass, orders, matrimony, purgatory, veneration of saints, regulars and nuns, indulgences, mortification, holy days, and reformation.

The council's work cannot be fully understood without some consideration of the attempts which preceded it. The concept of reform had been discussed at the Councils of Lyons (1274), Vienne (1311-1312), Constance (1414-1418), Pavia-Sienna (1423-1424), and Basle (1431-1449).[5] Even as Luther struggled through his own spiritual turmoil, bishops met at the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517)[6] to address the abuses which plagued the church. Since the council could not enforce its

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[1] Janelle, P. *The Catholic Reformation*, p.4.
[2] Lindberg, C. *The European Reformations*, p.54.
[3] Janelle, p.4.
[4] Hsia, R.P-C. *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540-1770*, p.12.
[5] Cameron, E. *The European Reformation*, p.39.
[6] Joncas, J.M. *Catholic Church Structures c. 1500 - 1600 CE: Ecumenical Councils*, p.1.

decisions,[7] the most significant efforts prior to the Council of Trent were initiated by individuals. The work of Girolamo Savonarola (d.1498), Giles of Viterbo, and Francisco Ximénes de Cisneros towards ethical reform exemplified a focus quite separate from Luther's proposals for theological reform.[8]

The Council of Trent was only one facet of the Catholic programme of reform, but it stands out as the central arena in which the conflicting claims for authority converged. Considering the long history of concern for reform, it is astonishing that the Council of Trent was not convoked until twenty-five years[9] after Luther's excommunication. Thus in examining the years leading up to Trent, two questions must be posed. First, why was the interim between Luther's excommunication and the convocation of the council so long? Second, how did this delay affect perceptions of the council?

Despite the impression given by Protestant reformers that holding an ecumenical council was simply a matter of issuing a summons, there were serious impediments to be overcome before a council could be convened. Emperor Charles V saw a council as the only way to reunite a fracturing Germany.[10] King Francis I opposed it because he feared it would strengthen Charles V's position.[11] King Henry VIII seemed less and less inclined to return to Rome. In addition, the pope faced internal concerns which required careful management. Reforms which were too stringent would mean a significant loss of revenue since in 1521 the sale of offices accounted for nearly one-sixth of papal income.[12] Once convened, a council might be usurped by the Lutheran 'heretics' or the conciliar party.[13] It was thought such a loss of control might exacerbate the damage already caused by the reformers to the prestige of the church.

Though Pope Clement VII was known for his policy of delaying reform,[14] he called an ecumenical council in 1532, but died in 1534 without ever convening it.[15] Paul III was consecrated pope on the condition that he would convene the aforementioned council, but he faced the growing popularity of the Lutheran formula of a 'general, free, Christian council in German lands.'[16] This formula illustrated the fundamental difference between the Roman Catholic and Lutheran understanding of

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[7] Cesareo, F.C. *Padre et Pastor Vostro: Girolamo Seripando and the Restoration of the Episcopate in Salerno*, p.1.
[8] Lindberg, p.336.
[9] Hughes, P. *The General Council of Trent, 1545-63*, p.1.
[10] O'Connell, M.R. *The Counter Reformation 1559-1610* , p.87.
[11] Rogers, J. *The Council of Trent*, p.1.
[12] Lunt, W.E. *Papal Revenues in the Middle Ages,* p.136.
[13] Pastor, L. *History of the Popes Vol.X*, p.386.
[14] Jedin, H. 'Origin and Breakthrough of the Catholic Reform' in H. Jedin and J. Dolan (eds.), (A. Biggs and P.W. Becker, trans.), *History of the Church Vol.V: Reformation and Counter Reformation* (Burns and Oates, 1980), p.462.
[15] Lindberg, p.339.
[16] O'Connell, M.R., p.87.

a council. Paul III intended to convene a gathering of bishops under his own authority which would articulate Christian faith and recommend necessary reforms in accordance with what he perceived to be the long history of the church as preserved in scripture and inherited tradition. The prevailing Protestant notion of a council was a body which: included both lay members and ministers, made decisions based mainly on the text of scripture, and functioned outside the authority of the pope.

Paul III demonstrated his commitment to reform by elevating leading reformers Fisher, Contarini, Sadoleto, Carafa, Pole, Morone, Cervini, and du Bellay to cardinals.[17] In 1537, he commissioned the *Consilium de Emendenda Ecclesia* to examine the charges widely laid against the church. The *Consilium* published a report that was so frankly critical the Lutherans reprinted it as propaganda.[18] In addition, Paul III made a partial concession to German demands by summoning a general council to meet at Mantua, an independent city near the Alpine passes of Germany, in 1537.[19] This attempt soon faltered when the Schmalkaldic League declined, Francis I declared the location unacceptable, and the Duke of Mantua demanded a large contingent of papal troops.[20] The pope adjourned the council to Vicenza, but in 1538, only a handful of Italian bishops were present.[21] Without sufficient numbers, the council was postponed indefinitely.

The Colloquy at Ratisbon[22] in 1541 held out a tantalising prospect of dialogue. The participants included the Genevan reformer, John Calvin; Luther's moderate assistant, Philip Melanchthon; Martin Bucer, who had worked for agreement between Luther and Zwingli; Dean Johannes Gropper, known for his work on clerical duties; Bishop Julius von Pflug, the diplomatic theologian;[23] and Cardinal Gaspar Contarini. These reformers represented a broad range of theological perspectives and were all committed to reform.[24] Gropper's compromise proposal of 'double justification' was accepted by those present but rejected by both Luther and the papacy, demonstrating their resistance to any forms of conciliation. The failure to reach agreement on a doctrine of the eucharist resulted in the gathering's dissolution before the delegates had a chance to discuss the role of the papacy.[25]

Two major factions emerged among the Catholic reformers relative to the Protestant schism. The liberals, led by Contarini, hoped to bring the estranged Lutherans back to the church and were willing to make concessions in order to

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[17] Searle, G.W. *The Counter Reformation*, p.73.
[18] Searle, p.74.
[19] Elton, G.R. *Reformation Europe 1517-1559*, p.163.
[20] Jedin, *Origin…,* p.*465.*
[21] Elton, *Reformation Europe,* p.164.
[22] Regensburg
[23] He was unanimously elected bishop of Naumburg, but Elector John Frederick ordered Luther to ordain Nicholas von Amsdorf instead. *Catholic Encyclopedia: Julius Von Pflug.*
[24] Searle, p.76.
[25] Ibid., p.77.

achieve this goal.[26] This was due in part to the influence of Augustine's view of justification. The conservative faction, led by Gian Pietro Carafa, opposed the council in favour of a magisterial reform founded on strict adherence to canon law.[27] Contarini's death in 1542 allowed Carafa's party to gain ascendance and dominate the reform efforts of the mid-sixteenth century. The resultant creation of the Roman Inquisition[28] gave Carafa unprecedented power as chief inquisitor, which he used to rid Italy of Protestant sympathisers. He declared, 'no man is to lower himself by showing toleration towards any sort of heretic, least of all a Calvinist'[29] and 'even if my own father were a heretic I would gather wood to burn him.'[30]

Thus, in the years leading up to the Council of Trent, the Roman hierarchy faced the combined difficulties of military conflicts between European rulers, concern that a council influenced by 'heretics' or secular rulers might damage the church, and disagreements among the leading clergy regarding the nature of reform. The council did not take place for nearly a quarter century after Luther's excommunication because given those conditions it was simply not possible to convene one. Low attendance at Vicenza and even throughout the first period of the Council of Trent demonstrated a general lack of enthusiasm among the bishops for conciliar reform. The council's delay damaged Catholic-Protestant relations by reinforcing the Protestant perception that the papacy was not interested in reform.

6.2   SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

The Council of Trent described authority as proceeding from three sources, scripture, tradition, and the pope. The first two were defined in April 1546 and served as the basis for the decrees which followed. The third source was more complicated since it entailed an assertion about episcopal authority and was affirmed implicitly rather than explicitly. It is important therefore to consider how the council described these sources of authority and how the three related to one another.

The Council of Trent made four assertions about the authority of scripture. First, everything in the canon possessed equal authority. Second, canonical authority was derived from the church. Third, interpretation was properly governed by the church. Fourth, scripture agreed with tradition but was not necessary to establish doctrine or practice.

The council's understanding of scripture was most clearly described in the *Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures.* It stated:

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[26] Ibid., p.75.
[27] Ibid., p.76.
[28] Carafa convinced Paul III to support his plan to model it after the one already extant in Spain.
[29] Searle, p.78.
[30] Ibid.

> [the council] receives and venerates with equal affection of piety and reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament, - seeing that one God is the author of both, as also the said traditions, as well as those appertaining to faith and morals, as having been dictated, either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in continuous succession in the Catholic Church.[31]

> if any one receive not, as sacred and canonical, these same books entire... and knowingly and deliberately despise the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema.[32]

Scripture contained the gospel passed on from Christ, to the apostles, to the fathers, through writing dictated by the Holy Spirit.[33]   The council's view of inspiration did not require a return to Greek or Hebrew because the Vulgate was 'believed to be inspired by God.'[34] The council seemed to admit the possibility of errors by adding the clause that the text was inspired 'in all the sentiments, but not in all the words.'[35] The determination that Old and New Testaments should be received equally differed markedly from Luther's idea of the 'Word of God' as contained within but not coextensive with scripture. The council refused to treat one book or theme of scripture as more authoritative than another.

The inclusion of six apocryphal books in the canon[36] was an additional differentiation from the Protestant understanding of scripture but does not seem to have been directly relevant to the schism. Though Protestants objected fiercely to this inclusion, apocryphal books had not been used to challenge Protestant teachings. A contemporary Lutheran, Martin Chemnitz, declared that the church had no power 'to decide anything concerning the sacred writings for which she cannot produce reliable documents from the testimony of the primitive church.'[37] This critique missed the point that the council had no need to support its declarations with anything because it possessed the same authority as the church fathers who accepted scripture in the first place. Furthermore, by declaring those who refused to accept the wider canon 'anathema,'[38] the fathers at Trent affirmed the authority of a council to denote the requirements of membership in the Christian community.

The restriction of interpretation embodied the council's initial measures against Protestants. The decree stated 'no one is to dare, or presume to reject [the Vulgate] under any pretext soever [sic]'[39] and articulated two reasons for doing so. First, the Vulgate was the text 'which, by long usage of so many ages, has been

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[31] Buckley, T.A. *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (henceforth, CD), p.18.
[32] CD, p.19.
[33] CD, p.18.
[34] Liguori, A.M. *An Exposition and Defence of All the Points of Faith Discussed and Defined by the Council of Trent*, p.39.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Flanagan, P. *Major Church Pronouncements on the Bible,* p.1.
[37] Chemnitz, M. *Examination of the Council of Trent Part I*, p.177.
[38] CD, p.19
[39] Ibid.

approved in the Church.'[40] The council apprehended the risk of losing meaning in translation, but failed to consider the possibility that such dissipation might have occurred in the time of Jerome. The reference to 'long usage' illustrated an essential difference between Catholic and Protestant methods of textual criticism. While Protestants viewed texts as true in an abstract sense which dictated that they seek and expound the earliest available texts, Catholic theologians granted authority to a text that had proved worthwhile over an extended period of time. The second reason the council declared the Vulgate the only authentic text was to maintain a monopoly on the exposition of the word of God. It seemed to the bishops that common disputes spoiled the sense of reverence with which scripture should be approached.[41] The council wished to 'restrain petulant spirits'[42] and 'repress that temerity by which the words and sentences of sacred scripture are turned and twisted to all manner of profane uses.'[43] Faced with superstitious, irreverent, and ignorant use of scripture, the council decided it was better to restrict its private use, even though that would prevent some lay people from using it piously.

The final important consideration is the council's use of scripture in supporting its decrees. The council made frequent references to scripture, but did not always do so with a rigorous hermeneutic. In its articulation of the sacraments, it consistently refused metaphorical interpretation as in the first canon touching baptism[44] and the first chapter touching the eucharist.[45] It claimed the sacrament of penance was established by Christ with the words 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins ye shall remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained.'[46] Thus, a passage which referred only to the limited concept of absolution was taken as evidence for a specific doctrine of sacramental penance. Furthermore, no mention was made of Luther's alternative translation of $\mu\varepsilon\tau\alpha\nu o\varepsilon\iota$ as 'repent' rather than 'do penance.' The council's literalism and failure to address the linguistic criticisms of the Protestant reformers suggested that the consensus of bishops was more important to the council than hermeneutics.

The Council of Trent affirmed three things concerning the authority of tradition. Tradition, though different from scripture, possessed the same authority. It represented the continuous work of the Holy Spirit from the time of the apostles to the present. Finally, once established, it was irrevocable.

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Mathias, B.W. *Compendious History of the Council of Trent,* p.28.
[42] CD, p.19.
[43] CD, p.20.
[44] CD, p.53.
[45] CD, pp.71-72.
[46] CD, p.87.

The affirmation of 'unwritten traditions' as part of the teachings 'received from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the apostles themselves'[47] made the council's position on their authority clear. Nevertheless, the formulation of the decree is interesting because it maintained the separation of scripture and tradition but made no mention of the possibility of disagreement between the two. Both sources of authority were to be 'received' and 'venerated' but tradition appeared almost as an afterthought. The principle violation regarding scripture was to not 'receive' it while the principle violation regarding tradition was to 'knowingly and deliberately despise' it.[48] Though the separate verbs suggest that the council commended a different response to tradition than scripture, the council did not acknowledge the possibility of their conflict.

The authority of tradition fulfilled three important functions for the church. First, it established the canon so that the church knew what to accept as scripture.[49] Second, it aided the church in determining the 'true sense' of biblical passages which establish important dogmas such as the Trinity, Mary's 'divine maternity,' and original sin.[50] Third, tradition was the only source for such dogmas as Mary's perpetual virginity and the validity of infant baptism.[51] It is noteworthy that many Protestants accepted these doctrines without acknowledging that they were based on the authority of tradition.

Though the council did not articulate rules by which the church determined the validity of traditions, those compiled by eighteenth century saint, Alphonsus Liguori, were likely similar to those applied. Liguori claimed a tradition was not divine if it originated in a certain father's opinion or a council,[52] if it was found only in a particular church, or if it was contrary to common opinion.[53] A tradition could be considered of divine origin if it was a dogma or practice observed by the whole church which could only have been instituted by God, or if it was a dogma or practice observed by the church historically which cannot be attributed to a council.[54] Thus, the validity of tradition was determined by usage, either geographically or chronologically. Nevertheless, during the council these rules were assumed rather than defined.

The council's failure to articulate such rules seems to indicate a desire to make pragmatic use of the ambiguity. Besides preventing a potentially embarrassing deadlock in the council, a vague definition allowed the fathers to define the

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[47] CD, p.18.
[48] CD, p.19.
[49] Liguori, p.48.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., pp.48-49.
[52] Ibid., p.51.
[53] Ibid., p.52.
[54] Ibid., pp.53-54.

sacraments from a general source rather than a specific one. Chemnitz criticised the council for precisely this reason, calling the decree 'a Pandora's box, under whose cover every kind of corruption, abuse, and superstition has been brought into the church.'[55] His critical analysis described eight different types of tradition but made one overarching distinction: traditions which can be demonstrated by scripture and those which cannot. Though he rightly criticised the ambiguity of the decree, he offered little to the discussion except the assertion that scripture was the authority by which tradition should be judged. The main objective of the council in making note of tradition in conjunction with scripture seems to have been directed towards this kind of assertion, making certain that scripture could not be used to repudiate decrees based on historic practice.[56]

The concept of tradition as an expression of the Holy Spirit's guidance was important in the development of the council's decrees. 'No council has ever insisted so explicitly, so repeatedly, and so forcefully on the continuity of the present with the apostolic past as did Trent.'[57] As the Spirit led the apostles into all truth, so it did for the council. Even the quip that the Holy Spirit would have to be sent for from Rome[58] revealed an understanding of the Holy Spirit as an active participant at the council. To deny the authority of tradition was to deny the activity of the Holy Spirit in guiding the history of the church.[59]

The understanding of tradition as irrevocable was applied even to the council's own decrees. Bishops were reminded by Cardinal del Monte and Cardinal Pacecco that 'it was the practice of the Church not to call in question definitions already made.'[60] Public disagreement with the council was strongly discouraged because it would damage perceptions of the church.[61] In 1563, the legates defended papal authority by referring to the immutability of the Council of Florence.[62] The notion of irrevocability came up again regarding the issue of clerical marriage. Some fathers tried to delay any decrees on the subject in the hope that granting the point might bring the Germans back into fellowship.[63] A legate declared that if Melanchthon's company did not arrive on time, the decrees would be passed and 'that work once done was done for ever, and could not be recalled.'[64] The council

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[55] Chemnitz, p.219.
[56] Moffat, J. *The Thrill of Tradition*, p.89.
[57] O'Malley, J.W. *Trent and All That,* p.122.
[58] Daniel-Rops, H. *The Catholic Reformation*, p.80. Froude, J.A. *Lectures on the Council of Trent*, p.173. Neither name the particular father who made this comment.
[59] Congar, Y. *Tradition and Traditions*, p.170.
[60] Liguori, p.20.
[61] Mathias, p.23.
[62] MacCaffrey, J. *History of the Catholic Church From the Renaissance to the French Revolution Vol.I*, p.196.
[63] Froude, J.A. *Lectures on the Council of Trent*, p.267.
[64] Ibid., p.268.

took the prohibition on questioning established doctrines so seriously that even doctrines established the day before could not be reconsidered.

The Council of Trent strove towards uniformity in its understanding of tradition, an effort supported by the strict enforcement of the principle that a doctrine once established might be embellished, but never rescinded. This principle created tension in regard to questionable decrees of past councils but was most dangerous when it nullified the council's ability to revise its own decisions. Tradition was the open-ended source from which the church justified its decrees on doctrines and practices which were not included in the textual canon.

The final source of authority dealt with in the council proved the most controversial and most significant in terms of its effect on the shape of the church.[65] Discussion of episcopal authority was necessary since bishops were expected to implement the decrees of the council but difficult because it was inextricably linked to theories of papal authority on which council members were divided. Some bishops felt their position was undermined by papal dispensations that permitted the laxity of their non-resident colleagues and hampered the regulation of their own diocese. They described episcopal authority in terms of a direct mandate from God and believed the council possessed authority because it represented the universal Church. A second group of bishops viewed the council in different terms. Within the context of the chaotic political climate of Europe and several failed attempts at reform, many believed a strong papacy was the only vehicle capable of enacting the necessary reforms. These fathers rejected any proposals which provided a way for bishops to subvert papal prerogatives. Thus, the two groups may be referred to as episcopal and papal parties respectively. The conflict between them came into clearest focus in the council's understanding of itself and its understanding of episcopacy regarding residence and ordination.

From the very first session, members exhibited differing understandings of their collective identity as a council. The opening sermon of the first session by Cornelius de Muis took a high view concerning the authority of councils. He broadly claimed they were responsible for 'heresies… extirpated, manners reformed, nations re-united, schisms extinguished, crusades decreed, and *even kings deposed*,'[66] but de Muis' opinion was not shared by everyone.

A group of French bishops comprised the extreme form of the episcopal party. They attempted to extend the authority of the council by adding the phrase *universalem ecclesiam reproesentans*[67] to its title. This proposal was repressed by

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[65] Janelle, p.71.
[66] Mathias, p.14.
[67] 'representing the universal church' *Catholic Encyclopedia: Council of Trent,* section II.

the legates because Pope Paul III wanted to avoid assertions like those put forward at the councils of Constance and Basle that the pope was subject to conciliar decrees.[68] When the proposed amendment to the title was discussed again in a general congregation in January 1546, the words *oecumenica et generalis*[69] were finally included in lieu of the representing clause.[70]

The extreme form of the papal party was embodied by Cardinal Carafa. When he was appointed Pope Paul IV (1555), he put an end to what he considered the tedious and unproductive debate of the council in order to conduct reform and combat heresy through the sole exercise of his apostolic authority.[71] He convoked a token papal council in 1556 to appease those who still demanded a council, but its role was purely advisory.[72]

Shortly before the third session (February 1546), the fathers debated about how the council should proceed. The council secretary, Angelo Massarelli, recorded four divergent opinions. Some wished to begin with doctrine and make a firm case against heretics. Some wished to begin with the reformation of the church in the ethical sense which characterised other areas of the Catholic reformation. The third faction sought to make peace with the estranged Germans and the final faction wished to address issues of doctrine and reform simultaneously.[73] In the end, the majority favoured compromise and so the council divided its efforts between extirpating heresy and reforming manners.[74] Since Paul III attempted to steer the council towards doctrinal definitions, it seems likely that the majority of those wishing to begin with reform and all of those who favoured a Protestant settlement were from the episcopal party. The legates were informed of the pope's 'strong displeasure at their allowing reformation to be introduced.'[75] Their failure was a strong indicator that despite disagreements among the bishops about particulars, 'reformation was desired by all.'[76]

One of the few areas of faith the council did not articulate clearly was its understanding of the term 'church.' There was a proposal to do so by a Franciscan named Vincentius Lunellus in the discussions prior to the fourth session (April 1546). He argued from Augustine that a doctrine of the church should be treated before scripture or tradition since both derived their authority from the church.[77] This suggestion was dismissed because 'church' was widely understood to mean 'the

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[68] Mathias, p.16.
[69] 'ecumenical and general' *Catholic Encyclopedia: Council of Trent,* section II.
[70] Mendham, J. *Memoirs of the Council of Tren*p.41.
[71] Jedin, H. *Crisis and Closure of the Council of Trent*, p.12.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., p.43.
[74] CD, p.16.
[75] Mathias, p.19.
[76] Mendham, p.41.
[77] Mathias, p.23.

ecclesiastical order… or, to speak more properly, a council and the pope who is its head.'[78] In 1563, a similar decision was taken not to make a decree concerning the supreme authority of the pope since it was implied by the council's proceedings.[79]

The failure of the council to produce a comprehensive definition of the church preserved an assertion of magisterial power within an ambiguous understanding of the church. This ambiguity permitted the episcopal and papal parties to hold opposing views without hampering the progress of the council. On two issues, however, the conflict between episcopal and papal schemas became necessarily explicit. The first was that of residence and the second that of ordination.

Bishops who lived outside their see had long been acknowledged as a major problem. Both the Fifth Lateran Council and the *Consilium de Emendenda Ecclesia* had remarked on its prevalence, but without any substantial effect.[80] The sixth session required residency and stipulated a serious loss of income[81] for violators.[82] This decree was not enforced,[83] so the issue was raised again in session eighteen (February 1562).[84] The episcopal party viewed residency as the fundamental impediment to reform[85] and sought to solve the problem by declaring it *iure divino*[86] which would prevent bishops from avoiding the regulation with papal dispensations. The papal party opposed the discussion of residency,[87] since it considered *ius divinum*[88] an infringement of the pope's authority[89] which might be used by the Protestants to attack the curia.[90]

After considerable debate, the legates decided to put the question of residence to a vote.[91] Sixty-seven voted for declaring residence a divine command and thus out of the pope's hands, thirty-five voted against it, and thirty-four wished to leave the question open until they could procure the pope's opinion.[92] On the instruction of Pope Pius IV, the legates included residence in the articles for the following session.[93] They excused their omission of the decree on residence from the current session with the claim that the issue had not been 'sufficiently decided,' but some

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[78] Ibid., p.24.
[79] MacCaffrey, p.196.
[80] Cesareo, p.1.
[81] A six month absence resulted in a loss of one quarter of the year's income. Jedin, *Origin…,* p.472.
[82] CD, p.48.
[83] Cesareo suggested *could not* be enforced., p.2.
[84] Hsia, p.19.
[85] Ibid., p.20.
[86] 'a divine law'
[87] Hsia, p.20.
[88] the clause asserting residency was required by 'divine law'
[89] Jedin, *Crisis…,* p.49.
[90] Pastor, *XV*, p.273.
[91] Jedin, *Crisis…,* p.50.
[92] There is a slight discrepancy with Ludwig von Pastor's account which records sixty-seven affirmative, thirty-three negative, and thirty-eight conditional responses on the basis of Seripando's notes and B.W. Mathias' account which cites sixty-six, thirty-three, thirty respectively. Pastor, *XV*, p.273. Mathias, p.239.
[93] Mathias, p.240.

bishops suspected that the legates were stalling in order to prevent a decision from ever being reached.[94]

The *ius divinum* of the episcopate was finally discussed following the twenty-second session (September 1562) in relation to the sacrament of orders.[95] The episcopal party argued that a bishop's power to ordain came directly from Christ.[96] The papal party claimed such a formulation detracted from papal authority because episcopal authority derived from the pope's status as vicar of Christ.[97] The arrival of the French bishops under the leadership of fiercely episcopal Cardinal Guise compounded the discussion even further.[98]

A new proposal regarding residence was presented in December with a compromise phrase, 'divine and human law,' but was rejected because the sanctions it proscribed were too harsh.[99] Guise composed a counter-proposal which avoided the words 'divine law' in favour of 'divine commandment,' but Cardinal Simonetta's rejection of this formula caused the legates to withdraw it before being discussed by the general congregation.[100] The final formulation, orchestrated by Cardinal Morone, described the 'divine precept'[101] to minister to one's own flock, but did not mention the basis upon which the duty of residence was founded.[102] The episcopal party was satisfied by the concession to include cardinals in the decree.[103]

6.3   EXPRESSIONS OF AUTHORITY

In addition to the canons and decrees which it produced, the council expressed its understanding of authority in the way it responded to three groups which attempted to exert influence over the proceedings. These included the Protestant reformers, the secular rulers, and those within the council who dissented from the majority opinion. What kept Protestants from make a significant contribution to the discussion? Did the secular rulers help or hinder the work of reform? Finally, how did the council respond to dissent?

As noted, the council summoned at Trent bore little resemblance to the council proposed by leading Lutheran reformers. The fathers had no intention of restricting themselves to scripture and papal legates presided over the discussions. The earliest decrees challenged the two fundamental Protestant positions: scripture as

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[94] Ibid., p.241.
[95] Jedin, *Crisis…*, p.80.
[96] Hsia, p.20.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., p.21.
[99] Jedin, *Crisis…*, p.88.
[100] Ibid., p.95.
[101] CD, p.161. H. Jedin traslated this word 'commandment' *Crisis…*, p.113.
[102] CD, p.161
[103] Jedin, *Crisis…*, p.113.

sole authority[104] and justification by faith.[105] Thus, by January 1547,[106] most Protestants had been declared anathema by two separate decrees. The council continued this pattern by issuing a decree concerning the sacraments in March,[107] and transferring to Bologna shortly afterwards,[108] rescinding the one major concession the Protestants had gained.

When Charles V begged the Lutheran princes to join the council at the Diet of Augsburg in August 1547, they responded that they would gladly do so if their conditions were met.[109] These were: that pope exerted no control, even through legates; that bishops were released from their oath of obedience; that Protestant theologians were permitted to vote; and that previous decrees were re-examined.[110] The secular princes who remained loyal to Rome requested that the council continue.[111] They suggested that the fathers should grant the Protestants a safe conduct, to attend and defend their position, in return for agreement that everyone would abide by the decisions of the council.[112] Before any further action could be taken, the council was suspended. It did not reconvene until 1551, when Pope Julius III brought it back to the city of Trent.

The council considered the Protestant demands 'extravagant,'[113] but issued a safe-conduct to German Protestants in October 1551.[114] The Protestants rejected this initial document because it did not provide adequately for their safety.[115] Their fears were not completely without warrant. The imperial councillors had suggested to Julius III in 1550 that 'the same artifice should be used for entrapping Protestants as was adopted by hunters to secure the object of their pursuit, - seeming to yield in order to inveigle the intended victim into the snare.'[116] The decree issued in conjunction with the safe-conduct, which affirmed the 'real presence' in the eucharist, added to the Lutherans' suspicions. They were well aware that the Council of Constance had decreed that 'faith need not be kept with heretics'[117] and it was thought that the council might readily ignore promises to those it had already declared anathema. Therefore, the carefully worded safe-conduct was viewed as a ruse and served to amplify rather than assuage the atmosphere of distrust.

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[104] CD, pp.18-19
[105] CD, pp.29-46.
[106] The date of the sixth session which issued the decree on justification.
[107] CD, p.51.
[108] CD, p.63.
[109] Mendham, p.127.
[110] Mathias, p.132.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] MacCaffrey, p.189.
[114] CD, pp.70, 85-86.
[115] Froude, pp.270-271.
[116] Mendham, p.138.
[117] Froude, pp.269-270.

While the Protestants debated, the council continued its business, issuing decrees on penance and extreme unction.[118] Discussion of the sacrifice of the mass had been delayed in the hope that Protestants would arrive and was prorogued in January 1552 until March 1552.[119] The language used in the decree implied a growing frustration with those 'to whom it had given the public faith, or a safe-conduct, that they might come freely and without hesitation.'[120] The council expressed its wish 'to remove… all dissensions and schisms touching religion' and its readiness 'to receive them kindly and listen to them with good-will.'[121] Such sentiments were spoiled, however, by the phrases that followed. The council expected the Protestants to come 'with the design… of learning the truth, and that they will at last… acquiesce in the decrees and discipline of holy Mother Church.'[122] The safe-conduct which followed defined the terms of safety more explicitly, declaring that the council would not use 'any authority, power, right, or statute, privilege of laws or canons, or of any councils soever [sic], especially those of Constance and Sienna'[123] to subvert its promises.

The Protestant ambassadors disdained this second safe-conduct because it did not accommodate their demands regarding 'the manner of proceeding.'[124] Nevertheless, six Protestant theologians came to Trent in March 1552[125] but did not participate in any theological discussions in hopes of securing their earlier demands.[126] When war erupted in Germany, driving Charles V from Innsbruck[127] and endangering the city of Trent, the council moved for a two-year suspension in April 1552.[128] R. Po-Chia Hsia has called this the 'definitive break' between Catholicism and Protestantism.[129]

In the interim between the second and third periods, Rome's relationship with Protestant reformers continued to deteriorate. Julius III sought to broker peace between Henry II and Charles V[130] but accomplished nothing.[131] England returned to Rome under Queen Mary without help from Julius III and executed nearly three hundred people for heresy.[132] Paul IV hunted out Protestant sympathisers in a 'reign

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[118] CD, p.86.
[119] CD, pp.112-113.
[120] CD, p.113.
[121] CD, p.113.
[122] CD, p.113.
[123] CD, p.116.
[124] Mathias, p.205.
[125] Two were from Strasburg and four from Wirtemberg . Pastor, *XIII*, p.125.
[126] Jedin, *Origin…*, p.478.
[127] Ibid.
[128] CD, p.118.
[129] Hsia, p.16.
[130] Pastor, *XIII*, p.143.
[131] Jedin, *Origin…*, p.479.
[132] Ibid., p.480.

of terror'[133] and challenged the validity of Ferdinand I's election because it included three Protestant electors.[134]   Protestants were generally suspicious that any continuation of the Council of Trent 'would only be a prelude to aggressive action against themselves.'[135]

As Pope Pius IV laboured[136] to reconvene the council in 1562, the negotiation for safe-conduct took place all over again. The Lutherans met at Naumburg and again refused to attend the council unless their terms were met.[137] They were not remarkably different from the terms proposed in 1547:

> that the Emperor called it in Germany – that the Pope did not preside in it – that he would submit to its decisions like others, and would absolve the bishops and divines of their oaths – that the Protestants had a deliberative vote – that every thing was decided by the Holy Scriptures, and that all the decrees made at Trent were re-examined…[138]

Though a new safe-conduct, which explicitly included all nations,[139] was issued in February 1562[140] before any major decrees were passed, neither German nor French Protestants ever appeared. The disassociation was mutual. Even the opening sermon by the archbishop of Reggio in January 1562 seemed to declare the Protestant position untenable.[141] Discussion in February revealed the council had lost interest in obtaining Protestant participation, but wanted to avoid recriminations from unfavourable propaganda.[142] The remaining sessions of the third period took place without further reference to Protestants as the council focused on completing the tasks of definition and reform, which it had set for itself in the first period.

It seems clear that Protestants distrusted the council for two key reasons. First, their fears that a council guided by papal legates would not allow them to present their case were confirmed by the early condemnations of their central doctrines. Second, their fears for their own safety, should they travel to Trent, were confirmed by the apparent deception contained in the safe-conduct of 1551. The council responded to this second fear by issuing the unambiguous safe-conduct of 1552, but failed to address the fundamental problem that Protestants had no wish to participate if their opinions were disallowed *a priori.* Thus, Protestant theologians never made a contribution to the council's discussions because neither party would

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[133] Pastor, *XIV*, p.287.
[134] Jedin, *Origin…,* p.485.
[135] O'Connell, M.R., p.92.
[136] Ibid., p.91.
[137] MacCaffrey, p.192.
[138] Mathias, p.210.
[139] CD, p.128.
[140] CD, p.123.
[141] Mathias, p.213.
[142] Mendham, p.191.

yield its own authority. The council refused to reconsider any of its decrees and the Protestants refused to submit themselves to papal legates.[143]

The secular rulers associated with the Council of Trent influenced it in three ways. First, they encouraged their bishops to support national interests in conciliar debates. Second, when decisions were made contrary to their will, they inhibited the council's ability to meet safely. Third, they repeatedly threatened to initiate alternative councils. The council responded to each of these influences in a different way.

The bishops who attended did not markedly divest themselves of national interest but pursued policies consonant with their political sovereigns.[144] For this reason it is important to consider their demographic divisions. Of those who were present at the opening session, most were Italians and no one came from France.[145] England's clergy were excluded under the Cranmerian reformation[146] and a large portion of Germany was excluded as Protestant. When procedure was established for voting, it was determined that it should take place according to individual rather than nation, as at Constance and Basle.[147] This decision was in accordance with all other past precedent, but seemed to give Italy a clear advantage. The national imbalance became more pronounced towards the close of the council. Of the one hundred and thirteen bishops present at the opening session of Trent's third period in 1562, eighty-six were Italian.[148] Spain began with thirteen bishops[149] and at no time were there more than twenty-four of them.[150] No French clergy arrived until November.[151] Pius IV kept informed of the objections of French, German, and Spanish bishops and attempted to resolve them diplomatically through the respective monarchs.[152] Overall, the proceedings were 'dominated by Italian and Spanish prelates.'[153]

France was a major cause of military threat to the council. As noted, Francis I's opposition to the council and war with Charles V contributed to the long delay before the Council of Trent was finally convened. In 1550, King Henry II forbid his bishops to leave France because of his war with Charles V and degenerating relationship with the pope.[154] In March 1552, Henry II invaded Lorraine in an

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[143] O'Connell, M.R., p.90.
[144] Daniel-Rops, p.80.
[145] Searle, p.81.
[146] Wilson, W.G. and J.H. Templeton. *The Church's Authority in Doctrine*, p.1.
[147] Kidd, B.J. *The Counter-Reformation 1550-1600*, p.57.
[148] Searle, p.93
[149] Ibid.
[150] Jedin, *Crisis…*, p.29.
[151] Searle, p.93
[152] Lindsay, T.M. *A History of the Reformation Vol.II,* p.590.
[153] Rogers, J. *The Council of Trent*, p.1.
[154] Daniel-Rops, p.83.

alliance with Protestant German princes who marched south towards Trent.[155] This campaign was the primary cause of the council's suspension in April 1552.

As emperor, Charles V had the greatest claim to authority sufficient to summon a council in the tradition of Constantine I, Theodosius II, Marcian, Justinian I, Constantine IV, Irene, Basil, and Sigismund.[156] He was dissatisfied with the council's decrees on doctrine and viewed the council's transfer to Bologna as an attempt by the papacy to dominate the proceedings. He encouraged fourteen bishops to remain at Trent[157] and threatened to continue the council there by imperial authority. Paul III denied initiating the move and summoned four bishops from Trent and the four legates from Bologna to a tribunal in Rome. When the bishops at Trent refused, Paul III suspended the council in September 1547.[158] Charles V asserted his authority again by summoning the Diet of Augsburg to draft the *Interim* as a confession which would satisfy both Protestants and Catholics in Germany.[159] The papacy viewed it as 'an encroachment of the civil authority on ecclesiastical jurisdiction…. an anticipation of [the council's] labours, and so far a disavowal of their authority.'[160]

Henry II challenged the authority of the council in a similar way declaring there were qualified prelates in France who could implement reform without having to attend a council in Trent.[161] During the council's second period, Henry II addressed the fathers as a 'convention' and a 'private synod.'[162] At this time, the French bishops affirmed papal authority in opposition to their monarch's attempts to reach a settlement with the Calvinists.[163]

In 1559, none of the leading powers of Europe desired a council. Out of concern to maintain the *Peace of Augsburg*, Emperor Ferdinand I opposed any council described as a continuation of Trent[164] in hopes of including all the Christian powers.[165] King Philip II of Spain feared a council might jeopardise his pending alliance with Queen Elizabeth of England, but declared that if there was a council it must not revise any of its previous decrees.[166] Francis II called a national council with the support of Cardinal Guise who hoped to dispute with the Huguenots.[167] Thus, Pius IV faced mutually exclusive conditions for calling a council. Finally,

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[155] Elton, *Reformation Europe*, p.263.
[156] Feeney, L. *The Ecumenical Councils*, p.1.
[157] *Catholic Encyclopedia: Council of Trent* section III.B.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Janelle, p.71.
[160] Mathias, p.138.
[161] Pastor, *XIII*, p.86.
[162] Froude, p.264.
[163] Hsia, p.19.
[164] O'Connell, M.R., p.91.
[165] Pastor, *XV*, p.190.
[166] O'Connell, M.R., p.92.
[167] Ibid., pp.93-94.

Philip II and Ferdinand I decided that a papal council at Trent was preferable to a private Gallican council and permitted Pius IV to reconvene the council in 1562.[168]

Though the other rulers made no further attempts to stop the council, Ferdinand I's tentative support evaporated during the third period as he became convinced that

> there was no liberty at the council, that it was being controlled entirely from Rome, and that the assembly at Trent had become merely a machine for confirming what had been decreed already on the other side of the Alps.[169]

For this reason Ferdinand I suggested in 1563 that he might convene a separate German assembly. Cardinal Morone's diplomatic efforts averted that crisis and Pius IV issued a statement asserting his right to be involved in affairs of the council as the 'Head of the Church.'[170]

The influence of secular rulers was largely negative, yet they also played an essential role in their defence of national interest. The interruptions caused by political manoeuvring disrupted the work of the council and made ethical reforms unenforceable by delaying papal confirmation of the council's decrees. The attempts of Charles V, Henry II, and Ferdinand I to assemble alternative councils contributed to a sense of religious division. Nevertheless, such attempts emerged out of a frustration with the way the council related to the growing number of Protestant reformers. With so many Italian bishops present, those interested in conciliation had little opportunity to effect change. The council determined that the best way to settle the question of schism was through repression[171] and therefore came into conflict with any ruler who advocated a compromise settlement.

Given the multiplicity of opinions voiced publicly at Trent,[172] the council demonstrated a remarkable level of consensus at its close. This consensus was the result of three factors which curtailed and eventually eliminated dissent. First, Protestant doctrines were declared heresy in the earliest sessions of the council. Second, minority opinions were construed as heretical or advantageous to heretics. Third, tolerable compromises were produced out of candid dialogue.

Though the council made some attempt to include Protestants in its discussions, it never intended to accept their dissent. The decrees opened with a military analogy to the *Nicene Creed* as a 'shield against heresies'[173] and a weapon by which councils of the past had 'overthrown heretics, and confirmed the

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[168] Ibid., p.94.
[169] MacCaffrey, p.195.
[170] Ibid., p.196.
[171] O'Malley, *Trent…*, p.127.
[172] Mendham, p.58.
[173] CD, p.16.

faithful.'[174] Soon after, the council began to extend and solidify the definition of heresy. The *Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures* anathematised those who did not accept the Latin Vulgate.[175] The *Decree Concerning Original Sin* did the same for 'any one who is of a contrary opinion'[176] to the doctrine as described therein. The one hundred and thirty-one[177] canons promulgated by the council each contained a separate instance of condemnation, 'let him be anathema.'[178] In discussions, the word 'Lutheran' was used interchangeably with 'heretic' and denounced with the same vehemence.

> Tenderness to Lutherans was folly. They must be broken down, driven upon their knees, every one of their errors dragged to light and condemned. Agreement with heretics was impossible, and the world must be made to see that it was impossible.[179]

It is important to recognise the belief that the Protestant teachings were endangering people's salvation. To allow any delay in defining doctrine meant 'casting away' souls.[180] The affirmation of these sentiments by conciliar decree reinforced the Catholic tendency to demonise Protestant reformers as 'opponents.' Dissent was eliminated by declaring peculiarly Protestant opinions outside of the scope of the church and thus irrelevant to discussion.

The council actively pursued uniformity in its decisions and sometimes made use of the concept of heresy to suppress minority opinions. Cardinal del Monte asserted that public disagreement with the decisions of the council should be avoided since it 'served only to give the heretics an occasion of talking.'[181] Regarding the *Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures*, pressure was put on the members of the council to present a united front so as to avoid giving ground to 'the heretics.' A doctrine of the church was not discussed so that heretics had no 'opportunity to believe that the authority of the council was still questioned.'[182] During the tense discussions on residence, Pius IV urged the fathers to avoid 'divisions and discord' so that Protestants would not be encouraged to mock the council.[183]

Those bishops who pressed too hard for reform might find themselves accused of avoiding doctrinal questions because they sympathised with heretics. Even Cardinal Morone was accused of heresy in Paul IV's inquisition.[184] As the

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[174] Ibid.
[175] CD, p.19.
[176] CD, p.24.
[177] Hughes, p.1. (table)
[178] CD, p.42.
[179] Froude, p.184.
[180] CD, p.29.
[181] Mathias, p.23.
[182] Ibid., p.24.
[183] Pastor, *XV*, p.284.
[184] Hsia, p.17.

council progressed, those with liberal views had increasingly less freedom to state divergent opinions.[185] For instance, it would have been permissible for a bishop to claim that the 'chief fruit' of the eucharist was remission of sins in 1547 but heretical to do so in 1552.[186] This problem of the dilation of heresy was further compounded by the irrevocable nature of conciliar decrees. Since the decisions of the council could not be revised, dissenting fathers had to choose whether they would continue in their own opinion or change to that proscribed by the church. The most documented example was Cardinal Pole who, though initially averse to the *Decree on Justification*, eventually accepted it completely.[187]

The final way the Council of Trent responded to dissent was by searching for compromises between opposing positions. These compromises did not satisfy all parties completely, but were tolerable enough to permit continued participation in the council. The first example of this was the decision to treat reform and doctrine at the same time. One party was convinced of the necessity of dealing with abuses first. The other party was equally convinced of the necessity of addressing the Protestant schism but was divided between a disciplinary and a conciliatory solution. The final solution was a compromise between the former party and the disciplinarians, leaving those who favoured conciliation an unheard minority.

The second example of compromise was the declaration on residence. The papal party was determined that nothing be permitted to inhibit the pope. The episcopal party was determined that bishops would not be permitted to shirk their diocesan duties, but was split between those who readily affirmed papal supremacy and those who wished to revive the conciliar assertions of the previous century. Morone's compromise formulation granted an assurance that bishops and cardinals would reside in their area of responsibility and protected the authority of the pope by not mentioning it at all. This compromise disadvantaged the conciliar minority by evading their central issue.

It is apparent that the council's response to dissent varied with circumstances. Certain forms of dissent were expressly not permitted and led to the repression of some opinions voiced by members of the council. Where a significant proportion of the fathers disagreed, compromises were reached, sometimes frustrating the intentions of a minority group. Nevertheless, those who were not completely satisfied with the council's decisions demonstrated their acceptance by affirming all of the decrees with their signatures in 1563.[188]

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[185] Elton, *Reformation Europe,* p.195.
[186] CD, p.78.
[187] Fenlon, D. *Heresy and Obedience in Tridentine Italy*, p.205.
[188] CD, p.257.

6.4   EVALUATION

The Council of Trent affirmed scripture as one of several historical sources of authority in the church. In response to Protestant attempts to restrict authority to particular books, the council affirmed a wider range of books as canonical, asserting its inherent authority to establish doctrine. The council acknowledged the hermeneutic danger associated with scripture and sought to inhibit private interpretation by authorising only the Latin Vulgate. The emphasis on Latin seemed to ignore the insights of humanist linguistic scholarship and was perceived by Protestants as an attempt to subvert the truth. The council's use of scripture demonstrated a lack of commitment to rigorous hermeneutics, reiterating the idea that a council's decrees possessed authority of their own.

The affirmation of the continuing authority of tradition enabled the council to avoid many of the objections of Protestant reformers. In doing so, they also preserved an epistemological ground for those dogmas which were not clearly described in scripture. By defining tradition imprecisely, the fathers were able to draw from a wide range of authorities, allowing them to issue decrees based on their present experience of faith. The council's refusal to reconsider previous decrees preserved continuity through numerous disruptions, but also served as a tool of control which the legates used to protect papal interests.

During the course of the council, some bishops made an attempt to assert their collective authority over the pope, but their attempts were at every junction frustrated. Though the papacy did not dictate the council's decisions, it arranged decretals as far as possible in its favour and succeeded in gaining the support of the majority. This support was likely founded on the conviction that councils had proved ineffective in reform initiatives of the past and lacked political resources to resist the influence of secular rulers. Thus, the conflict between conciliar and papal authority was decided unequivocally in favour of the pope.

The majority of participants had no interest in coming to terms with Protestant reformers. They moved quickly and decisively to declare Protestant doctrines heretical. Though they provided some opportunity for Protestants to take part in the proceedings, they stubbornly refused to reconsider the doctrines Protestants considered most important. When Protestants failed to take advantage of these opportunities through equal stubbornness regarding the influence of the pope, the council fathers seemed to take it as confirmation that they were possessed of irredeemable schismatic tendencies.

The secular rulers' attempt to establish their sovereignty as a source of authority in the church was prevented by the concentration of authority in the person of the pope. Though the council itself could not respond effectively to the challenges

presented by political interests in Europe, the diplomatic efforts of Paul III, Julius III, and especially Pius IV protected the council from becoming a tool of the state. This also left the council open to criticism that it was merely a tool of the papacy.

Though there were occasions of dissent, disagreement was effectively eliminated by the end of the council. The concept of 'heresy' became in practice less a statement about truth than a method of controlling one's colleagues. Consensus was sought not merely as an end in itself, but as a means of securing the gains of the papacy and preventing compromise with Protestants.

In responding to the Protestant confessional statements by issuing a confessional statement of its own,[189] the Council of Trent ushered the *Roman Catholic church* into the modern age where practice was less important than adherence to a creed.[190] It attempted to solve the problem of interpretation by referring it to the office of the pope. It established that the domain of religious authority was not the private individual but the church. It must be acknowledged, however, that concentration of authority in the papal office still meant concentration of power in an individual who would be susceptible to the same problems faced by the Protestant reformers.

The extreme forms of both the papal and the episcopal positions were caricatures which have inhibited dialogue concerning the Council of Trent. From a Protestant perspective, Paul IV's pontificate seemed to be evidence that a strong papacy meant totalitarian control. From a Catholic perspective, those who favoured conciliar authority would have compromised the integrity of the church by making concessions to heretics. To mourn the council for abandoning democracy or applaud it for its clear condemnation of subversive opinions is equally unproductive since both groups believed they were acting in the interest of Christ.

Finally, the council did not determine that the pope's authority was superior to scripture. Its proceedings demonstrate a general assent that the pope is the supreme interpreter of the church's twin sources of authority: scripture and tradition. The most heated debates at the Council of Trent were never between the authority of a council and scripture, but between that of a council and the pope. Thus, the description of Trent as an assertion of papal authority over scripture is a limited one. The fundamental determination of the council was that conciliar authority was subsumed in papal authority. The process of the council, more so than its decrees,

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[189] O'Malley, *Trent…*, p.111.
[190] Royal, R. *The Other Side of the Renaissance*, p.1.

established this so decisively that no council was called for more than three centuries.[191]

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[191] Dickens, A.G. *The Counter Reformation,* p.129.

CHAPTER 7: THE GROWTH OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

7.1 THE PROBLEM OF DIVISION FROM 1563 TO 1910

This chapter notes a few highlights of the intervening centuries between the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council focusing primarily on the development of the *World Council of churches*[1] and important documents preceding *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry.*

The Consensus of Sendomir (1570) was arguably the first successful attempt at Protestant unity in its program of mutual tolerance and shared works of charity.[2] A similar attempt failed in Poland in 1578[3] and at the Synod of Tonneins in 1614.[4] Different perceptions of the Church, particularly between a flawed visible Church and a pure mystical Church,[5] led to divisive doctrinal formulations such as the Synod of Dort (1618-1619).[6]

In the seventeenth century, the term 'Catholic' replaced the term 'papist' in Protestant scholarship[7] revealing a growing lack of concern for the universality of the Church. Furthermore, the Protestant adoption of the pejorative labels of 'Lutheranism' and 'Calvinism' reinforced an impression of exclusivity among Protestant denominations[8] which did not exist in the early sixteenth century.

While there were isolated proposals for unity from various theologians such as Hugo Grotius (1583-1645),[9] John Dury (1595-1680),[10] Pierre Jurien (1637-1713),[11] and Daniel Ernst Jablonski (1660-1741),[12] their efforts were ineffectual. The emergence of Pietism, particularly as expressed by Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760) and Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769) offered the possibility of a spiritual unity which transcended denominational lines,[13] but its novel emphasis led to rifts within Lutheranism.[14] A similar pattern was repeated within Anglicanism regarding the work of John Wesley[15] and was compounded by the opportunities

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[1] See *Note on capitalisation*, p.2.
[2] Rouse, R. and Neill, S.C. (eds.) *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, p.63.
[3] Ibid., p.64.
[4] Ibid., p.66.
[5] Ibid., p.80.
[6] Ibid., p.87.
[7] Ibid., p.74.
[8] Ibid. See also V.L. von Seckendorf's *Historical and Apologetic Commentary on Lutheranism* (1682) and P. Jurieu's *The History of Calvinism and that of Popery, Set Forth in Parallel* (1682).
[9] Rouse and Neill, p.94.
[10] Ibid., p.99.
[11] Ibid., pp.92-93.
[12] Ibid., p.112.
[13] Ibid., pp.101-103.
[14] Bouyer, L. *A History of Christian Spirituality Vol. III* pp.173-176.
[15] Rouse and Neill, pp.164-165.

migration to North America afforded for avoiding rather than addressing the issue of division.

Nevertheless, the growing interest in missions towards the end of the eighteenth century gave rise to pragmatic concerns for unity. Methodist Thomas Coke's proposal for an inclusive missions board in 1784 was soon followed by the formation of inter-denominational societies such as the German Christian Fellowship (1780),[16] the London Missionary Society (1795),[17] and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810).[18] Attempting to capitalise on this trend, William Carey proposed inviting all denominations to Capetown in 1810 for the purpose of sharing experiences and discussing common problems,[19] but such a gathering would not take place for another hundred years.

At this stage dialogue with the *Roman Catholic church* had all but ceased. In 1870, the declaration of papal infallibility at Vatican I further emphasised the rift between Catholic and Protestant. The rigidity of the declaration prompted a scattered exodus from Roman Catholicism known as the Old Catholic Movement which manifested widespread interest in ecumenical unity and eventually established intercommunion with the *church of England*.[20]

7.2 THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The modern ecumenical movement began with the global mission conference in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910.[21] It differed from previous ecumenical attempts in that delegates spoke as official representatives of missions organisations, and therefore of their respective denominations.[22] Out of this gathering emerged the *International Missionary Council*, the *Universal Conference on Life and Work*, and the *Universal Conference on Faith and Order*.

In the period around 1920, three separate proposals were made for bringing the churches of the world into closer contact with each other. The first, generally regarded as the work of Germanos Strenopoulos, took the form of an invitation from Constantinople in 1919 to create a 'league of churches' which could act in common interest and pave the way for full unity.[23] In this way, the Orthodox took an important first step in including Protestants in their definition of Christianity. The second came from Nathan Söderblom, Archbishop of Uppsala. He proposed an

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[16] Ibid., p.118.
[17] Gaines, D.P. *The World Council of Churches*, p.6.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., p.5.
[20] Ibid., pp.125-126.
[21] VanElderen, M. *Introducing the World Council of Churches*, p.18.
[22] Ibid., p.19.
[23] Hooft, W.A.V. *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches,* p.2.

ecumenical council which could represent all Christians but suggested that it 'should not be invested with external authority, but should gain its influence according to the degree in which it would be able to act as a spiritual power.'[24] It is important to note that Söderblom's formal proposal to the *World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the churches* in 1919[25] suggested that this body should not deal with matters of doctrine as *Faith and Order*, but rather with 'some well-defined urgent practical aims.'[26] The third came from J.H. Oldham who had been secretary at the World Missionary Conference of 1910.[27] He predicted at the *International Missionary Council* meeting in 1921 that any missions organisation created 'will probably have before long to give way to something that may represent the beginning of a world league of churches.'[28]

The direct result of Söderblom's proposal was the *Universal Conference on Life and Work* which convened in Stockholm in 1925.[29] Visser 't Hooft suggested that while this might have proved an excellent platform for developing the idea of a permanent council, Germanos and Söderblom avoided the topic because of significant opposition among the delegates.[30] In his closing sermon, Söderblom urged Christians to unite in speaking against social and economic injustices[31] in order to make 'Christ the Lord not only of the individual's heart, but of every realm of social, economic and political life'.[32]

Cooperation on humanitarian issues became an important expression of the ecumenical movement, but even in the earliest days its proponents realised that doctrinal issues could not be ignored. At the *World Conference on Faith and Order* in 1927, Germanos of Thyateira put forward the principle of liberty in non-essentials but suggested that further discussion and definition of essentials was unnecessary since they were already determined in the seven ecumenical synods. 'Consequently, the teaching of the ancient and undivided Church of the first eight centuries… must to-day also constitute the basis of the reunion of the Churches.'[33] The issue of the scripture's relation to tradition was raised but not dealt with comprehensively until many years later.[34] It was at this meeting that Söderblom pressed for a council of

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[24] Ibid., p.13.
[25] His ideas first appeared in an article published a few weeks before in *The Contemporary Review* in England and *Die Eiche* in Germany.
[26] Ibid., p.14.
[27] Latourette, K.S. *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age Vol. 4: The Twentieth Century in Europe,* p.507
[28] Hooft, *Genesis…* pp.10-11.
[29] Latourette, p.507.
[30] Hooft, *Genesis…,* p.19.
[31] Kinnamon, M. and Cope, B.E. *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices,* p.17.
[32] Hooft, W.A.V. (ed.) *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches,* p.13.
[33] Kinnamon and Cope, p.15.
[34] Gassmann, G. *Documentary History of Faith and Order 1963-1993,* p.201.

churches, suggesting that it might be 'evolved from' *Life and Work* and the *World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the churches.*[35]

In the next decade, members of *Faith and Order* felt it increasingly necessary to take common action on the basis of limited agreements and members of *Life and Work* found themselves faced with more and more theological issues.[36] In 1937, this growing desire to create an ecumenical consultation body, which would draw together both *Life and Work* and *Faith and Order* movements, led each group to and appoint seven members from among themselves to comprise a *Committee of Fourteen* authorised to convene the *World Council of churches.*[37] The *Faith and Order* conference, held in Edinburgh, was also important because it affirmed scripture as authoritative in content and witness and laid the groundwork of a more comprehensive understanding of tradition.[38]

At the same time, a transformation was taking place within the *Roman Catholic church.* In 1910, the papal encyclical *Editae Saepe* had derided the sixteenth century reformers claiming, 'They tried to destroy the church's doctrine, constitution, and discipline…. They called this rebellious riot and perversion of faith and morals a reformation, and themselves reformers. In reality they were corrupters.'[39] Permission to take part in ecumenical meetings had to come directly from the pope.[40] However, by 1928, *Rerum Orientalium* was calling for the removal of 'the impediment of mutual ignorance, contempt, and prejudice.'[41] *Nostis Qua* suggested that non-Catholic churches might have insight into what is 'valuable, good, and Christian in the fragments of ancient Catholic truth.'[42] The decline of Catholic antagonism in this area continued during the reign of Pope Pius XII. In 1939, *Summi Pontificatus* expressed gratitude for

> the good wishes of those who, though not belonging to the visible body of the Catholic Church, have given noble and sincere expression to their appreciation of all that unites them to us, in love for the person of Christ or in belief in God.[43]

Pius XII fostered the growing view that Protestants were 'separated brethren' rather than 'heretics.'[44] In 1948, he contributed to decentralisation by placing authority to approve attendance of ecumenical gatherings in the hands of the local bishops.[45]

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[35] *Faith and Order: Lausanne 1927*, p.397.
[36] Hooft, *First Assembly…*, p.13.
[37] Ibid., p.14.
[38] Gassmann, *Documentary History…* p.201.
[39] Fiedler, M. and Rabben, L. *Rome Has Spoken*, p.57.
[40] Ibid., p.62.
[41] Armstrong, D. *Pre-Vatican II Ecumenism*, p.1.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Fiedler and Rabben, p.62.

The first meeting of the *World Council of churches* convened at Amsterdam in 1948. The authority of the council was expressed as a service or instrument by which the constituent churches 'may bear witness together to their common allegiance to Jesus Christ and co-operate in matters requiring united action.'[46] It was firmly declared that 'the Council disavows any thought of becoming a single unified church structure independent of the churches who have joined in constituting the Council, or a structure dominated by a centralised administrative authority.'[47] In its initial stages the *World Council of churches* did not establish doctrinal criteria but stated that it affirmed the incarnation and the atonement and desired 'to be a fellowship of those churches which accept these truths.'[48] Its constitution clearly made no claim to determinative authority:

> The World Council shall offer counsel and provide opportunity of united action in matters of common interest. It may take action on behalf of constituent churches in such matters as one or more of them may commit to it. It shall have authority to call regional and world conferences on specific subjects as occasion may require. The World Council shall not legislate for the churches; nor shall it act for them in any manner except as indicated above or as may hereafter be specified by the constituent churches.[49]

Therefore, any public pronouncements that the council might make 'will not be binding on any church unless that church has confirmed them, and made them its own.'[50] The trepidation with which many communions became members was evidenced by the *Toronto Declaration* of 1950 which described a principle of ecclesiological neutrality, assuring that membership did not imply acceptance of a particular theory of church union.[51]

The majority of delegates at the Amsterdam (1948) and Evanston (1954) assemblies were from North America and Europe, but by the New Delhi assembly (1961), representation from South America, Asia, and Africa was significantly increased, giving the *World Council* its first truly international representation. Many communions welcomed the official merger of the *International Missionary Council* with the *World Council of churches*,[52] but it also had the unforeseen effect of isolating some Evangelicals whose hesitance about committing to the *World Council* had not prevented them from contributing to international dialogue through a missions board.[53] It was at New Delhi that Nikos Nissiotis expressed his desire for

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[46] Hooft, *First Assembly…*, p.127.
[47] Ibid.
[48] William Temple's memorandum from *The World Council of Churches: Its Process of Formation*, p.175. (quoted in Hooft, *Genesis…*, p.50.)
[49] Hooft, *First Assembly…*, p.198.
[50] Ibid., p.128.
[51] Meyer, H. *That All May Be One*, p.42.
[52] Hooft, W.A.V. (ed.) *The New Delhi Report*, pp.6-7.
[53] Bosch, D.E. 'Ecumenicals and Evangelicals: a Growing Relationship' in E. Castro (ed.), *Ecumenical Review Vol.40, No.3-4* (1988), p.462.

the Orthodox communion to 'give up its defensive, confessional-apologetic attitude' and think of other communions in terms of discovering the 'true life' within their own traditions rather than returning to Orthodoxy.[54] This perspective aided the assembly in articulating a statement which formed the foundation for all further descriptions of unity.[55] The statement envisioned 'one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all'.[56] In doing so, it affirmed the traditional marks of the Church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic as both an origin and a goal.

7.3   CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

Even as the ecumenical movement was gathering into a worldwide council, Protestant theologians were giving new consideration to the relative authority of the text of scripture. Karl Barth argued that 'it is not merely possible but necessary to appeal from scripture (always recognising its unique value) to a true and original Word of God which we have to conceive of quite differently.'[57] The equally profound changes effected by Vatican II for Catholics are discussed in the following chapter.[58]

In 1963, the *Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order* developed syntax for distinguishing between *Tradition*, *tradition*, and *traditions*, and discussed their relation to scripture. It defined the capitalised *Tradition* as 'the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church, Christ himself present in the life of the Church.'[59] The lowercase form *tradition* referred to the process by which Tradition is passed on. The plural form *traditions* was allowed three definitions including 'the diversity of forms of expression.... confessional traditions, for instance the Lutheran tradition or the Reformed tradition.... [and] cultural traditions.'[60]

The report described the historical positions which perceived scripture in opposition to tradition and attempted to reformulate the question in terms of how Tradition is actualised. Various expressions of the one Tradition could be found in 'the preaching of the Word, in the administration of the Sacraments and worship, in Christian teaching and theology, and in mission and witness to Christ by the lives of

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[54] Hooft, *New Delhi…*, p.22.
[55] Meyer, *That All…* p.43.
[56] *New Delhi Statement on Unity, and Orthodox Response: Third Assembly of the WCC*, 2.
[57] Barth, K. *Church Dogmatics Vol.I Part 2*, p.541.
[58] See Chapter 8: Authority at Vatican II.
[59] Rodger, P.C. and Vischer, L. *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, p.50.
[60] Ibid.

the members of the Church.'[61] Thus, Tradition is always embodied within traditions. By defining Tradition as the whole of the gospel and Christ's presence, the commission established a common language to describe an ideological foundation, but did not make any headway in determining an effective criterion for distinguishing Tradition from the traditions in which it is embodied.

The history of this search for criterion was described by the committee as follows:

> For the post-apostolic Church the appeal to the Tradition received from the apostles became the criterion. As this Tradition was embodied in the apostolic writings, it became natural to use those writings as an authority for determining where the true Tradition was to be found. In the midst of all tradition, these early records of divine revelation have a special basic value, because of their apostolic character. But the Gnostic crisis in the second century shows that the mere existence of apostolic writings did not solve the problem. The question of interpretation arose as soon as the appeal to written documents made its appearance. When the canon of the New Testament had finally been defined and recognized by the Church, it was still more natural to use this body of writings as an indispensable criterion.[62]

It is important to recognise that scripture is not identified with the essence of faith, but merely testifies to it as the written form of Tradition. Furthermore, this written form requires reinterpretation for changing situations as demonstrated 'in the crystalization of the creeds, the liturgical forms of the sacraments and other forms of worship, and also in the preaching of the Word and in theological expositions of the Church's doctrine.'[63] This emphasis on continually presenting the gospel in the present is conveyed even more strongly in the statement that 'mere reiteration of the words of Holy Scripture would be a betrayal of the Gospel'.[64]

When the necessity of interpretation is admitted, it becomes apparent that an appeal to scripture is insufficient without qualifying it with the concept of 'right interpretation.' Nevertheless, the committee noted that defining this concept as interpretation guided by the Holy Spirit provides no further insight into the problem of criterion. Though scripture may be identified as the criterion of faith, doing so merely narrows the scope of possible descriptions of Tradition and shifts the search for reliable texts to a search for a hermeneutic principle.

The *Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order* highlighted several proposals for such a principle which have been espoused by various communions. These included scripture as a whole, a central facet of scripture such as justification by faith, individual conscience, the mind of the Church, and the deposit of faith guarded by a *magisterium*. In these can quickly be identified the methods of Calvin,

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[61] Ibid., pp.51-52.
[62] Ibid., pp.52-53.
[63] Ibid., p.53.
[64] Ibid.

Luther and Cranmer, the Anabaptists, Orthodox, and Catholics respectively. The committee carefully pointed out that 'In none of these cases where the principle of interpretation is found elsewhere than in scripture is the authority thought to be alien to the central concept of Holy Scripture.'[65] Thus, there is agreement that scripture is a reliable expression of Tradition, but divergent interpretations result from a diversity of hermeneutic principles.

The committee further identified two polar understandings of Tradition which have yet to be resolved. The one defines Tradition as 'not only the act of God in Christ… also the Christian faith itself… made explicit in unbroken continuity through definite events'[66] and 'found in the organic and concrete unity of the one Church'.[67] The other defines Tradition as 'revelation in Christ and the preaching of the Word… expressed with different degrees of fidelity in various historically conditioned forms, namely the traditions.'[68]

The report, *The Significance of the Hermeneutical Problem for the Ecumenical Movement*,[69] presented at Bristol in 1967 continued the movement from a focus on the relation between scripture and tradition as parts of Tradition to consideration of the common problem of hermeneutics.[70] Their recommendation for further study of biblical authority prompted a study guide arranged by James Barr in 1969.[71] The responses were compiled at the 1971 meeting of *Faith and Order* in Louvain[72] where a call was issued for a fresh examination of biblical authority in light of historical and critical scholarship.[73] The official report emphasised the Bible's role as a consistent source of revelation, but added that the authority of the Bible

> is the authority of God Himself and not that of the Bible as a book. Authority in this sense can only be claimed for the Bible because by its witness it makes possible the knowledge of God and of His authority. Therefore it has only derived authority.[74]

It further reported that 'authority must be understood as a "relational concept", not as aggressive power but as a testimony which is to be accepted in freedom'.[75]

The study document, *How Does the Church Teach Authoritatively Today* (1977), described three groups who exercise teaching authority. Individuals such as 'saints, monks, theologians, founders of movements… church-reformers' have

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., pp.54-55.
[67] Ibid., p.55.
[68] Ibid.
[69] *The Significance of the Hermeneutical Problem for the Ecumenical Movement* (1968).
[70] Gassmann, *Documentary History…* p.202.
[71] See Barr, J. 'The Authority of Scripture' in *Ecumenical Review Vol.21* (1969), pp.135-150.
[72] Gassmann, *Documentary History…* p.202.
[73] *Louvain 1971: Study Reports and Documents*, p.11.
[74] Ibid., p.14.
[75] Ibid., p.14.

'*personal credibility*'.[76] Church officials have *ministerial authority* by which they preach, administer sacraments, and oversee the community.[77] Representative gatherings have *corporate teaching authority*.[78]

The document divided communions into four categories based on the way they measure conformity to the gospel in agreement with scripture and tradition.[79] The first category included those who emphasise a particular office as able to reliably express truth. The second category included those who emphasise confessional documents by which even statements of the teaching office must be measured. This left a third category comprised of those who accept neither of the first two criteria as sufficient in themselves and therefore emphasise the collective understanding of the whole people of God embodied in reception. The final category bore obvious similarities to the previous one but was necessary to include those who emphasise the individual's responsibility to judge for themselves.

Most importantly, it noted the inadequacy of reference to a single criterion which an increasing number of communions have come to appreciate:

> Where an official teaching office claims allegiance, the discovery of changes in teaching which have occurred in history may create problems. Confessional statements are often interpreted in contrary ways by the groups which adhere to them. As historical examples show, too exclusive a reference to the need for reception by the people of God can diminish the prophetic element in the Church's teaching and lead to immobility. As previously mentioned, some have come to recognize diversity within the Scriptures themselves; judgement on conformity with the Scriptures can lead, therefore, to very different results.[80]

7.4   SYNOPSIS

The centuries following the European reformations exhibited the consequences of differing perspectives on authority. The failure of intermittent attempts towards Christian unity, subsequent schisms within Protestantism, and the increasing emphasis on papal authority revealed that the problem could not be solved without considerable effort. The formation of the *World Council of churches* was successful in bringing Christians together in an unprecedented way, but made little progress regarding the issue of authority. Significant progress relating to the claims about authority would not be made until after the ecumenical movement had grown to embrace Christians in every continent and could include Catholics in an official capacity. The changing perspectives on scripture and tradition were essential for the creation of *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* and much of the progress of

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[76] Gassmann, *Documentary History…* p.243.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., p.244.
[79] Ibid., pp.244-245.
[80] *How Does the Church Teach Authoritatively Today? Odessa* (1977), I:D.

international bilateral dialogues, but before these can be examined, it is necessary to deal with the concept of authority developed and promulgated by Vatican II.

CHAPTER 8:   AUTHORITY AT VATICAN II

8.1   BACKGROUND

The second Vatican council lasted from 1962 to 1965 and issued four constitutions, nine decrees, and three declarations. Its most distinguishing mark was that, unlike other councils, it did not condemn any doctrines, but rather sought to express Christian faith in pastoral terms[1] relevant to the twentieth century. For this reason it is important to take note of several developments prior to the council.

These developments indicated areas of tension in the church and suggested the direction the council would take. Reaction to *modernism*, the developing liberal movement of Catholic theology, caused a conservative backlash termed *neoscholasticism*.[2] Two world wars generated questions about the church's role in conflict. The liturgical movement represented a new impetus for 'the symbolic and communal riches of traditional Christian worship.'[3] The emergence of historical-critical scholarship in Germany placed a new focus on scripture.[4] The approval of this methodology by *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in 1943 generated a surge of Catholic biblical scholarship.[5] A new generation of theologians began to focus on issues of ecclesiology through biblical and patristic sources.[6]

Changing Catholic perspectives regarding the ecumenical movement have already been noted. Pope John XXIII continued this trend by announcing his intention to call a council in 1959 on the last day of the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*.[7] He determined that the council would be a separate event, not merely a continuation of Vatican I,[8] and set two major goals for its work. It was intended to bring the church up to date and to promote Christian unity.[9]

8.2   THREE ASPECTS OF AUTHORITY

Vatican II's understanding of authority may be derived from several key documents. The most important are *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)* and *The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei*

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[1] Stacpoole, A. *Vatican II by those who were there*, p.345.
[2] Ellis, I. *Vision and Reality*, p.101.
[3] Rausch, T.P. *Catholicism at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*, p.6.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ellis, p.101.
[6] Rausch, p.8.
[7] Stacpoole, p.337.
[8] Ibid., p.339.
[9] Rausch, p.10.

Verbum). It is also useful to consider *The Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio), The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate)*, and *The Declaration on Religious Liberty (Dignitatis Humanae).*

The council began by grounding authority in God's choice to 'reveal himself and make known the mystery of his will'[10] so that people might 'become sharers in the divine nature.'[11] God provides 'constant evidence of himself in created realities.'[12] God spoke through the prophets and sent his son as the eternal Word.[13] God perfects faith 'so that Revelation may be more and more profoundly understood.'[14] Finally, 'God graciously arranged that the things he had once revealed… should remain in their entirety, throughout the ages, and be transmitted to all generations.'[15] Thus, God is connected with every stage of the process by which revelation is to be received as authoritative: God reveals, God preserves, and God grants understanding.

Dei Verbum suggested three ways that growth of insight occurs which seem to fall under the headings of scripture, tradition,[16] and magisterium:

> It comes through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts (cf. Lk. 2:19 and 51). It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience. And it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth.[17]

Scripture is approached through contemplation and study, tradition is derived from experience, and the magisterium is based upon apostolic succession. Viewed in this light, Vatican II's model of authority has obvious similarities to the Council of Trent's, but also possesses significant differences. These differences involve both the council's articulation of various elements within each aspect of authority as well as the relationships proposed between them.

It is important to note at the outset that in contrast to the Council of Trent, Vatican II did not describe tradition and scripture as distinct sources of authority.[18]

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[10] *Dei Verbum*, 2. (DV)
[11] DV, 2.
[12] DV, 3.
[13] DV, 4.
[14] DV, 5.
[15] DV, 7.
[16] **Note on capitalisation:** Any attempt to use the terms 'Tradition' and 'tradition' consistently in regard to Vatican II depends on a certain amount of arbitrariness which is reflected even in the Vatican archive available online where *Dei Verbum* uses 'tradition' to refer to tradition exclusive of scripture, but *Lumen Gentium* uses 'Tradition.' Though the concept of a 'single deposit' which is the 'word of God' is consonant with the Montreal definition, this chapter uses only 'tradition' in order to avoid speculative use of the capitalised form 'Tradition.' Discrepancies between the Vatican archive and W.M. Abbott in this regard are noted in footnotes.
See Vatican archive <http://www.vatican.va/archive/index.htm>.
[17] DV, 8.
[18] Butler, C. *The Theology of Vatican II*, p.37.

They were arranged together within the metaphor of 'a mirror, in which the Church… contemplates God.'[19] Tradition and scripture 'are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other.'[20] They 'make up a single deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church.'[21] The council declared that the church 'has always regarded and continues to regard the scriptures, taken together with sacred Tradition, as the supreme rule of her faith.'[22] For this reason, analysis of scripture and tradition separately should not be mistaken for an ontological distinction which the council repudiated.

Vatican II defined scripture as 'the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit'[23] and made known to the Church as the canon through tradition.[24] It reiterated the Council of Trent's affirmation that the Holy Spirit inspired both the Old and New Testaments[25] and placed a new emphasis on awareness of literary forms as a necessary for understanding what God wished to communicate.[26] The Church's veneration of scripture was compared to her veneration of the body of Christ,[27] suggesting that like the Church itself, scripture possesses sacramental qualities.

In contrast to tradition, scripture was discussed with reference to its special status as the Word of God in 'unalterable form.'[28] For this reason, the council placed greater emphasis on its interpretation and made considerable headway in its incorporation of modern methodology. Even in an early draft of *Dei Verbum*, exegetes were encouraged to make use of archaeology and ancient history in order to understand the mentality of the biblical writers and the literary forms which they used.[29] In this way, the council approached interpretation biblically and historically rather than philosophically.[30]

The final version of *Dei Verbum* presented two sets of hermeneutic rules, the first for technical exegesis,[31] and the second for dogmatic theology.[32] Exegetes were encouraged to take into account the literary form in which revelation is expressed as well as the particular circumstances which faced the author. The unity of scripture was described in such a way that it did not prevent examination of each of its

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[19] DV, 7.
[20] DV, 9.
[21] DV, 10.
[22] DV, 21. The Vatican archive translation uses 'tradition.' See <http://www.vatican.va>, op. cit.
[23] DV, 9.
[24] DV, 8.
[25] DV, 11.
[26] DV, 12.
[27] DV, 21.
[28] DV, 21.
[29] Vorgrimler, H. *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Vol.III*, p.218.
[30] Ellis, p.102.
[31] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.III*, p.240.
[32] Ibid., p.242.

components as individual literary works.[33] The council accepted 'all legitimate methods of critical historical research to establish the historical conditions of the writer's intention.'[34] Theologians were expected to interpret scripture in a sense that was both historical, in terms of scientific exegesis, and Christian, in terms of church tradition.[35] They were required to take into account 'the Tradition of the entire Church and the analogy of faith… [to] derive their true meaning from the sacred texts.'[36] Tradition, in this respect, was identified as the intellectual process of reflection upon the Christ event out of which scripture emerged.[37] The council understood that process as something continuing into the present, drawing inspiration from the 'unalterable form' of scripture.[38] The task of theologians was then to synthesise the insights of historical exegesis with the living tradition of the church in a 'reciprocal relationship.'[39] The council declared the purpose of all hermeneutics was to discover 'the *sensus divinus* in the *sensus humano*.'[40]

Despite the reaffirmation that authoritative interpretation was reserved to the hierarchy, the council reversed the general sentiments of Trent with the declaration that 'Access to sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful.'[41] It even went so far as to suggest that translations might be produced in conjunction with separated brethren.[42] Ministers were encouraged to use scripture to nourish their flock 'under the watchful eye of the sacred Magisterium.'[43] This emphasis on active oversight was reiterated in regard to biblical scholars who were invited to continue their work 'in accordance with the mind of the Church.'[44] Such passages exemplify the tension the council faced between encouraging the laity in spiritual pursuits without opening the church to ideological disintegration.

One of the subtle but significant contributions of the council was its embrace of biblical metaphors, particularly in *Lumen Gentium.* It began by declaring that the Church was a mystery. This differed considerably from Vatican I's rejection of the phrase 'the body of Christ' as the starting point of ecclesiology because it was 'obscure.'[45] The Church was described as 'in the nature of a sacrament,'[46] though not properly a sacrament, and expressed in a series of metaphors: a seed of the kingdom

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[33] Ibid., p.243.
[34] Ibid., p.242.
[35] Ibid., p.243.
[36] DV, 12. The Vatican archive translation uses 'tradition.' See <http://www.vatican.va>, op. cit.
[37] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.III*, p.244.
[38] DV, 21.
[39] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.III*, p.245.
[40] Ibid., p.246.
[41] DV, 22.
[42] DV, 22.
[43] DV, 23.
[44] DV, 23.
[45] Küng, H. *The Church*, p.12.
[46] *Lumen Gentium* (LG), 1.

of God,[47] a sheepfold, a flock, a field, a vineyard, a building, a household, a temple, Jerusalem above, a mother, a spotless spouse,[48] and finally the body of Christ.[49] The use of metaphorical language in formal documents exemplified a broader perspective from which to interpret scripture.

Vatican II attempted to respond to a widely expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of a clear and positive description of tradition by either the Council of Trent or Vatican I.[50] Joseph Ratzinger described the council's understanding of tradition as 'the many-layered yet one presence of the mystery of Christ throughout all the ages; it means the totality of the presence of Christ in the world.'[51] A similar formulation described tradition as 'the constant continuation and making present of everything that the Church is, of everything it believes.'[52] In this sense, tradition meant the 'full and living Gospel'[53] in terms of both historical propositions and the ongoing living faith of the church, a position very similar to that articulated at Montreal in 1963.

Unlike scripture, the *documenta*[54] of tradition extended beyond written texts to 'other kinds of evidence of traditional faith… physical records of what the Church has believed.'[55] Since 'tradition' was used to encompass transmission as well as content,[56] it could be accorded the curious property of 'making progress' as the Holy Spirit enabled a 'growth of insight into the realities and words that are being passed on.'[57] Catholics believe therefore that through contemplation, study, and preaching 'the church is always advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her.'[58] This clause imbued the conciliar documents with a sense of provisionality and created an expectation for the continuing revelation of God.

It is important to understand that tradition was not used to refer to a portion of revelation but rather that which 'transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit.'[59] Thus, while historical *documenta* contained parts of tradition, some parts could only be contained in the lives of the faithful. The importance of this element of tradition was emphasised by *Lumen Gentium*'s call to holiness. Priests were enjoined to imitate 'those priests who, in the course of centuries, left behind them an outstanding

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[47] LG, 5.
[48] LG, 6.
[49] LG, 7.
[50] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.184.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] DV, 7.
[54] loosely, 'documents'
[55] Sullivan, F.A. *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church*, p.188.
[56] Harrington, W. and L. Walsh *Vatican II on Revelation*, p.41.
[57] DV, 8.
[58] DV, 8.
[59] DV, 9.

example of holiness, often in a humble and hidden service.'[60] Similarly, marriage was praised as 'an example of unfailing and generous love.'[61] Such imitation of the 'love and humility of Christ'[62] through a life of holiness seems to entail participation to some extent in Christ's authority.

Closely related to the general call to holiness was the chapter on the religious life. The council clearly stated that it was not 'a kind of middle way between the clerical and lay conditions of life.'[63] Religious communities were described as coming together in such a way that spiritual resources were multiplied for the progress in holiness of their members. Their unity in common vows symbolised Christ's bond to the church.[64] The council highlighted important function they served: showing forth Christ with 'ever-increasing clarity'[65] as they dedicated their spiritual lives to the whole church.[66] In turn, the hierarchy was to use 'its supervisory and protective authority to ensure that religious institutes… may develop and flourish in accordance with the spirit of their founders.'[67] Though religious communities were subordinated to the magisterium, an opening remains for their practice of holiness to serve as a prophetic voice which does not merely receive direction from the hierarchy, but speaks to it in a particular way.

The council has been criticised for its failure to abandon the distinction between laity and clergy and the concept of the church as a perfect society.[68] Both critiques are somewhat misleading. The task of preserving tradition was not entrusted exclusively to the episcopate, but to the whole people of God.[69] This task has been expressed historically in the practice of holiness, thereby connecting the whole people of God to the pilgrimage of the Church.

The ancient Roman ecclesiology focused on the legal character of the office of bishops, but at that point there was diversity.[70] Tertullian and Cyprian challenged the dominant view of authority as independent from personal sanctity with an emphasis on authority as dependent on the gift of the Spirit, and therefore upon personal sanctity.[71] The lack of personal holiness among clergy was a major criticism in the sixteenth century but was insufficiently addressed by the Council of

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[60] LG, 41.
[61] LG, 41.
[62] LG, 42.
[63] LG, 43.
[64] LG, 44.
[65] LG, 46.
[66] LG, 44.
[67] LG, 45.
[68] Jeanrond, W.G. 'Community and Authority: The Nature and Implications of the Authority of Christian Community' in C.E. Gunton and D.W. Hardy *On Being the Church* (T & T Clark, 1989), p.92.
[69] Butler, p.40.
[70] Küng, *The Church*, p.8.
[71] Ibid.

Trent. While Vatican II did not abolish the lay/clerical distinction, its emphasis on holiness suggested a commonality which has been underemphasised since the patriarchal church and a means by which lay-members may exercise authority. As Edward Schillebeeckx wrote:

> A layman, especially if he is an intellectual or has received some form of higher education, has his own view about several aspects of the Church. Exerting *moral* influence, he can from time to time assert himself vigorously.[72]

While he avoided asserting that the laity may act *authoritatively*,[73] this seems to be a significant area in which tradition influences the magisterium.

Grounding the Church within the metaphor of pilgrimage established a foundation from which the Church could frankly admit its imperfections. This metaphor asserted the historical authority of the Church as proceeding from Christ but also directed attention forward to the eschatological fulfilment of unity and perfection. The Church was described as possessing 'a sanctity that is real though imperfect…. [she] carries the mark of this world… [and] takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail.'[74] Thus, as Hans Küng has commented, the Church suffers and causes suffering because it is composed of sinful people.[75]

Karl Rahner noted the difficulty of recognising both the reality of sin and the holiness of the Church.[76] He considered the council's description of this paradox insufficient[77] and suggested 'the Church on earth is *always* the Church of sinners'[78] and is holy only through grace which operates 'particularly where she actualises her whole essence *fully*.'[79] This need for grace extended to church leaders in so far as they personally were sinners, but also included 'its effect upon the whole exercise of their office… [whereby] the Church almost necessarily even in her official sphere is "sinful" in quite a specific sense.'[80]

If the Church is composed of sinners and is sinful itself, it requires an example by which to reform itself. The penultimate example is, of course, Christ, but numerous other examples can be found historically in the lives of saints, particularly Mary, whose sinless description identifies her with the ideal of the Church.[81] Though the chapter on Mary appears somewhat out of place in *Lumen Gentium*, it connected with Ambrose and Augustine's descriptions of Mary as the

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[72] Schillebeeckx, E.H. *Vatican II: A Struggle of Minds and other essays*, p.51.
[73] Ibid., p.52.
[74] LG, 48.
[75] Küng, *The Church*, p.28.
[76] Rahner, K. *Theological Investigations Vol.VI.*, p.271.
[77] Ibid., p.288.
[78] Ibid., p.292.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., p.286.
[81] Ibid., p.285.

typological model of the Church.[82] As Mary gave birth to Christ, so the Church gives birth to Christians. As Mary is the ideal figure of the Church, so saints are ideal figures of individual Christian holiness. They have lived prophetic lives of holiness in the past and continue to speak to the church as they are venerated and imitated by the people of God.

Additionally, the council described the present work of the Holy Spirit in each member of the people of God. The Holy Spirit was depicted making the people of God holy and allotting gifts by which 'he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building of the Church.'[83] The magisterium was enjoined to 'judge the genuineness and proper use of these gifts' but warned not to inhibit the work of the Spirit.[84] In this way, everyone could exercise the prophetic office of Christ which is shared by all the people of God.[85]

One of the main functions of the magisterium has been to compensate for the obscurity of scripture.[86] Though it has overemphasised its authority in this respect in the past, the council sought to achieve a balance by asserting that the magisterium's right to interpret scripture was subject to the condition of submitting to it.[87] The central idea necessary for understanding the magisterium's authority as described at Vatican II was that the church is hierarchical. The word 'hierarchy' is easily misconstrued and so careful attention is required to determine its meaning in terms of the conciliar documents.

It is notable that hierarchy was not the main topic addressed in the first chapters of *Lumen Gentium*. The fundamental term used for church was 'mystery.' There was considerable debate regarding this term because it might lead to a theology of the invisible Church which abandoned the truth of its visible reality.[88] For this reason, the council was careful to describe the church as an earthly society 'structured with hierarchical organs.'[89] It explicitly stated that mystical and material components could not be separated but 'form one complex reality which comes together from a human and divine element.'[90] The embodiment of the mystical Church in organisational structures therefore parallels the incarnation of Christ as divine Word.

The placement of *The People of God* in front of the chapter on hierarchy was particularly significant since the 1963 draft had ordered them the other way around.[91]

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[82] Flannery, A. *Vatican II: On The Church*, p.136.
[83] LG, 12.
[84] LG, 12.
[85] LG, 12.
[86] Komoncha, J. *Renewing Authority: The lesson of Dei verbum*, p.2.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.138.
[89] LG, 8.
[90] LG, 8.
[91] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.110.

The fathers generally agreed that it should be separated from a description of 'the laity' because 'the various tasks and states of life can only be understood in the light of the essential mission of the universal Church.'[92] That mission was described as both 'the instrument for the salvation of all' and 'the visible sacrament of [Christ's] saving unity.'[93] The focus on mission precluded any distinction between hierarchy and laity, designating 'people of God' as a term for the whole visible Church.[94]

Vatican II envisioned an institutional expression of authority modelled after the 'college' of the apostles.[95] The constitution described it as a permanent body, but did not give an account of the historical details of its establishment.[96] For the second time in as many articles, Peter 's primacy was emphasised as that which the church is 'built upon.'[97] There was some ambiguity in the sense that the church was 'founded upon' the apostles but 'built on' Peter which served mainly to avoid hermeneutic questions arising from an apparent conflict between Ephesians 2:20 and Matthew 16:18.[98] It is significant that the council described the church as hierarchical *by nature*, a system of governance established by Christ and maintained by the Holy Spirit, not merely the result of historical developments.[99] The arrangement of church offices with Peter as head of the apostles were grounded in direct actions of Christ without further explanation.[100]

The laity were clearly delineated from the magisterium. Though they shared 'the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ,'[101] their 'special vocation' was to engage with temporal affairs, 'directing them according to God's will.'[102] Their role was witnessing to 'the power of the Gospel,'[103] and 'to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus.'[104] Even though they were instructed to 'aid one another to greater holiness of life' they were also implored to 'disclose their needs and desires'[105] regarding 'spiritual goods' to their pastors whose decisions were to be 'promptly accepted in Christian obedience.'[106] The document carefully distinguished between the ministerial priesthood entrusted with forming and ruling, and the common priesthood exercised through reception of sacraments and other pious acts.[107] This

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[92] Ibid., p.119.
[93] LG, 9.
[94] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.153.
[95] LG, 19.
[96] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.189.
[97] LG, 19.
[98] The former suggests apostles are the foundation while the latter suggests Peter is a special foundation. Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.190.
[99] LG, 27.
[100] LG, 18.
[101] LG, 31.
[102] LG, 31.
[103] LG, 35.
[104] LG, 38.
[105] LG, 37.
[106] LG, 37.
[107] LG, 10.

distance between clergy and laity was emphasised by the consistent use of indicative statements concerning bishops and the predominant use of imperative statements concerning the laity.[108] The major exception to this tendency was the statement that the 'whole body of the faithful… cannot err in matters of faith.'[109] The *sensus fidei*[110] present in all the faithful allowed them to receive and apply faith to daily life.[111] This placed the active infallibility *in credendo* in the domain of the laity while reserving the passive charism *in docendo* to the clergy.[112]

Though the council considered priests and deacons part of the hierarchy, it described neither office in terms of possessing an inherent authority. In so far as they were pastors, priests represented Christ.[113] Nevertheless, in order to exercise their power, they depended on bishops.[114] Though the diaconate could be a part of priestly formation, the council asserted it was a unique office which could not be reduced to a mere 'stepping-stone' towards priesthood or some kind of a 'lay-apostolate.'[115] It depicted the consecration and mission of Christ as something entrusted to priests and deacons *by the bishops*.[116] It was unclear, however, to what extent such a mission may be identified with the mission of the whole people of God and whether the bishops have a role in entrusting this mission to the laity also.

The distinct role of bishops seemed to be based on the 'special outpouring' of the Holy Spirit passed on from the apostles.[117] They were proclaimed 'vicars of Christ' who have power in their own right,[118] a principle that was demonstrated practically in the council when the bishops revised the schemata prepared by the curia.[119] The council argued that Christ is present in the person of the bishops[120] and has endowed them with authority to teach.[121] For this reason, the faithful have an obligation to submit to episcopal decisions.[122] As direct inheritors of the authority of the apostles, the bishops together form a college which serves as an 'inner core of the church' and a source of 'creative initiatives and energy.'[123] As such, the episcopate was hailed as 'the supreme bearer of the fullness of power,'[124] but only 'in union with

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[108] Küng, *Infallible?*, p.57.
[109] LG, 12.
[110] appreciation of faith, instinctive sensitivity or discrimination
[111] LG, 12.
[112] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.165.
[113] LG, 37.
[114] LG, 28.
[115] Schillebeeckx, p.33.
[116] LG, 28.
[117] LG, 28.
[118] LG, 27.
[119] Orsy, L. *Who Are the Bishops?*, p.3.
[120] LG, 21.
[121] LG, 25.
[122] LG, 25.
[123] Orsy, p.4.
[124] Rahner, p.317.

the pope.'[125] The council's articulation of this qualification is the central issue concerning the ministerial authority of the church.

The council depicted the papacy at the heart of the college of bishops.[126] The pope could be accurately described as a member of the episcopate, but also as its head because he alone possessed independent infallibility.[127] The affirmation of papal authority in *Lumen Gentium* essentially endorsed Vatican I's decisions,[128] but focused the role of the pope on unity. It described the supreme and universal power of the pope within the framework of defending and supporting the authority of bishops.[129] The office was therefore a unifying principle of the whole church, expressed most clearly in the pope's relation to the college of bishops. The council described how Christ put Peter in charge of the apostles so that the episcopate would be one and undivided.[130] According to this model, the bishops are united with and through the Roman Pontiff.[131] Even though he is not the only principle of unity,[132] he serves as 'the perpetual and visible source and foundation of unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.'[133] Individual bishops mirror this function by acting as a source of unity for their own dioceses.[134]

The relationship between bishops and pope described in the conciliar documents exists in complex tension. The structure of the college precludes disagreement between the college and the pope since the only relevant distinction is between the college acting with the pope as its head and the pope acting alone.[135] Despite the fact that authority cannot be exercised apart from the pope, authority does not come from the pope.[136] Individual bishops have authority to teach directly from Christ, yet popes are permitted to censure them. The pope's teaching authority is to be respected and adhered to 'even when he does not speak *ex cathedra*.'[137] Nevertheless, if the episcopate has supreme and full authority, 'it cannot receive it from the Pope, whatever be the structure of this college, as for instance that it can only exist with and under the Pope.'[138] The college includes the pope, but 'is not to be understood as a moral unity in which all the members have exactly the same powers.'[139]

[125] Ibid.
[126] Tillard, J.-M.R. *Church of Churches: TheEcclesiology of Communion*, p.284.
[127] LG, 25.
[128] Küng, *Infallible?*, p.56.
[129] LG, 27.
[130] LG, 18.
[131] LG, 22.
[132] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.199.
[133] LG, 23.
[134] LG, 23.
[135] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.199.
[136] Ibid., p.200.
[137] LG, 25.
[138] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.195.
[139] Ibid., p.197.

The powers of the college are not merely the sum of the powers of the individual bishops,[140] but it is unclear how this relates to the papal authority by itself. When the pope acts alone, it is not in the strict sense of private action, but rather (always) as head of the college and visible head of the church.[141] That is to say, the pope acts with the authority of the college even when the college is not directly participating. In this sense, papal authority is the pragmatic function by which thousands of bishops speak with a single decisive voice. While the bishops possess a collective infallibility when they are all in agreement,[142] such consensus is only possible when acting 'together with' the pope.[143] The authority of the pope therefore means 'the same full and supreme authority over the Church… as the college of bishops as a whole.'[144]

This somewhat obtuse formulation emerged as a response to what Hermann J. Pottmeyer called the 'maximalist interpretation' of Vatican I in which papal primacy is equated with a centralised sovereignty.[145] It represents a compromise between the emerging patristic view of collegiality opposed to centralisation and the nineteenth century awareness that anything capable of subverting papal authority was dangerous to the faith. In Pottmeyer's view, Vatican II provided support for both maximalist interpretation and decentralised ecclesiology of communion.[146] Thus, the best description of the relation between the pope and the episcopate is an overlapping or joint authority, the details of which have yet to be determined.

Whatever overlap exists, however, it is clear that the college does not function as a corrective mechanism since it is theoretically possible for the pope to make decisions contrary to the opinion of all the bishops. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the pope is not free to exercise authority entirely without controls. For instance, he is bound to the doctrine handed down by the bishops,[147] that is, tradition. The pope's role was described in terms of protecting legitimate variety and preventing variety which hinders unity.[148] This clause may make doctrinal constraints ineffective, however, since the council defined 'legitimate variety' in terms of those differences which exist 'without prejudice to the Chair of Peter which presides over the whole assembly of charity.'[149] Thus, the pope could potentially dismiss reforms directed at the papacy itself without giving them sufficient consideration.

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[140] Ibid., p.198.
[141] Ibid., p.204.
[142] LG, 25.
[143] LG, 25.
[144] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.201.
[145] See Pottmeyer, H.J. Towards A *Papacy In Communion: Perspectives From Vatican II* pp.112-116.
[146] Pottmeyer, p.129.
[147] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.202.
[148] LG, 13.
[149] LG, 13.

Karl Rahner argued that though the possibility of autocratic domination by the pope in exclusion of the bishops exists, it will never be actualised.[150]   His argument is unconvincing, however, in light of Pope Paul VI's rejection of the Birth Control Commission's recommendation.[151]   Though it was clearly within the pope's authority to do so, *Humanae Vitae* (1968) suggested the people of God ought to commit their consciences to a papal interpretation of natural law even though many would not agree with it.[152]   The decision prompted serious questions concerning 'the obligatory force of such teaching.'[153]   Likewise, Paul VI unilaterally declared Mary 'Mother of the Church' after the third session of the council (1964) in opposition to the recommendation of the Theological Commission.[154]   Both seem to be cases of an independent exercise of authority by the pope in opposition to a significant number of bishops.   Nevertheless, such independent exercise of authority is not a necessary result of the doctrine of papal primacy.   As Yves Congar has noted, primacy has been and may continue to be exercised in a variety of ways.[155]

The ecclesiology of Vatican II has been criticised for being 'essentially juridical' rather than fundamentally biblical.[156]   Such analysis misconstrues the council's decrees by treating passages that were intentionally placed in a position of lesser importance as central ideas.   Hans Küng offered a similar critique of the third chapter of *Lumen Gentium*.   He noted that in the two prior chapters, 'the language is above all biblical, pastoral, ecumenical; in Chapter III it becomes juridical, institutional, disciplinary, Roman'.[157]   In doing so, he seems to identify the chapter with the maximalist tendencies of Vatican I.[158]   While it is true that chapter three drew more than any of the others from Vatican I, 'the ideas of the majority at Vatican II moved in the direction of some form of permanent participation of the bishops in the leadership of the church.'[159]   For this reason, it seems incorrect to assign the label of 'juridical' to the council as a whole.   Its decrees contained juridical elements, but also biblical and collegial elements.   Magisterial authority must make use of all these elements in its role of preserving and clarifying church doctrine in a way that neither revelation nor holiness could by themselves.

8.3   THE COUNCIL'S RELATION TO OUTSIDERS

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[150] Vorgrimler, *Commentary... Vol.I*, p.203.
[151] Collins, p.308.
[152] Ibid., p.309.
[153] Sullivan, *Magisterium…,* p.155.
[154] Hebblethwaite, P. *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope*, p.368.
[155] Congar, Y. *Report From Rome II: The Second Session of the Vatican Council*, p.100.
[156] Ellis, p.107.
[157] Küng, H. *Infallible?*, p.56.
[158] Pottmeyer, p.77.
[159] Ibid., p.116.

The council's most radical concession in terms of authority was the recognition of other religious systems. While certainly not an endorsement of relativism,[160] it entailed a change in how Catholics relate to those outside the *Roman Catholic church*. Cardinal Joseph Beran, exiled Archbishop of Prague, suggested to the council that *Dignitatis Humanae* might be viewed as an act of penance for the church's 'sins of the past,' noting in particular the burning of Jan Hus and forced conversions of the Czech people.[161] Though the council did not claim a monopoly on truth or goodness for the church, it framed the church as the teleological apex for which truth and goodness exists outside of its boundaries.[162]

The concern of the council to approach Protestants and Orthodox Christians in a different way was revealed both in its official statements and its inclusion of Protestant observers. *Unitatis Redintegratio* began with an explicit statement that the restoration of unity was one of the primary concerns of the council.[163]

The shift in language from the Council of Trent to Vatican II was remarkable. The latter council described non-Catholics in terms of relation rather than difference. It declared the church 'is joined in many ways to the baptized.'[164] It acknowledged that 'often enough, men of both sides were to blame'[165] for rifts in the church. The council even went so far as to state that the liturgy of other churches 'can truly engender a life of grace, and… give access to the communion of salvation.'[166] Though they possess defects, God uses them 'as a means of salvation.'[167]

Despite these encouraging comments, the council maintained that 'the fullness of the means of salvation' belongs to the *Roman Catholic church* alone.[168] This distinction between partial and complete means of salvation deserves investigation. The church was described as 'subsisting within' the *Roman Catholic church*, but it is interesting to note the qualifying words 'constituted and organized as a society in the present world.'[169] This emphasis suggests the possibility that the mystical body of Christ does not possess identical confines. Such a formulation makes sense of the comment that 'elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines.'[170] This differed from the encyclical *Mystici Corporis*

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[160] LG, 14.
[161] Stacpoole, p.296.
[162] LG, 16.
[163] *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR), 1.
[164] LG, 15.
[165] UR, 3.
[166] UR, 3.
[167] UR, 3.
[168] UR, 3.
[169] LG, 8.
[170] LG, 8.

(1943) which identified the mystical body of Christ exclusively with the *Roman Catholic church*.[171]

The council advocated the process of dialogue, but only 'between competent experts'[172] or by the faithful 'under the attentive guidance of their bishops.'[173] This was both an expression of magisterial authority and a limited acceptance of Protestant and Orthodox formulations of authority. Decisions regarding ecumenical events were referred for the most part to the local episcopal authority.[174] The decree was careful to note the authority of the pope or relevant bishop to override such decisions.[175]

Protestants who observed the council exerted influence in three ways. First, by being physically present, they had a moderating effect which kept the fathers from making statements that would offend the observers.[176] Second, they communicated their thoughts in informal settings.[177] Third, though they could not speak in conciliar sessions, they occasionally arranged for bishops to speak on their behalf.[178]

The council's tone was even more remarkably different in regard to religious liberty. It approached the subject with a sense of humility without comprising the understanding that its own version is exclusively true. 'We believe that this one true religion continues to exist in the Catholic and Apostolic Church.'[179] Likewise, it affirmed the 'moral duty of individuals and societies towards the true religion and the one Church of Christ.'[180]

Non-Christians were no longer regarded as infidels worthy of destruction, but as 'those who have not yet received the Gospel'[181] who therefore were 'related to the People of God.'[182] In stark contrast to the general opinion of the sixteenth century that dissenting persons should be given the opportunity to choose between recantation and death, the council emphasised the impossibility of coercing voluntary acts.[183] It drew from Christ's parable[184] to assert that wheat and tares should be permitted to grow together until the end of the world.[185]

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[171] Ellis, p.105.
[172] UR, 4.
[173] UR, 4.
[174] UR, 8.
[175] UR, 8.
[176] Stacpoole, p.166.
[177] Ibid., p.167.
[178] Ibid.
[179] *Dignitatis Humanae*(DH), 1.
[180] DH, 1.
[181] LG, 16.
[182] LG, 16.
[183] DH, 3.
[184] Matthew 13.
[185] DH, 11.

The council grounded the idea of religious liberty in the 'dignity of the human person.'[186] By doing so, it was able to establish limits on religious practices which violate that dignity.[187] Communities were attributed similar rights 'provided the just requirements of public order are not violated.'[188] Likewise, parents were accorded the right to choose for their children.[189] In this manner, authority to make personal religious decisions extended outward from the individual to communities and families.

In the council's view, the Church took the place of Israel as the people of God[190] and for this reason Christians have a special relation to Jews. It strongly condemned 'all hatreds, persecutions, displays of antisemitism' against Jews at any time.[191] It likewise lamented the historical conflicts between Christians and Muslims, urging all to forget the past.[192] The council's irenicism seemed to advocate a program for re-establishing an existential authority regarding its response to other religions.

Truth might be found in other religions, but only in a limited way. Ultimately, teaching truth was the province of the *Roman Catholic church*.[193] There was a curious extension of this authority, however, from teaching 'the truth which is Christ'[194] to declaring 'the principles of the moral order which spring from human nature itself.'[195] In this way, the Catholic claim to authority encompassed not only religious matters but also natural law.

8.4   EVALUATION

Since Vatican II, two extreme responses have emerged regarding its interpretation. The first was that the council was merely a continuation of the church's previous policies that has been widely misinterpreted by liberals.[196] The second was that the council entailed a radical departure from the past ushering in a new age for the church that has been muted by conservative stubbornness.[197] It seems clear that such extremes leave space for a broad middle ground.

The main reason for this lack of consensus as to what the council did is that the move it made towards complex understandings of the church permitted openings

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[186] DH, 1.
[187] DH, 3.
[188] DH, 4.
[189] DH, 5.
[190] LG, 9.
[191] *Nostra Aetate*, 4. (NA)
[192] NA, 3.
[193] DH, 14.
[194] DH, 14.
[195] DH, 14.
[196] See Hitchcock, J. *Version I: A Continuum in the Great Tradition.*
[197] See O'Malley, J. *Version II: A Break From the Past.*

for dialogue rather than closing discussion with antagonistic declarations. The fathers at Trent did not define the term 'church' because it was understood to mean the ecclesiastical order. The documents of Vatican II expressed a broader view, shifting from a theory of church occupied almost exclusively with the hierarchy to a theory attempting to encompass all Christians as 'the People of God.' While the Council of Trent presented revelation in terms of propositions imparted by the church, Vatican II presented it as the personal communication of the Trinity. In Vatican II the language of 'perfect society' was replaced by 'pilgrimage' and 'mystery.' The 'charism of truth' exercised by the hierarchy was balanced by emphasis on other charismatic gifts. Tradition was defined positively and scripture employed more comprehensively. Though Vatican II did not significantly alter the Council of Trent's understanding of papal primacy, it connected the pope inextricably to the college of bishops. This same decentralising tendency was expressed in the new emphasis on the *sensus fidei* of the whole people of God.

In his analysis of Max Weber's categories of 'rational-legal,' 'charismatic,' and 'traditional' authority, Philip Selznik suggested that he had not adequately considered their interdependence.[198] A full understanding of Vatican II cannot overlook the way scripture, tradition, and the magisterium are necessarily linked. The council closed its section on the transmission of revelation by solemnly declaring that 'sacred tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others.'[199]

The relation between scripture and tradition bears some similarity to the relation between the episcopate and the pope. As the pope is a part of the college of bishops, so scripture is a part of tradition. Both relationships were described with complex formulations attempting to adequately capture the uniqueness of scripture and the pope. Though tradition possesses the entire Word of God, it is unclear whether the same can be said of scripture. If tradition possesses the entire Word of God and will eventually culminate in plenitude of truth, scripture's authority seems to overlap in some undescribed way. The reassertion of the Tridentine version of equality concerning devotion and reverence implied that scripture's authority is 'full and complete' but tradition's is also 'full and complete.' Disagreement between scripture and tradition was precluded by an assertion that the two are part of a 'single deposit' just as disagreement is not possible between the pope and the college of bishops. The manner in which scripture and tradition 'communicate' was never articulated. In emphasising the distance between the oral preaching of the gospel and its preservation in scripture, the council espoused a historical view of revelation more

[198] Murnion, P.J. et al. *Church Authority in American Culture*, p.67.
[199] DV, 10. The Vatican archive translation uses 'tradition.' See <http://www.vatican.va>, op. cit.

compatible with the insights of contemporary scholarship. While *Dei Verbum* did not rule out such a mutually critical conversation, it equally did nothing to commend it.

The description of the people as a 'kingdom of priests'[200] was reminiscent of Luther's 'priesthood of all believers' but like Luther, the council had no intention of issuing a general authorisation for anyone to teach. It reserved the task of 'watching over and interpreting the Word of God'[201] to the magisterium. It declared interpretation the privilege of 'the living teaching office of the Church alone.'[202] Nevertheless, the council strongly asserted that this did not imply a superiority possessed by the teaching office. The teaching office was described as a servant of the Word of God which 'teaches only what has been handed on to it.'[203] This formulation seems unsatisfactory because the *Roman Catholic church* has frequently faced decisions relating to the modern world which require declarations that could never have been passed on. The issues of abortion, euthanasia, and women in ministry have been radically altered by technological and social developments of recent decades. Thus, the phrase seems to be generally understood as 'teaches only *on the basis of* what has been handed on to it,' allowing for the progress the church makes towards fullness of truth.

One element of authority which the council did not address directly but contributed to methodologically was the role of theologians as a separate body. Prior to the council, theologians were regarded as 'auxiliaries to the Roman magisterium, to the Pope.'[204] Administrative controls prevented free discussion of suspect doctrines.[205] In Pope John Paul II's pontificate, they have been viewed primarily as apologists to defend magisterial teaching.[206] During the council, however, the *magistri*, or theologians, had a unique role as expert advisors who were aware of the most recent developments in historical theology. The changes in role have prompted consideration of Thomas Aquinas' presentation of *magisterium cathedrae pastoralis* and *magisterium cathedrae magistralis*.[207] Visser 't Hooft has suggested that the *magistri* may form a fourth office[208] (in addition to bishop, priest, and deacon) but this suggestion does not seem entirely practical or desirable. They seem to retain a greater amount of the independence which Hans Küng emphasised as so important[209]

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[200] LG, 10.
[201] DV, 12.
[202] DV, 10.
[203] DV, 10.
[204] Stacpoole, p.34.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Collins, P. *Upon This Rock,* p.329.
[207] 'teaching authority of bishops' and 'teaching authority of theologians' Sullivan, *Magisterium…,* p.24.
[208] Hooft, W.A.V. *Teachers and Teaching Authorities*, p.64.
[209] See Küng, *Infallible?* pp.190-192.

if allowed to exist as professional interpreters of the Word of God who are not constrained by the responsibility of making definitive, pastorally responsible statements. As such, they may form an effective counterpoint to the magisterium and the prophetic role of holiness in tradition.

The dynamic interaction of all three aspects of authority is readily apparent. Bishops must make decisions concerning faith yet always draw from and are controlled by the Word of God. Tradition expresses itself in the canon of scripture and the lives of believers but must be interpreted by the bishops and the Word of God as preserved unalterably in scripture. Scripture is the Word of God written down but can only be understood through the teaching and practice of the church. This complex model of overlapping authority seems appropriate in light of the Triune God on which it depends. While it would be reductionist to assign each member of the Trinity a unique type of authority, there is a surprising similarity between the difficulty faced in describing the interaction of the Trinity and that faced in describing the interaction of these aspects of authority. Just as some churches have been criticised for emphasising one member of the Trinity to the detriment of the others, so Roman Catholicism has been rightly criticised for emphasising the magisterium to the detriment of scripture and tradition. Vatican II opened up the relationships between these three aspects of authority for mutual conversation and supported this perspective of authority by altering the *Catholic church*'s historically hostile stance towards Protestants and other religions.

CHAPTER 9:   AUTHORITY IN BAPTISM, EUCHARIST, AND MINISTRY

9.1   OVERVIEW

The process which led to the creation of *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (BEM) encompassed four world conferences beginning with Lausanne in 1927 and ten plenary meetings of the Faith and Order Commission.[1]   The initial drafts were generated in 1967 (eucharist), 1968 (baptism), and 1972 (ministry).[2]   Many churches expressed an appreciation for the extended length of time which went into its preparation[3] and some hailed it as a sign that the *World Council of churches* was once again dealing with central issues of faith.[4]

BEM remains unique among ecumenical documents[5] both for its summary of divisive material and the process of response it requested of various communions.   It described itself in terms of convergence rather than consensus[6] and introduced, according to some communions, a novel method of dialogue in its call for 'reception.'   The demand for clarification of this term by the *Inter-Orthodox Symposium*[7] was quite correct because reception has meant different things when used in reference to ecumenical councils or documents like Calvin's *Institutes*.   In light of the limited authority claimed by the constitution of the *World Council of churches* and the preface of BEM, it seems clear that the writers understood reception more in terms of the active sense in which the *Institutes* were analysed and critiqued than the passive sense in which conciliar decisions put an end to further discussion.   Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that the document truly was 'unprecedented'[8] as an extended collective project of an international body of Christians.

This chapter focuses primarily on the ministry section, though general hermeneutic and methodological issues addressed in various responses sometimes included the sections on baptism or eucharist.   A clear division is apparent in the section on ministry between the *ministry of the whole people of God* dealt with in the

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[1] Thurian, M. (ed.) *Churches respond to BEM : Official responses to the "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" text*, I.2. (henceforth, CR)
[2] CR, I.3.
[3] One such example is the *church of Scotland*, CR, I.88.
[4] Batkis, P.A. 'Ministry and Ecclesiology in the Orthodox Responses to BEM' in L. Swidler (ed.), *Journal of Ecumenical Studies Vol.33, Spring* (1996), p.174.
[5] Kirill, G. 'The Significance and Status of BEM in the Ecumenical Movement' in G. Limouris and N.M. Vaporis (eds.), *Orthodox Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (1985), p.81.
[6] BEM, ix.
[7] CR, I.124.
[8] BEM, ix.

first section[9] and the *ordained ministry* dealt with in the remaining five sections. Section two addressed the Church and the ordained ministry, highlighting the historical foundation of ordination, authority, priesthood, and gender issues.[10] Section three described forms of ordained ministry, noting the development of the threefold pattern, a set of guiding principles, the differentiation of function, and the variety of charisms.[11] Section four presented succession in the apostolic tradition, differentiating between apostolic tradition and the succession of the apostolic ministry.[12] Section five described the meaning of, act of, and conditions for ordination itself.[13] Section six set forth the goal of mutual recognition of the ordained ministries.[14]

The text of BEM clearly was not an attempt to come to a consensus on the issue of authority. Many responses criticised BEM on this account,[15] some noting in particular the absence of statements on papal ministry and magisterium.[16] Of the fifty-five points, only M15 and M16 dealt directly with the question and not in a comprehensive way. This limited account likely resulted from a desire to limit the length of the section on ministry and recognition that authority remained a divisive question among the various communions.

M15 rooted authority in Christ and linked ministers to this authority through the act of ordination, emphasising that authority was not a possession of the ordained but a gift for the edification of the Church. The cautious language of this formulation was significant because it preserved the possibility of conceiving other gifts of authority which might be exercised by laity. The connection of clergy to laity was highlighted by the emphasis on responsibility and cooperation with the whole community in the exercise of authority. Likewise, M16 cautioned against autocracy, emphasising the interdependent and reciprocal features of authority. The description of Christ's authority as *exousia*, authority governed by love, led to the conclusion that authentic authority may be measured by conformity to Christ's example of service, death, and resurrection.

9.2 MAJOR CRITICISM

Before proceeding to the important problems raised by the response to BEM, it is necessary to note three major criticisms directed at methodology rather than

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[9] M1-M6.
[10] M7-M18.
[11] M19-M33.
[12] M34-M38.
[13] M39-50.
[14] M51-M55.
[15] CR, III.155.
[16] CR, III.157.

content. While these were not expressly reflections on authority, they reveal significant barriers to reception for some communions. They merit consideration because they represent a growing understanding of the requirements necessary for ecumenical statements to be considered authoritative.

Several churches expressed concern that BEM did not adequately reflect their history or emphasis. The *Evangelical church of the Augsburg Confession*[17] noted that the ecclesiastical language used was foreign to them.[18] The *Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland* pointed out that the issues were presented 'largely in terms native to other Christian traditions.'[19] The *United church of Christ in Japan* reported that much of BEM 'cannot be said to be completely relevant to our situation. In general it comes across to us as strongly influenced by the values of the so-called "Christian world" of Europe and North America.'[20] They described the document as 'protective, conservative, and insufficiently missional or reformational.'[21]

This problem of philosophical pluralism and cultural diversification represents a challenge to authority expressed admirably by the *Anglican church of the Southern Cone*:

> New discoveries in the fields of semantics, linguistics, and the sociology of knowledge have raised doubts as to the possibility of drafting doctrinal statements akin to the Chalcedonian definition which came to be accepted as the authoritative solution to the Christological problems posed in the fourth century.[22]

They believed such definition would still be possible if the 'serious problems' of exegesis and application were acknowledged even though 'such statements will not have the same impact on the life of the church today'.[23] This solution is insufficient because even if exegetical principles could be agreed on, the problem of a commonly accepted procedure for making definitive declarations would remain. The implications of BEM for both must be considered.

The many communions who agreed wholeheartedly with BEM's use of scripture[24] have caused some writers to overlook the negative assessment of a minority.[25] There seemed to be general agreement with the *Anglican church of Canada*'s analysis that 'the biblical treatment of the ministry section as a whole was

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[17] See *Note on capitalisation, p.2.*
[18] CR, III.146.
[19] CR, I.75.
[20] CR, II.288.
[21] CR, II.290.
[22] CR, I.55.
[23] CR, I.55.
[24] For example the *church of Ireland* response in CR, I.63.
[25] For example, William Henn in 'Hermeneutics and Ecumenical Dialogue: BEM and Its Responses on "Apostolicity"' in P. Bouteneff and D. Heller (eds.), *Interpreting Together: Essays in Hermeneutics* (WCC, 2001), p.86.

seen to be less complete than that given to the other two topics.'[26] Nevertheless, several explicitly critical responses must be taken into account.

The *Anglican church of the Southern Cone* recorded doubts about 'the hermeneutic implicit in the use of scriptural references'.[27] They criticised in particular the use of Pauline epistles, addressed to particular situations in the early church, to make conclusions on a universal level, and suggested a clearer articulation of the principles used in biblical quotations.[28] They further reported dissatisfaction with the way 'statements from different schools of thought have been laid side by side without achieving a real synthesis.'[29] The *Catholic Theological Society of America* suggested that biblical texts were used in BEM to 'prove' things 'beyond the limits of the historico-critical method'.[30] Since BEM acknowledged only the possibility of infant baptism in the ancient church, the *Romanian Orthodox church* suggested that passages which indicated its actual practice[31] were being ignored or misinterpreted.[32]

The *Netherlands Reformed church and Reformed churches in the Netherlands* questioned whether appropriate consideration was given to the unity of scripture.

> Biblical arguments are taken exclusively from the New Testament and as a result no special theological attention is given to the continuity of God's people in the Old and the New Covenant…. the fact that the supper of the Lord was instigated in the framework of Jewish Passover could be further investigated, and that the offices of prophet, priest and king used in the Old Testament could be looked at when dealing with the structure of the church's ministry.[33]

The *Presbyterian church in Ireland* echoed this concern, hinting that a 'synagogue pattern' or the reformed tradition's concept of eldership might be more appropriate than the threefold pattern.[34] The *Remonstrant Brotherhood* pressed this theme further, declaring that consideration of Jewish heritage was essential to finding common ground for the church of today.[35]

When considering their assessment of BEM's use of scripture, the divide between episcopal and non-episcopal communions is readily apparent. The critiques of the former focused on abstract hermeneutical issues while the latter addressed the isolation of Christianity from its Jewish roots in connection with issues of governance. Such comments reflected attempts to ensure that scripture would not be

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[26] CR, II.46.
[27] CR, I.56.
[28] CR, I.56.
[29] CR, I.56-57.
[30] CTSA Research Team. 'A Global Evaluation of Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry' in M.A. Fahey (ed.), *Catholic Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (University Press of America, 1986), p.10.
[31] Acts 2:39, 16:15, 16:33, and 1 Corinthians 1:16
[32] CR, III.5.
[33] CR, IV.101-102.
[34] CR, III.217.
[35] CR, II.306.

used as an argumentative lever against a teaching office on the one hand and to support Calvin's theories of governance and concern for the unity of the scripture on the other.

Many of the same communions which criticised BEM for neglecting their perspective or misapplying scripture also criticised the language of the document. The *Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland* argued that the linguistic problem where 'what is *heard* by one tradition is generally subtly and significantly different from what another tradition *intends*'[36] was compounded by ambiguous language, particularly the difficulty of ascertaining whether particular statements were to be taken literally or metaphorically.[37] The *United Reformed church in the United Kingdom* supported this position, dismissing convergence regarding the sacraments as dependant 'on ambiguities of language.'[38] This may have been the concern behind the Catholic reservations concerning some of the content, despite their affirmation of the process.[39]

Some communions were particularly sceptical that certain terms were being used to 'smuggle in' ideas or practices contrary to their belief. For instance, the *Finnish Orthodox church* criticised the failure to clarify 'the differences between the priesthood of all Christians and the ministry of the church'[40] while the *United church of Christ (USA)* objected to the 'leap from chronology to ontology of office and person' in discussion of ordination.[41] Though BEM never attempted a rigorous definition of sacrament, the *Salvation Army* criticised it for failing 'to make clear the crucial distinction between the sign and the truth signified, between the shadow and the reality.'[42] The *Remonstrant Brotherhood* feared BEM suggested they lacked something necessary for salvation because it appeared to be based on an idea of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.[43]

Two theories were presented as explanations for such ambiguities. The *Evangelical Lutheran church in Canada* attributed it to a 'lack of emphasis on the word.'[44] This seems to imply that the ideas of scripture are more clear than those articulated in BEM. The problems Lutherans and Reformed faced in coming to a common understanding of the eucharist at Marburg (1529), not to mention the long history of Protestant division, have demonstrated that significant portions of scripture are not so clear that they cannot be read differently with equal conviction about the

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[36] CR, I.75.
[37] CR, I.75.
[38] CR, I.103-104.
[39] CR, VI.4.
[40] CR, II.27. See also Kirill, p.89.
[41] CR, II.331.
[42] CR, IV.254.
[43] 'There is no salvation outside the church.' CR, II.305.
[44] CR, II.102.

authority of the text. Since this seems to be an intractable problem of language, it would be more useful to focus on strategies for coping with ambiguity rather than transferring the problem of ambiguity to another aspect of authority. The *United church of Canada* attributed the ambiguity concerning women in ministry to 'clericalist' and 'sexist' attitudes reflective of 'the *tradition* of the church… [but] inappropriate to the *faith* of the church.'[45] While these theories emphasised the need for clarity on the issues of scripture's relation to tradition and the ordination of women, ambiguity is clearly the result of attempting to use language which connected with as many traditions as possible.

9.3   THREE PROBLEMS

In his review of BEM, George Vandervelde described three problems related to ministry: the differences apparent between non-hierarchical and hierarchical patterns of ministry, the relation of the priesthood of all believers to ordained ministry, and the question of women in ministry.[46] It is useful to consider these problems as a means of understanding the models of authority which various confessional families have applied in support of their positions.

The most definitive recommendation BEM gave the churches was that those without the threefold pattern should adopt it and those who had it already should accept non-episcopal ministries as valid. The question which most churches addressed in responding to this recommendation was: is there a clear pattern for ministry which everyone must adhere to?

It is obvious that scripture does not provide such a model.[47] The *Presbyterian church of Wales* and the *Union of Welsh Independents* noted that επισκοπος and πρεσβυτερος were used interchangeably in the New Testament.[48] With the advent of Christianity, the word διακονια changed from a common, non-religious word connoting slavery to a poetic, inherently religious term connoting loving service and authority.[49] The changes in ministerial patterns evidenced by historical criticism undermine any attempt to assert that a particular pattern of ministry has always been practiced as it is today.

For this reason, many churches saw no reason to adopt the threefold pattern. Both the *Baptist Union of Sweden* and the *Evangelical church of Westphalia (FRG)* argued that it was not essential for unity, the latter noting the variety of orders

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[45] CR, II.284.
[46] Vandervelde, G. 'BEM and the Hierarchy of Truths: a Vatican contribution to the Reception Process' in L. Swidler (ed.), *Journal of Ecumenical Studies Vol.25, Winter* (1988), p.77.
[47] M19.
[48] CR, II.172, CR, III.279.
[49] Collins, p.168.

depicted in the New Testament.[50] The *Evangelical Methodist church: Central Conference in the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin* opposed any hierarchically structured ministry because the 'New Testament explicitly addresses the equality of different services and visions of God's people, and does not give priority to the office of leadership, rather to the vision of love.'[51] The *Waldesian Evangelical church of the River Plate* questioned why the church of the third century should be chosen as a model[52] and expressly disavowed any movements that might lead to 'constantinianism.'[53] This concern was echoed by the *Evangelical church in Hesse and Nassau (FRG)* which wanted BEM to take into account the biblical critique of power and authority.[54] The *Evangelical Lutheran church of Hanover (FRG)* rejected the proposal to adopt the threefold ministry because of the lack of 'cogent reasons' and the problematic nature of denoting functions.[55]

A second argument against acceptance of the threefold pattern was apparent in responses describing it as useless or harmful to the church. The *Evangelical Methodist church: Central Conference in the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin* stated bluntly that 'it is exactly the ordained clergy who have brought about the splits in the Christian church. It is also true that through the ages clergy have separated themselves more and more from the laity and have incapacitated them'.[56] The *Evangelical-Reformed church of North-West Germany* argued that the calling of the whole people of God would be better represented by a collegial model than a hierarchical one.[57] The *Netherlands Reformed church* and the *Reformed churches in the Netherlands* suggested 'the historical development towards… the threefold office of bishop, presbyter, and deacon, gains a normative influence which a historical development should not be given.'[58] It is apparent that this type of response was confined to a limited area in both a geographic and a confessional sense.

It is notable that communions outside of central Europe did not criticise the pattern directly, but only the emphasis given to it in BEM. The *Methodist church (UK)* suggested that the focus on the validity of ministerial orders indicated a 'loss of proportion' which leads to apathy among the people of God.[59] Similarly, the *United Methodist Church (USA)* questioned the implied understanding of ordination as a sacrament because they view it in functional rather than ontological terms.[60] The

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[50] CR, IV.210, CR, IV.152.
[51] CR, IV.181.
[52] CR, IV.126.
[53] CR, IV.127.
[54] CR, IV.136.
[55] CR, IV.55.
[56] CR, IV.181.
[57] CR, IV.98.
[58] CR, IV.107. The two synods made a joint response.
[59] CR, II.216.
[60] CR, II.196.

church of Scotland argued that 'the significance of the threefold ministry… is overstated'.[61] Interestingly, the *Methodist church of South Africa* stated that it was possible for them to consider adopting the threefold pattern because BEM affirmed 'that no pattern of ministry may claim exclusive legitimacy on biblical grounds'.[62] The *Evangelical church of the Congo* urged that ministerial patterns 'should not be allowed to become a source of division among the churches of the present day' since the first century functioned harmoniously with a variety of patterns.[63] That the most negative appraisals of the threefold pattern should come exclusively from central Europe suggests that those communions have continued to function in a sixteenth century framework of suspicion in which difference is perceived as not merely theological but a threat to a particular way of life.

In contrast, the three major episcopal communions described the threefold pattern as an outworking of the Holy Spirit's influence in the history of the Church. For the Orthodox churches, episcopacy was not merely *bene esse ecclesiae* but *esse ecclesiae*.[64] The *church of England* read BEM as promoting the idea that the threefold pattern of ministry is the norm and departure from it is justifiable only in 'an emergency situation in which the existing ministry actually destroys some essential characteristics of the Church'.[65] In their understanding, it is not 'one amongst many possible patterns… [but] the most obvious candidate for a church visibly united… an expression of unity and the means for achieving it.'[66] The *Roman Catholic church* emphasised the need to further explore the difference between 'the fundamental and constitutive core of the threefold ministry… and the historic form, style and organization it has inevitably assumed and will assume in the future.'[67] It is clear, however, that they understood episcopacy itself as constitutive in its service to the unity of 'the local eucharistic communities.'[68] The *Orthodox church in America* approached the threefold pattern of ministry as a somewhat open question, recording that they were exploring for the first time whether they considered it normative or one option among many.[69] Nevertheless, they continued to consider their patterns the result of an 'inner logic' rather than merely 'fortuitous historical circumstances.'[70]

Other churches understood it as good for the church, though not essential. The *church in Wales* asserted that the threefold form which they use is 'necessary for

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[61] CR, I.96.

[62] CR, II.241.

[63] CR, V.168.

[64] Batkis, p.183. 'good for the Church'/'essential for the Church'

[65] CR, III.53.

[66] CR, III.54.

[67] CR, VI.31.

[68] Marrevee, W. 'The Lima Document on Ordained Ministry' in M.A. Fahey (ed.), *Catholic Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (University Press of America, 1986), p.173.

[69] CR, III.22.

[70] CR, III.23.

the wellbeing of the church'[71] and always in need of reform.[72] The *Evangelical-Lutheran church of Denmark* was willing to recognise the threefold ministry, but not its necessity for the unity of the church.[73] The *Evangelical church of the Augsburg Confession* even acknowledged that history made a 'powerful claim' for the acceptance of the threefold form but regarded it as 'a distinction based on human law,'[74] a position echoed by the *Evangelical Lutheran church of France*.[75] The *North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran church* was willing to consider adopting practices which were practical for their communion.[76] The *Methodist church (UK)* was willing to accept the threefold structure in its entirety, but only if the present sufficiency of their ministry was acknowledged.[77] The *Salvation Army* stated 'We can understand the threefold ministry as three levels of ministerial authority, but find attempts to give distinct theological meaning to those levels unconvincing and confusing.'[78]

Many of the positive appraisals of the threefold pattern were based on acceptance of the premise that history had demonstrated the effectiveness of the threefold pattern for maintaining unity. The negative side of this argument, that other patterns of ministry resulted in endless division, could be seen most strongly in the *Finnish Orthodox church*'s appraisal of BEM as a challenge to Protestant tradition.[79] Nevertheless, the refusal of some churches to accept such a reading of history must be taken seriously, especially since even those communions which have maintained the threefold pattern in its strictest form, namely Orthodox and Catholics, are not in communion with each other.[80]

When the historical argument for the threefold pattern is set aside, it becomes possible to consider the ways in which the diverse forms of ministry may be seen to correspond in terms of function, if not in office. A number of non-episcopal communions adopted this as their strategy of rapproachment. The *Presbyterian church USA* and the *Presbyterian church of Wales* recorded that they could accept the threefold ministry if it was considered in terms of function rather than office.[81] The *Evangelical church of Westphalia (FRG)* suggested that the solution proposed in the baptism section of accepting both infant and believer baptism as valid within the appropriate context might be applied to ministry.[82] Interpreting the threefold pattern

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[71] CR, III.92.
[72] CR, III.93.
[73] CR, III.113.
[74] CR, III.156.
[75] CR, III.162.
[76] CR, I.48-49.
[77] CR, II.227.
[78] CR, IV.249.
[79] CR, II.25.
[80] Marrevee, p.170.
[81] CR, III.200, CR, II.172.
[82] CRBEM, II.163.
[82] Schrotenboer, P. *An Evangelical Response to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Ministry:A

in terms of function could resolve the disparity in BEM between the inclusivist perspective permitting a variety of baptismal forms and the exclusivist perspective advocating a single pattern of ministry. The *Presbyterian church of Korea* deemed the threefold pattern acceptable provided it could 'be reformed and respond to the historical needs of the churches.'[83] The *World Evangelical Fellowship* referred to functional roles rather than offices in their response: 'bishop, pastor, elder, deacon, evangelist, missionary, preacher, counselor. These are primarily functional terms rather than being indicative of status.'[84] The *Uniting church in Australia* considered that in light of their presbyteries' requests for pastoral care, a model of 'bishop-in-presbytery is a possible ordering of episkope in our church.'[85] The *Moravian church in America, Southern Province* described itself as having a threefold ministry, but without 'mechanical' succession.[86]

The issue of ministerial pattern highlighted the main difference between previous dialogues and BEM. While the former accepted different patterns of ministry as different emphases aimed at preserving particular ecclesiological values, BEM presented a strong proposal for the adoption of the threefold pattern as the best candidate for a future united Church.[87] This proposal was not well received by non-episcopal communions. Some rejected it outright while others considered adopting it even though they did not regard it as essential. The proposal to move towards a threefold ministry of *function* rather than office found support in the *Catholic Theological Society of America*'s suggestion that orthopraxis in word and sacrament might be an alternative measure of non-episcopal ordination.[88] It is doubtful, however, that this would prove acceptable to the Vatican since even Anglican ministry has not been recognised. Furthermore, there was scant reference to collegiality,[89] a lack which some Catholics viewed as a deliberate attempt to avoid dealing with questions relating to Petrine ministry.[90]

Those communions with a strong view of episcopacy perceived BEM as asking 'for just as much conversion and reform' from episcopal communions as from non-episcopal communions.[91] This assertion would be true if episcopal communions accepted non-episcopal ministry according to function, but that would mean that non-episcopal communions were being asked to change very little – indeed, this was

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[82] CRBEM,CR, IV.152.
[83] CR, II.163.
[84] Schrotenboer, Ministry:A.
[85] CR, IV.163.
[86] CR, II.258.
[87] Marrevee, p.171.
[88] CTSA Research Team, *A Global Evaluation of Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, p.23.
[89] M48.
[90] Marrevee, p.175. It was not only Catholics who noted this lack. See the *Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR*, CR, V.145.
[91] Marrevee, p.180.

certainly why so many Protestant communions reformulated the question in that way. Depending on how it was approached, one side or the other had to take a larger step. Neither appeared ready to make radical adjustment regarding their current pattern of ministry.

The relationship between the priesthood of all believers and the ordained ministry was expressed most clearly in discussions of what it means to have apostolic continuity. All communions agree that ministry is something for the whole people of God.[92] Those communions which grounded apostolicity in an unbroken formal succession emphasised the distinction between clergy and laity.[93] Those which grounded apostolicity in faithfulness to apostolic teaching necessarily rejected a radical distinction between clergy and laity since both could be apostolic in the same sense. The question implicit in the former position is whether the latter have lost something in eliminating the theological distinction. There is also an opposite question of whether such radical difference can be consonant with the gospel.

The link between apostolicity and the pattern of ministry becomes apparent upon consideration that episcopal communions emphasised continuity through formal succession while non-episcopal communions emphasised continuity in teaching. BEM attempted a circumlocution which linked both perspectives to the word 'apostolic.' It defined apostolic *tradition* as 'continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles'[94] and apostolic *succession* as 'found in the apostolic tradition of the Church as a whole…. an expression of permanence and, therefore of the continuity of Christ's own mission.'[95] Thus, apostolicity is concerned with what the church needs to survive from generation to generation expressed in both episcopal succession and maintenance of the living word in the community.[96]

Numerous reports described this strategy as helpful, but such an appraisal was not shared by all. The statement by the *Czechoslovak Hussite church* that when apostolicity was grounded in the church as a whole, 'the problems with succession disappear and what remains as an important task is, rather, the preservation of continuity'[97] was clearly an overstatement. The negative assessments of BEM's presentation of apostolicity fall into three categories: concern for the unity of apostolic succession and apostolic tradition, those concerned that apostolic teaching should take precedence over any act of succession, and those which rejected apostolic succession entirely.

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[92] M6.
[93] CR, VI.30.
[94] M34.
[95] M35.
[96] Collins, p.178.
[97] CR, II.302.

Orthodox found the text an incomplete description of succession because it considered neither its sacramental expression[98] nor its essential place in apostolic tradition. While the *Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria* called for clarity regarding 'the link between ordained ministry and the ministry of the apostles and apostolic succession,'[99] the *Bulgarian Orthodox church* declared apostolic tradition 'inextricably bound up' with the apostolic ministry.'[100] For Orthodox in general, apostolic succession meant 'the truth in all its fullness and wholeness'[101] so that continuity cannot be separated from content. The *Finnish Orthodox church* suggested succession 'has a much greater meaning as a constitutive factor… than the document indicates.'[102] They argued that ministry is not based on functions, but the will of Christ and considered it 'problematic and easily misleading to speak of episkope without an episkopos, a bishop.'[103]

The *Roman Catholic church* expressed similar concern that ministerial succession should not be isolated from its 'ecclesial context.'[104] They suggested that the word 'sign' could only accurately represent their position when accompanied by the adjective 'effective' as in a previous draft.[105] Furthermore, in their view, episcopal succession actually is a *guarantee* because each bishop 'embodies and actualizes' apostolicity in time and the wider community.[106] The agreement between Catholics and Orthodox on this issue would eventually be formalised in the United States with the *Agreed Statement of the Eastern Orthodox/Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States: Apostolicity in the Life of the Church* (1986).

Some Protestant communions accepted that continuity in succession could be important but argued that it was ultimately subsidiary to the content of teaching. The *Evangelical-Lutheran church of Denmark* stated: 'agreement with the apostolic gospel, should receive precedence over continuity of ministry'.[107] The *Evangelical Lutheran church of Iceland* affirmed that 'the preservation of the apostolic tradition in the church is of greater importance than the apostolic succession.'[108] While the *American Lutheran Church* appreciated 'the stress on the need for historical continuity and accountability to the apostolic proclamation',[109] they nevertheless

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[98] CRBEM,Kirill, p.92.
[99] CR, III.2.
[100] CR, II.22-23.
[101] Kirill, p.91.
[102] CR, II.28.
[103] CR, II.28.
[104] Marrevee, p.178.
[105] CR, VI.33.
[106] CR, VI.33.
[107] CR, III.113.
[108] CR, IV.68.
[109] CR, II.83.

defined apostolic as 'carrying out the functions of ministry' not 'following traditional forms.'[110]

Other communions simply presented succession as unnecessary. *Pentecostals* have always understood apostolic succession as conformity to teachings rather than a projection of historical continuity.[111] The *churches of Christ in Australia* stated that 'the "apostolic tradition" in the post-apostolic age is preserved in the NT and is transmitted through the whole people of God who faithfully minister in accordance with the NT rather than through the succession of bishops'.[112] The clearest articulation came from the *church of Norway* which stated:

> We cannot see that the validity of ministerial acts performed by ordained persons are dependent on being able to trace back to the first apostles a formal succession of the laying on of hands. The question of the church's apostolicity, and thereby the validity of its ministry, depends rather on the extent to which it has preserved the apostolic witness to Christ and apostolic teaching.[113]

As with the threefold pattern, a minority even criticised the practice as harmful to the church. The *Baptist Union of Sweden* stated that apostolic succession has throughout history 'counteracted and persecuted those who have tried to stand up for essential parts of this tradition. Therefore, it is not possible for us to see an unbroken apostolic succession as an essential part of the Christian church.'[114] Because the *United Methodist church, Central and Southern Europe* rejected any form of sacramental and hierarchical thinking as 'irreconcilable with the gospel,'[115] they regarded episcopal succession as unhelpful for the unity of the church.[116] These did not reflect novel critiques of descriptions of apostolicity, but rather were extensions of critiques concerning the threefold pattern. Again, the limited geographic area these critiques came from is readily apparent.

Clearly BEM did not solve the problem of apostolic succession.[117] It merely served to clarify the disagreement with common language. These disagreements fall along interesting chronological lines. Pre-reformation communions asserted that succession was an intrinsic part of apostolic tradition. Reformation communions wanted to give apostolic teaching (i.e. scripture) precedence over the act of succession. Post-reformation communions refused to concede that apostolic tradition could be anything other than scripture. While the *Roman Catholic church* is not known for its ability to change, Vatican II affirmed the possibility of rethinking

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[110] CR, II.83-84.
[111] Hunter, p.343.
[112] CR, II.272-273.
[113] CR, II.121.
[114] CR, IV.211.
[115] CR, II.207.
[116] CR, II.208.
[117] Kirill, p.91.

different understandings as the Church makes progress in the Holy Spirit.[118]   The Orthodox position is more problematic because they understand the immutability of apostolic tradition as a precondition for unity lest any agreements reached be eroded as notions taken out of their context lose significance and meaning.[119]   The Protestant position, on the other hand, has a serious weakness.   The idea that apostolicity depended only on continuity in teaching clearly arose from historical necessity rather than a theologically prior idea.   An apostolicity detached from historical expression faces the twin danger of being reduced to a set of propositions and being easily influenced by changes in fashionable philosophy.[120]   Thus there is a real need for an apostolicity linked to both apostolic teaching and unbroken succession, but the intransigence of older communions and the obstinacy of the younger make dialogue towards a common apostolicity futile unless both demonstrate a willingness to move.

Though the text and many of the responses treated the ordination of women as a peripheral issue,[121] it remains central to understanding authority because of its decisiveness regarding the possibility of a shared ministry.[122]   The issue has obvious connections to the pattern of ministry and the meaning of apostolicity and therefore must be a part of any serious dialogue on ministry.[123]

Faith and Order discussed women's roles intermittently,[124] but the question was not raised at a general meeting until Uppsala (1968) where further study was recommended.   Methodists began ordaining women in 1920s but did not grant them full status as clergy until 1956.[125]   Presbyterians granted full ordination in 1955.[126]   The first female Lutheran pastors were ordained in 1953 but not permitted to be head pastors until 1959.[127]   The first Anglican woman was ordained in 1944 in the extenuating circumstances of China during World War II, but this action was declared 'uncanonical.'[128]   By 1971, over seventy member churches of the *World Council of churches* had ordained women.[129]   While even Catholics seemed to be

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[118] *Dei Verbum*, 8
[119] Kirill, p.93.
[120] See Hopko, T. 'Orthodoxy in Post-Modern Pluralist Societies' in K. Raiser *The Ecumenical Review Vol.51, No.4 October* (1999).
[121] It is worth noting that the earlier paper *One Baptism, One Eucharist, and a Mutually Recognized Ministry* (1975) devoted six of its one-hundred and sixty-six paragraphs to the ordination of women while BEM mentioned it only in M18 and M54 out of one-hundred and eleven paragraphs. Approximately half of the official responses did not address the issue of women's ordination directly.
[122] May, M.A. 'The ordination of women: the churches' responses to Baptism, eucharist, and ministry' in L. Swidler (ed.), *Journal of Ecumenical Studies Vol.26, Spring* (1989), p.252.
[123] Gassmann, G. et al. *BEM 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses*, p.125.
[124] Lynch, J. E. 'Ordination of women: Protestant experience in ecumenical perspective' in L. Swidler (ed.), *Journal of Ecumenical Studies Vol. 12, Spring* (1975), p.176.
[125] Ibid., p.180.
[126] Ibid., p.181.
[127] Ibid., p.185.
[128] Ibid., p.187.
[129] Hiatt, S.R. 'Ecumenical conference on ordination of women' in L. Swidler (ed.), *Journal of Ecumenical Studies Vol.8, Winter* (1971), p.207.

considering the possibility at that point in time, the question remained closed for the Orthodox.[130]

In the history of the Church, the overwhelming practice has certainly been not to ordain women as priests. Though a minority of Catholics have argued for the ordination of women priests, Pope John Paul II asserted in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* that 'the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.'[131] This minority has continued to point to the existence of deaconesses from the third to the ninth century,[132] a fact affirmed by Orthodox who pressed for discussion of a female diaconate.[133] Inter-Orthodox discussion would eventually flounder on disagreement about whether being made deaconess would require *ordination* rather than a lesser form of consecration.[134]

While churches might have pointed to evidence of women in leadership roles in the first two centuries and attribute women's exclusion to institutionalisation within the Roman Empire, most of the arguments for ordaining women were implicit in reports of positive experiences. The *Baptist Union of Sweden* reported that they ordain women and recently elected a woman to their equivalent of bishop.[135] The *church of Sweden* suggested a more detailed treatment, noting that they had ordained women for 25 years.[136] For the *church of Norway*, mutual recognition of ministries must include the recognition of their ordained women.[137] On the basis of their experiences, the *Presbyterian church in Canada* urged that 'decisive leadership should be given in encouraging all churches to move towards the ordination of women.'[138] The one communion whose response recorded an argument unrelated to experience was the *Methodist church in New Zealand*. It argued that the ordination of women was a way to overcome the problem of cultural dominance,[139] noting 'Northern hemisphere cultural perspectives dominate the text'.[140]

More than anything else, the introduction of women priests was perceived by Orthodox as evidence that Protestant criteria are liable to radical reinterpretation and therefore to be distrusted.[141] The *Bulgarian Orthodox church* argued that because ordination is a sacrament, not a mere sign or symbol, 'the Orthodox Church cannot

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[130] Ibid.
[131] *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (1994), 4.
[132] Wijngaards, J. *Church Councils on Women Deacons*, p.1.
[133] *A Joint Reaction by the Orthodox/Roman Catholic Consultation in the U.S.A.* (1989), 20.
[134] Faith and Order Standing Commission, *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Standing Commission (1999)*, p.63.
[135] CR, IV.209.
[136] CR, II.137.
[137] CR, II.122.
[138] CR, II.157.
[139] CR, I.80.
[140] CR, I.79.
[141] Kirill, pp.93-94.

and will not follow the example of the Protestant churches in the ordination of women.'[142] The *Orthodox church in America* offered a moderate view in that it did not permanently oppose the ordination of women, but rather advised that historical practices 'should not be changed *without deep and serious reflection, prayer, and careful consideration* of all the aspects of the issue.'[143] Thus, there is some indication that dialogue might be possible. The other opening for discussion was presented by Archbishop Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad who argued that the question of women priests (e.g. eucharistic celebrants) which Orthodox oppose should be separated from the question of women in ministry which they consider a necessary part of the search for common solutions.[144]

Some churches were convinced that scripture's answer is emphatically 'no.' The *Lutheran church-Missouri Synod* criticised BEM for attributing opposition to the ordination of women on the basis of tradition without considering the 'weighty biblical and theological arguments against the ordination of women'.[145] The *Russian Orthodox church* rejected the idea that 'it is only tradition that prevents the churches which do not ordain women from introducing changes.'[146] They noted Paul's comments regarding women's participation in churches[147] and the fact that Jesus did not include any women in the apostolic twelve.[148] To disregard Paul's teachings or Christ's example would undermine biblical authority.

Other churches considered the biblical emphasis on equality before Christ an imperative to avoid discrimination in any form. The *Moravian church in America, Northern Province* requested BEM 'speak more directly in affirmation of the ordination of women.'[149] The *Remonstrant Brotherhood* stated that ordination should not be restricted on the basis of gender or sexual preference.[150] The *United Methodist Church (USA)* refused to concede that the ordination of women could be optional, even for the sake of church unity.[151] In his summary of various arguments, Vandervelde captured the perspective of many Protestants: 'ministry of women in the church is an indispensable expression of the complete boundary-breaking restoration in Christ of the human community.'[152]

The treatment of this issue was considered inadequate on all sides. BEM's neutral stance has been particularly criticised because it served to perpetuate the

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[142] CR, II.23.
[143] CR, III.24-25, emphasis added.
[144] Kirill, p.93.
[145] CR, III.141.
[146] CR, II.9-10.
[147] I Corinthians 14:34-35.
[148] CR, II.10.
[149] CR, II.263.
[150] CR, II.310.
[151] CR, II.195.
[152] Vandervelde, G. *BEM and the Hierarchy of Truths: a Vatican contribution*, p.81.

exclusion of women,[153] a situation which on other social issues, such as apartheid, would have been clearly unacceptable. Melanie May accused Catholics and Orthodox of ignoring the statement in BEM that 'the Spirit may well speak to one church through the insights of another'.[154] The confessionally based arguments are readily apparent. While Orthodox and Catholics referred to Tradition concerning their opposition to women's ordination,[155] Lutherans referred to scripture.[156] It is interesting that scripture was used both in favour and against but that no communion cited its experience of a purely male ministry as evidence of its effectiveness.

Furthermore, the strategy proposed by Archbishop Kirill bears remarkable similarity to Protestant strategies for dealing with the pattern of ministry and apostolicity. Just as Protestants divided the pattern of ministry into *form* (which they rejected) and *function* (which they could accept) and apostolicity into *apostolic teaching* (which they accepted) and *apostolic tradition* (which they had suspicions about), so Kirill sought to divide the issue of women in ministry into *diaconal* and *priestly* forms. Since tradition included deaconesses, it might be possible for Orthodox, and even Catholics, to affirm that women had a place within the threefold ministry without compromising their stance on *priestly* ministry.

9.4   HERMENEUTICAL ISSUES

Two significant attempts have been made to categorise the hermeneutic frameworks various communions used to evaluate BEM. The first appeared in *BEM 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses* and included six categories: scripture only; scripture and tradition apparent in the 'early' Church; scripture, the ancient creeds, and additional statements of faith; scripture and tradition as interpreted by a teaching office; scripture, tradition, and reason; and an abstraction of Tradition such as 'the gospel.'[157] The second came from William Henn who argued in his essay *Hermeneutics and Ecumenical Dialogue: BEM and Its Responses on "Apostolicity"* that the overlap between these categories made them unhelpful because they obscured the real issue between those who insist that Tradition is nothing more or less than scripture and those who accept that Tradition is expressed in both scripture and other forms.[158]

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[153] Prestwood-Taylor, B.T. 'BEM reconsidered' in *Christian Century Vol.100, No.33* (1983), p.1022.
[154] M54. Cf. May, p.262.
[155] May, p.258.
[156] Ibid., p.259.
[157] Gassmann, *BEM 1982-1990…* pp.133-135.
[158] Henn, W. *Hermeneutics and Ecumenical Dialogue: BEM and Its Responses on "Apostolicity"*, p.81.

This division, which seems to indicate there has been little change in the fundamental disagreements of the sixteenth century, raises several questions that require exploration. Why have some communions continued to make use of the 'only' clause while other similar communions have given it up for a term like 'primary'? What is the difference between 'only' and 'primary'? Has the difference between communions which use a reformation confession to interpret and those communions which depend on a teaching office in continuity with the apostles become insignificant in terms of hermeneutics? The best way to explore these questions is through consideration of the differences apparent within each confessional family which may then be compared with earlier observations concerning the three central problems of ministry.

It might be expected that Lutherans would take the strongest stance on *sola scriptura* but this was not the case. Certainly there were some who made strong assertions, like the *Lutheran church of Australia* which argued that 'the faith of the church through the ages' was not as important as 'clear witness to the gospel judged by the word of the infallible scriptures',[159] but most Lutheran descriptions of scripture exhibited a high level of sophistication. The *Standing Council of the Lutheran and Reformed churches of France* argued that tradition and history 'can never become the authorized interpreter of the biblical message',[160] but acknowledged that they were 'heirs to a tradition and a history which affect our interpretation of holy scripture and the manner in which we ascribe authority to it.'[161] The *Evangelical Lutheran church in Oldenburg* argued that since the establishment of the canon 'there is no other trustworthy tradition from apostolic times…. [scripture] alone can help maintain the apostolic tradition.'[162]

Some circumvented the problem by using the concept of 'gospel' rather than 'scripture' much the same way that Montreal used 'Tradition.' The *Evangelical-Lutheran church of Denmark* expressed this most clearly in its assertion that ministry was grounded in 'the authority *of the gospel* alone.'[163] Similarly, *The American Lutheran church* rejected appeals to the patristic period as insufficient, arguing that the Church must be 'grounded and centered in the Word, the living voice of the gospel'.[164] Though the *Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* asserted that 'the ultimate criterion for the church's confession of faith is the inerrant scriptures,'[165] they qualified this by stating that 'It does not suffice to use scripture only as a "witness"

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[159] CR, II.87.
[160] CR, III.143.
[161] CR, III.143.
[162] CR, IV.79.
[163] CR, III.113.
[164] CR, II.83.
[165] CR, III.132.

to the gospel. The gospel "interprets" scripture, and scripture "interprets" the gospel.'[166]

Most Lutherans accepted the problems posed by contemporary understandings of hermeneutics for describing faith authentically. The *Evangelical Lutheran church of Hanover (FRG)* noted that no 'ecumenical criteria' had been established to deal with the 'diversity and divergence of traditions.'[167] The *Evangelical-Lutheran church of Finland* remarked that 'there are no generally accepted standards of the content of the "apostolic faith".'[168] Where there was openness to tradition, it was qualified, either by reference to Lutheran tradition, as the *Lutheran church in Hungary*,[169] or by an assertion that 'all tradition and all experience must be measured against the Bible with respect to their authority and limits',[170] as the *Evangelical Lutheran church in Bavaria*.

It is clear that the maintenance of the authority of scripture remains an important issue for Lutherans, but their awareness of the hermeneutic problems associated with interpretation has led to an acceptance that scripture is an expression of Tradition. The difference between those who emphasise scripture as primary rather than *sola* is that the former allow their understanding of authority to be shaped by dialogue between scripture and other elements of Tradition. The latter's recourse to concepts such as 'infallibility,' 'never,' and 'no other' prevent such dialogue *a priori* and fail to make clear how the canon, established by tradition through episcopal structures, could provide an authority of a wholly different character than other elements of Tradition.

Presbyterians tended to direct their critiques towards the inadequacy of tradition rather than the all-sufficiency of scripture. The *Presbyterian church in Ireland* objected that BEM gave 'greater place to tradition than to the norm of Holy Scripture',[171] arguing that tradition could not be relied upon because the development of second and third century patterns of ministry can be attributed to causes other than the Holy Spirit.[172] The *Presbyterian church of Rwanda* argued that tradition[173] was not merely an inadequate hermeneutic principle, but harmful to the unity of the church. They advocated 'joint reading' of the scripture because 'The Bible can unite us, whereas tradition disunites.'[174] Some merely alluded to arguments posed in the sixteenth century as the *Reformed church of Alsace and Lorraine* who described

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[166] CR, III.132.
[167] CR, IV.47.
[168] CR, III.125.
[169] CR, III.129.
[170] CR, IV.26.
[171] CR, III.220.
[172] CR, III.216.
[173] It is unclear from the context whether they intended this to be understood as Tradition (gospel), tradition (process), or traditions (historical practices).
[174] CR, III.185.

themselves as 'a Reformation-derived church, for which scripture remains the sovereign authority.'[175]

On the other hand, two communions were willing to consider tradition alongside scripture. The *Presbyterian church USA* suggested that 'openness to the work of the Holy Spirit' must be 'disciplined by the insights of Scripture and tradition… allowing for a balance between the values of continuity and institutional integrity and charismatic and prophetic insight'.[176] This comment was extremely important because it focused on the need to incorporate an existential aspect within the schema of authority, as addressed in the following chapter.[177] The *church of Scotland* perceived 'two kinds of tradition, a special Reformed one and a general catholic one',[178] leading them to consider how tradition might serve as an authoritative standard 'other than and subsequent to scripture.'[179] They noted, however, the potential harm in the tendency 'to absolutise [sic] past forms and to close a "canon" of sacred tradition at particular historical points.'[180]

The dividing line between Reformed traditions was much clearer than that between Lutherans. Those communions which accepted a role of tradition in addition to scripture demonstrated an involvement in ecumenical dialogue not apparent in *sola scriptura* responses. The charges of unreliability and harmfulness require some comment. The idea that tradition was less reliable because it intermingled with history can be equally applied to scripture in light of the findings of redactive literary criticism. Therefore, maintaining such a position would require the rejection of a significant portion of contemporary biblical scholarship. While the insight that bible-reading is easier to share than the eucharist, embroiled as it is in the conflicting claims of tradition, must be recognised, the assertion that tradition is itself harmful ignores the fact that tradition is *always* happening. The ubiquity of tradition makes it possible to attribute historical examples of both unity and disunity to its influence. In this regard, the point of the *church of Scotland* is well taken: mere reference to tradition does not solve the hermeneutic problem of which practices and insights are to be taken as normative.[181]

Methodists who referred to the idea of scripture alone also mentioned the importance of other aspects of authority. The *United Methodist church, Central and Southern Europe* asked whether the measure of faith through the ages can be anything but scripture but at the same time criticised BEM for lack of concern with

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[175] CR, III.165.
[176] CR, III.204.
[177] See 10.2 Existential elements.
[178] CR, I.98.
[179] CR, I.98.
[180] CR, I.98.
[181] See above.

the subjective experience of faith.[182] The *Evangelical Methodist church: Central Conference in the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin* referred explicitly to *sola scriptura* as a guiding principle.[183] While they found the Wesley quadrilateral[184] useful for determining 'faith awareness,' 'scripture alone' was lauded as a 'more decisive criterion'.[185]

In contrast, the *United Methodist church (USA)* received BEM positively since it was clearly 'derived from the scriptures [and] representative of Tradition and the varying traditions, while including the experiential dimension'.[186] The *Waldesian and Methodist churches in Italy* stated clearly the primary role of scripture without adding *sola*:

> the scriptures are normative for judging the authenticity of tradition and of every kind of ecclesiastic authority; neither to tradition nor to church authority (*magistere*) can an authority be attributed that is superior or equal to that of the scriptures.[187]

In this way, Methodist appraisals clearly recognised the existence of other important aspects of authority. It is difficult to ascertain, however, the meaning of formulations which included both existential aspects of faith and *sola scriptura*. It seems that when Methodists used the Lutheran phrase, the meaning was identical with a strong declaration that scripture is the primary authority. While some Methodists seemed to accept a more influential role for tradition, their collective contribution revealed that it was possible to extend the definition of 'normative' so that scripture becomes the measure of all Tradition without excluding important aspects of authority through recourse to *sola scriptura*.

Other post-reformation communions, though diverse in emphasis, shared a common perspective that scripture was the only standard. Many emphasised, like the *Evangelical church in Hesse and Nassau (FRG)*, scripture's unique witness to the word of God as 'the cognitive basis of theology and of the church' and the wholly different status of 'traditions that developed later or doctrinal statements in church law'.[188] A similar distrust of historical developments not mentioned in scripture was expressed by *Seventh-day Adventists* who urged the *World Council of churches* 'to pursue their work of reconstruction farther back in Christian history; to compare and verify their statements with the biblical writings accepted as normative.'[189] The *Federation of Evangelical churches in the GDR* objected to BEM's reliance on

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[182] CR, II.201.
[183] CR, IV.167.
[184] Scripture, Tradition, reason, and experience.
[185] CR, IV.174.
[186] CR, II.180.
[187] CR, II.247.
[188] CR, IV.129.
[189] CR, II.348.

'tradition which begins in the ancient church' rather than the New Testament.[190] The reason for this radical distinction may be seen in the *World Evangelical Fellowship*'s argument that, as unique revelation, scripture can only be normative when allowed to interpret itself.[191] Therefore, traditions including Evangelical tradition should 'be regarded as interpretative traditions – themselves subject to Scripture.'[192]

Some described scripture as having a special critical role. The *Federation of Evangelical churches in the GDR* distinguished between scripture and tradition by identifying the latter as the context all communions live within and the former as a continual challenge to the Church, 'not just as an initial basis for the faith we inherit and as something that can be quoted to authenticate it.'[193] The *Baptist Union of Sweden* echoed this idea in its description of ministry as 'authority *in* the church and never over or against it,'[194] implying that only scripture could serve as critical standard.

Others emphasised the role of the community in interpretation, seeming to transfer Luther's emphasis on the authority of the individual conscience to the collective decisions of local congregations as some Anabaptists came to do. The *Baptist Union of Scotland* questioned 'the basic assumption that the goal of visible unity is either practicable or right'[195] out of concern to preserve the local congregation's freedom 'to interpret and to obey Christ's will in the light of its understanding of Holy Scripture.'[196] This understanding of centralised structure as antithetical to scripture was evident in the response of the *American Baptist churches in the USA* who simply stated that they evaluated BEM according to whether it agreed with scripture, not whether it had been held 'everywhere, at all times, by all'.[197]

These communions can be seen as contemporary heirs of the Anabaptists, at least in terms of their understanding of authority. They differ from Methodists primarily in their strict rejection of tradition. For these communions, no discussion of scripture as 'primary' was possible since tradition was not merely a lesser authority but something of wholly different status.

Episcopal communions were more likely to emphasise the place of tradition, though they did so in different ways. The *church of Ireland* and the *church in Wales* looked to scripture and the early church for doctrinal criteria,[198] the latter specifically

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[190] CR, V.141.
[191] Schrotenboer, P. *An Evangelical Response to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Eucharist, D
[192] Ibid., Conclusion 4a.
[193] CR, V.121.
[194] CR, IV.208.
[195] CR, III.232.
[196] CR, III.232.
[197] CR, III.259.
[198] CR, I.63.

referring to the Nicene Creed.[199] The *Episcopal church USA* cited both scripture and 'continuity with the apostolic faith and mission' as criteria for determining the faith of the Church,[200] seeming to emphasise the content of early tradition rather than historical developments. The *church of England* referred to 'the *universal Christian tradition* which has been mediated to us through the various traditions of all our churches.'[201] They accepted that scripture could have ambiguous implications, such as ministerial patterns,[202] and stressed that it was not merely the early history of the Church, but also subsequent development which 'embodied basic characteristics of the Christian community.'[203] In their own appraisal, they had 'consistently ascribed high authority to the primitive Church which settled the Canon of Scripture, gave us the ecumenical Creeds, and articulated the ministry and sacraments on the basis of Scripture.'[204]

While Anglicans focused on propositional content which could be expressed in a chronologically independent way, Orthodox emphasised the unbroken line of faith through time which connects traditions to Tradition. Though creeds were important to Orthodox as confessions of faith,[205] they were seen as inadequate to encapsulate the entirety of faith, a fact demonstrated by the 'confessional approach of divided Christianity.'[206] As the *Russian Orthodox church* argued, 'mere reference to the catholic tradition of the early church is obviously not sufficient, for it must be supported and interpreted by the witness of the holy fathers of the early church.'[207] The *Bulgarian Orthodox church* approached hermeneutics less as a problem than as a question of loyalty.[208] Authority depended on fidelity to 'the fullness of the holy scripture and holy Tradition as they have been handed down to us by the apostles.'[209]

The importance of tradition in the Catholic understanding of authority has already been noted. Reference to Vatican II in their response to BEM demonstrated how conciliar decisions continue to function as a hermeneutic key for the *Roman Catholic church*. The unity of scripture and tradition as 'the word of God' described in *Dei Verbum* was reaffirmed[210] and the indivisibility of Catholic teaching was reasserted.[211]

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[199] CR, III.88.
[200] CR, II.58.
[201] CR, III.31, emphasis added.
[202] CR, III.52.
[203] CR, III.52.
[204] CR, III.52.
[205] CR, III.16-17.
[206] CR, II.6.
[207] CR, II.6.
[208] CR, II.13.
[209] CR, II.13.
[210] CR, VI.7.
[211] CR, VI.40.

The Anglican responses exhibited an interesting tension between the Protestant reliance on scripture and the Catholic acceptance of tradition. The qualifiers 'early,' 'apostolic,' and 'primitive' did not specify what particular years they referred to or describe what non-arbitrary standard might be used to determine whether 313, 451, or any other year contained the last authoritative expression. The *church of England's* apparent assertion that the early Church established the canon through episcopal structures *and* that those same structures were established on the *basis* of scripture,[212] coupled with the fact nether Catholics nor Orthodox attempted to use scripture as justification for their pattern of ministry, reflects the circularity of a *sola scriptura* framework despite their retention of a clearly traditional pattern of ministry.

The importance of a teaching office for distinguishing history from tradition was more apparent in Orthodox and Catholic responses. Catholics gave greater importance to the contemporary role of interpretation consonant with their understanding of 'development' while Orthodox seem to understand the primary role of the teaching office as the *maintenance* of tradition already established. Both described scripture and tradition as a single whole which it is possible to identify as Tradition. The fundamental difference between this perspective and the Anglican position was the value placed on historical continuity. Catholics and Orthodox could see no justification for any interpretation which would be inconsistent with church teaching at any point in history.

9.5   EVALUATION

The divide between those who demand *sola scriptura* and those who do not remains a formidable challenge. There is some cause for hope in the realisation that within Lutheran, Reformed, and Methodist communions, changing perspectives were apparent which allow some consideration of tradition as an element of authority. Though these changes have resulted in disagreement between those who call themselves Lutheran or Reformed, they hold out the possibility that time and further dialogue will lead to a consensus about scripture's *primary* rather than *exclusive* normative role. Some Evangelicals pose a more difficult challenge because of their simple refusal to acknowledge the role of other aspects of authority. Tenacious adherence to the principle of *sola scriptura* without acknowledgement of its historical development or philosophical circularity epitomises the ahistorical abstraction for which Protestantism is most open to criticism.

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[212] See above.

Nowhere has the circularity of the claim *sola scriptura* been answered. Scripture itself does not purport to be anything other than 'God-breathed.' Likewise, the argument that the fluid pattern of ministry apparent in the New Testament precludes *any* later formalisation of structures is itself a more fixed understanding of ministry than the text warrants.[213]

Those communions which have used 'primary' rather than *sola* demonstrated the results of participation in ecumenical dialogue and engagement with contemporary scholarship. Giving up scripture's exclusivity, however, does not entail giving up its normative role. As Lutheran and Methodist responses have demonstrated, differences between *sola* and primary can be subtle. The extent to which 'normative' means scripture determines what may be considered tradition remains a task for common exploration, but it cannot take place without the acknowledgement that scripture and tradition are in dialogue, even though scripture is given more weight.

Even within episcopal communions, significant hermeneutical differences remain. The connection of history to tradition separated Catholics and Orthodox from Anglicans, though the two more ancient communions also differ in emphases. While the Anglican perspective resonates with those communions who emphasise scripture as primary, its structure seems incompatible with *sola scriptura* – which makes sense since the principle never featured strongly in Thomas Cranmer's thought.

BEM 'gives a good basis for further theological work' but ultimately depends on the churches' commitment to work toward creative solutions.[214] The responses of various communions revealed a growing appreciation for diverse expressions of authority. Tolerance of other emphases made it possible to work towards common understandings, but invocation of a *sola* clause has in several instances blocked further dialogue. It is not only the Protestant emphasis on scripture, however, in which such a clause is apparent. Proposals which include the threefold pattern (alone) and male priests (alone) have had surprisingly similar effects upon dialogue as demands for *sola scriptura*. This tendency to attach a *sola* to one's own position is best understood as an ecumenical temptation whose antidote is the humility to reserve *sola* for God alone.

The clearest thing about BEM is its indication that a common framework of authority has not yet been established. Progress was made in the recognition of the reasonableness of alternate frameworks, but BEM's focus on ministry rather than the

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[213] Henn, p.81.
[214] Kirill, p.95.

hermeneutic assumptions behind ministry made it ineffective in bringing the process of consensus on authority beyond the statement that Christ is its source.

CHAPTER 10: AUTHORITY IN INTERNATIONAL BILATERAL DIALOGUES BETWEEN SELECTED COMMUNIONS AND ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Before attempting to understand the bilateral dialogues, it is useful to note the communions that this study considers, and the frequency with which they met with the *Roman Catholic church*. Various Orthodox leaders have met with Catholics for ecumenical dialogue since 1971, producing official documents since 1982, but none which focused expressly on the issue of authority. Anglicans and Catholics have met regularly since 1967, producing numerous statements, including four specifically addressing authority.[1] Methodists and Catholics have met regularly since 1967, and have produced a major report every five years since 1971. Lutherans and Catholics have met since 1967, producing documents on a variety of topics, culminating in a *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* in 1999. By way of contrast, Reformed and Catholics have produced two reports in two phases of dialogue: 1970-1977 and 1984-1990. Evangelicals have produced three documents, two focused on mission (1984, 1994) and one focused on the doctrine of salvation (1998), but these have faced a significant problem in reception.[2] Baptists have engaged with Catholics in a single official dialogue at an international level in 1988. The report from this dialogue mentioned authority only in terms of an area 'needing continued exploration.'[3] After long silence following Brazilian Baptists' rejection of this report, the possibility of further talks has only recently become a possibility.[4] Even the discussions between Southern Baptists and Catholics in the United States, which produced a brief report on scripture, were suspended in 2001. Though every attempt has been made to include input from each of the major communions, the following analysis necessarily reflects the proportionally different levels of engagement with Roman Catholicism. Furthermore, the paucity of official statements from Evangelicals and Baptists makes it necessary to depend more on individual writers to assess their perspective. Since there is considerable overlap between Evangelicals and Baptists,[5] the wider term 'Evangelical'[6] has been used more commonly, unless addressing a specific Baptist statement.

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[1] *Authority in the Church I-III* (1976, 1981, 1998) and *Elucidation* (1981)
[2] See Sproul, R.C. *Getting the Gospel Right*.
[3] Baptist-Roman Catholic Dialogue (B-RC), *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World* (1988), 45-47.
[4] *Seventh Forum on Bilateral Dialogues*, p.48.
[5] For instance, James R. White and Philip De Courcey are Baptists who write on behalf of Evangelicals.
[6] See Noll, M., C. Plantinga, and D. Wells 'Evangelical Theology Today' in B.J. Nicholls *Evangelical Review of Theology: Justification, Scripture and Tradition Vol.21, No.2* (1997) for a discussion of the ambiguity inherent in this term.

10.1 TEXTUAL ELEMENTS

All churches agree that there is a textual aspect to authority and that scripture has a special place among the various texts which makes up the elements of textual authority. There are four areas which have elicited significant discussion: the relationship between scripture and tradition, the issue of interpretation, the hierarchy of truths, and the role of theologians.

Orthodox and Roman Catholics agreed easily on a common set of texts, understood as a compendium of common faith, which comprise the first criteria for communion listed in *Faith, Sacrament and the Unity of the Church*.[7] Both churches affirmed scripture and the first seven ecumenical councils[8] and described them as valid bases for further declarations of 'the correct faith authentically and infallibly in an ecumenical council.'[9]

With the reformation churches, differences in historical descriptions of scripture and tradition required them to invest considerable effort in clearly articulating the place of each. The Lutheran-Roman Catholic *Malta Report* broke new ground stating 'Scripture can no longer be exclusively contrasted with tradition, because the New Testament itself is the product of primitive tradition. Yet as a witness to the fundamental tradition, Scripture has a normative role for the entire later tradition of the church.'[10] It is interesting that though the formula almost certainly drew on sources from the *Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, it did not make use of their capitalisation, 'Tradition,' to emphasise its identity with the gospel. Furthermore, in regard to criteria by which developments can be judged, both communions conceded the inadequacy of their historical formulations: 'Neither the *sola scriptura* nor formal references to the authoritativeness of the magisterial office are sufficient.'[11] Lutherans asserted their understanding that the gospel is normally interpreted in 'the living word of preaching'[12] while Catholics reported their understanding that authenticity is apparent 'through the reciprocal interaction of official and unofficial charisma…. the living faith-experiences of Christians'.[13] Similarly, those representing Reformed churches in Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue agreed that since the New Testament is both a witness to tradition and part

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[7] Eastern Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue (E-RC), *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church* (1987), 21.
[8] *An agreed statement on conciliarity and primacy in the church* (1989), 8.
[9] E-RC, *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church* (1987), 27.
[10] Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue (L-RC), *The Malta Report (1972)*, 17.
[11] Ibid., 18.
[12] Ibid., 19.
[13] Ibid., 20.

of its development, 'the customary distinction between Scripture and Tradition as two different sources... has become impossible.'[14]

The most notable opposition to the identification of scripture and tradition has come from Evangelicals. Those who take a moderate stance are able to identify with Tradition when it is understood as 'materially identical' with the New Testament but they object to the production of major doctrines from relatively insignificant New Testament ideas.[15] Others insist that scripture is in conflict with tradition, reading Matthew 15 as an example of how Jesus refuted *tradition* by quoting *scripture*.[16] This opposition has roots in the Evangelical understanding that scripture is something '*proclaimed to* the church rather than *produced by* the church'.[17] Scripture prevents the Church from becoming pharisaical – something it will always do if permitted to be 'its own legislator'.[18] The maintenance of this distinction gives Evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogue an entirely different character than previously mentioned dialogues which have come to an understanding of at least the basic textual elements from which faith is to be understood. Baptists may be viewed as participating in this objection in so far as they refuse to regard even the early ecumenical councils as normative on the principle that 'Scriptures alone are normative.'[19] That this perspective may not be altogether adequate is evidenced by self-criticism within Evangelicalism which accepts that they have sometimes set *Evangelical tradition* over scripture.[20]

While not all churches warmed to Vatican II's identification of scripture and tradition as the singular Word of God, the word 'normative' soon came to characterise any ecumenical reference to scripture. ARCIC I's clearest definition of scripture reads: 'a normative record of the authentic foundation of faith.... Through these written words the authority of the Word of God is conveyed.'[21] It later listed the creeds, the Fathers, the early conciliar definitions as other normative texts.[22] Nevertheless, care was taken in the *Elucidation* to emphasise the unique witness of scripture to revelation and the need to test doctrine 'by its consonance with Scripture.'[23] In *The Gift of Authority*, Anglicans and Catholics reaffirmed the

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[14] Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue (R-RC), *The Presence of Christ in Church and World* (1977), 25.
[15] Blocher, H. 'Scripture and Tradition: An Evangelical Response' Tradition' in B.J. Nicholls (ed.), *Evangelical Review of Theology Vol.21, No.2* (1997), pp.124-125.
[16] White, J.R. *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, p.68.
[17] Blocher, p.125.
[18] Vandervelde, G. 'Justification Between Scripture and Tradition' in B.J. Nicholls (ed.), *Evangelical Review of Theology Vol.21, No.2* (1997), p.145.
[19] B-RC, *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World* (1988), 12.
[20] Escobar, S. *Missionary Dynamism in Search of Missiological Discernment*, p.79.
[21] Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue (A-RC), *Authority In The Church I – Venice Statement* (1976), 2.
[22] Ibid., 18.
[23] A-RC, *Elucidation* (1981), 2.

agreement that the Church should regard 'this corpus alone as the inspired Word of God written and, as such, uniquely authoritative.'[24] Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue began to use similar language in 1980 when *Ways to Community* described the word of salvation as 'normatively given in *Holy Scripture*'[25] but noted that 'God's word is also transmitted through *church traditions*'.[26] Early Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue lacked clarity regarding authority,[27] but by the *Honolulu Report*, a common understanding of the Church's dependence on 'constant reflection on the Scriptures… and on their traditional interpretation' began to emerge.[28] In this way, their former emphasis on scripture and tradition as polar sources of authority gave way to an affirmation 'that Scripture in witness to the living tradition from which it arose has a normative role for the total tradition of the Church'.[29] This emphasis on scripture as a 'normative authority… interpreted in the light of Tradition… Reason and Experience'[30] seemed to echo the classical Wesleyan formulation. It was reaffirmed at Nairobi that, the scriptures 'bear permanent witness to the divine revelation in Christ and are normative for all subsequent tradition.'[31] Even Evangelicals were able to affirm along with Catholics that scripture remains 'the ultimate permanent and normative reference of the revelation of God.'[32]

Though describing scripture and tradition as a unity seemed constructive in theory, it proved very difficult in practice, as *The Apostolic Tradition* wryly noted.[33] Reformed, for instance, insisted that scripture was 'sufficient witness,' in contrast to the Catholic position which would do no more than declare that scripture is 'the *norma normans* of all doctrine of the faith'.[34] Anglicans emphasised their concern 'never to go beyond the bounds of Scripture' while Catholics noted their concern 'with the growth of the seed of God's word from age to age.'[35] The Evangelical rejection of such an identification has already been noted, but even when they affirm with Catholics the *Nicene* and *Apostles Creed*, they 'are usually quick to insert an emphatic qualifier: "but we interpret these matters differently".'[36]

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[24] A-RC, *Authority In The Church III –The Gift of Authority* (1998), 19.
[25] L-RC, *Ways to Community* (1980), 63.
[26] Ibid., 64.
[27] The *Denver Report* (1971) attributed authority to some twelve subjects without sufficient definition.
[28] Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue (M-RC), *Honolulu Report* (1981), 34.
[29] Ibid., 34.
[30] Ibid., 43.
[31] M-RC, *Towards a Statement on the Church – Fourth Series 1982-1986, Nairobi* (1986), 64.
[32] Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue (E-RC), *The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission (ERCDOM)* (1977-1984), 1.1.
[33] M-RC, *The Apostolic Tradition – Fifth Series 1986-1991, Paris* (1991), 21.
[34] R-RC, *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* (1990), 121.
[35] A-RC, *Elucidation* (1981), 2.
[36] Vandervelde, G. 'Introduction' in D. Parker (ed.), *Evangelical Review of Theology Vol.23, No.1* (1999), p.8.

Nevertheless, a growing awareness of commonalities emerged in many dialogues. Catholics have agreed that there is no way to determine whether a practice or doctrine is truly apostolic apart from scripture,[37] even though they still find 'the formal sufficiency and clarity of Scripture… unconvincing'.[38] Similarly, Baptists admitted that they tend to 'invoke the Baptist heritage as decisively as Roman Catholics cite Tradition, usually disclaiming that it bears the same authority as scripture but holding on to it vigorously nonetheless.'[39] It is significant that the notional distinction which made it possible to postulate scripture and tradition as antithetical sources of authority, did not originate in the sixteenth century, but stems rather from Henry of Ghent's writings in the thirteenth century.[40] Thus, the supposed conflict has its roots in scholastic rather than reformation theology.

An important clarification is necessary, however, regarding the Catholic conception of Tradition. While Protestants have been concerned mainly with doctrine and ecclesial decisions, that is, Tradition as text, *The Gift of Authority* expressly declared that 'A minimalist understanding of Tradition that would limit it to a storehouse of doctrine and ecclesial decisions is insufficient.'[41] Furthermore, though Tradition comes to us through historical texts, it is not to be equated with history in general because it is possible to be selective in choosing which portions of history to preserve as normative and which to reject.[42] Thus while Tradition certainly includes textual elements, Catholics understand it to include existential elements as well.

The growing consensus that 'scriptural authority does not function without interpretation, and interpretation takes place within a tradition',[43] led some discussions to the more complex task of interpretation. It is not surprising, given the divergent perspectives expressed concerning scripture and tradition, that the issue of interpretation should be addressed in Lutheran, Reformed and Evangelical dialogues.

Lutherans and Catholics perceived, in their divergent perspectives on scripture and tradition, the need to determine what principles would be used to interpret God's word in both forms.[44] Both groups expressed a fear of 'ignoring our traditions or surrendering our historical identities on the way to unity.'[45] It seems that such principles were never concisely defined, presumably because growing

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[37] Dulles, A. 'Revelation as the Basis for Scripture and Tradition' in B.J. Nicholls (ed.), *Evangelical Review of Theology Vol.21, No.2* (1997), p.118.
[38] Ibid.
[39] B-RC, *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World* (1988), 46.
[40] Lash, N. *Change in Focus: A Study of Doctrinal Change and Continuity* pp.41-42.
[41] A-RC, *The Gift of Authority* (1998), 14.
[42] McWilliam, J. 'A Response to Papers on *Apostolicae Curae*' in R.W. Franklin (ed.), *Anglican Orders: Essays on the Centenary of Apostolicae Curae 1896-1996* (Mowbray, 1996), p.114.
[43] Vandervelde, *Justification…*, p.148.
[44] L-RC, *Ways to Community* (1980), 65.
[45] Ibid.

rapproachment rendered the project unnecessary. In *Martin Luther – Witness to Jesus Christ*, Lutherans admitted that in their tradition 'the Bible was increasingly isolated from its church context, and its authority was legalistically misunderstood'.[46] In *Church and Justification*, Catholics suggested that dissent was justified if bishops contradicted scripture or tradition.[47] With the level of agreement reached concerning justification,[48] it seems the issue of interpretation has diminished in importance through indirect means.

Reformed and Catholics agreed on the need to reject a naïve literalism because the application of ancient texts to modern problems required interpreters to 'go beyond the immediate letter of Scripture.'[49] The difference between the two was apparent in their qualification of this phrase. Roman Catholics accepted indirect or non-textual support for doctrines, while Reformed looked for direct textual support.[50] The attribution of this difference to understandings of the work of the Holy Spirit[51] clarified the issue to some degree, but did not offer any prospect for change. The basic disagreement about whether interpretation of scripture was the responsibility of the whole community or the particular responsibility of the ordained remained.[52] The most constructive feature of their dialogue was the description of history as 'a process of constant interpretive efforts with discontinuous stages of restructuring'.[53] This acceptance that the Church should develop in a discontinuous way seems to provide grounds for criticising present practices in either communion without asserting such practices were *always* inappropriate to the life of the Church.

Evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogue also began with the idea that texts always require interpretation, especially regarding 'new problems or different cultures.'[54] To facilitate interpretation in common, five principles were presented as guidelines: dependence on the Holy Spirit, the unity of scripture, Biblical criticism, the literal sense, and a contemporary message.[55] The second principle is of particular interest because it described scripture as having a *single* meaning and pointed to the centrality of Christ as 'a fundamental hermeneutical key.'[56] This first point is more appropriately understood as *meta-meaning* or *central meaning* as contrasted with the plurality of 'partial meanings' illuminated by it.[57] The fifth principle's stress on the

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[46] L-RC, *Martin Luther – Witness to Jesus Christ, Kloster Kirchberg* (1983), 19.
[47] *Church and Justification* (1993), 217.
[48] L-RC, *Official Common Statement by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church* (1999), 1.
[49] R-RC, *The Presence of Christ in Church and World* (1977), 27.
[50] Ibid., 28.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 37.
[53] Ibid., 36.
[54] E-RC, *ERCDOM* (1977-1984), 1.1.
[55] Ibid., 1.2a-e.
[56] Ibid., 1.2b.
[57] Ibid.

need to 'go beyond the original meaning to the contemporary message'[58] suggests a level of ambiguity concerning the quality of meaning in scripture that could be further explored.

The various issues related to the interpretation of scripture were particularly apparent in discussion of Mary. Both groups agreed that the process of interpretation begins with the literal sense, and also has a spiritual sense, but disagreed in 'the degree to which the spiritual sense may be separated from the literal.'[59] Though Catholics acknowledged that Marian devotion developed after the apostles, they regard it as a legitimate expression of 'the living, developing Tradition of the church'.[60]

James White located the differences in interpretive practice in the *a priori* understanding of inspiration: Catholics understand the Bible as inspired because that is what the *Roman Catholic church* teaches.[61] While it is true that in dialogue with Evangelicals, Roman Catholics emphasised the magisterium's authority to interpret scripture because 'Scripture must be seen as having been produced by and within the church',[62] White's analysis seems to misrepresent their position. He described Catholic reasoning as circular,[63] but failed to identify the parallel circularity of Evangelical and Baptist thought: the Bible is inspired because that is what the text of the Bible appears to teach. Thus, while White accurately identifies prior assumptions about inspiration, he fails to recognise the inadequacy of either assumption. The circularity of the grounds for interpretation is not a problem particular to the Church, but a wider philosophic one inherent in any claim to ultimate authority.

Discussion of principles of interpretation has been a sign of continuing disagreement in bilateral dialogue in so far as it proves necessary only between communions who continue to disagree on other issues. While it might be supposed that this indicates a need to deal with the issue of interpretation prior to other issues, the Lutheran-Roman Catholic experience suggests that rapproachment in other areas may render explicit articulation of hermeneutic principles unnecessary. That an issue as important as interpretation might be circumlocuted by a doctrinal issue suggests the possibility that ecumenical actions may also play such a role, and therefore function not just an *end* but also a *means* to growth in doctrinal agreement.

Catholics had suggested early on in dialogue with Methodists, that acceptance of the authority of Christ 'is bound to lead to the consideration of subsidiary

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[58] Ibid., 1.2e.
[59] Ibid., 3.Appendix.a.
[60] Ibid.
[61] White, p.46.
[62] E-RC, *ERCDOM* (1977-1984), 1.1.
[63] White, p.48.

'authorities' and even perhaps to a hierarchy of authorities'.[64] This idea seems to refer not so much to episcopal hierarchy as a hierarchy of truths. For Protestants, Vatican II's concept of a 'hierarchy of truths' was seen as a means of coping with significant ecclesiological differences. [65] In Methodist dialogue, it was compared to Wesley's 'analogy of faith,'[66] but the essential question remains as to whether Protestants and Catholics mean the same thing when they make use of the phrase.

Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue used 'hierarchy of truths' terminology more tentatively. At Malta, they only dealt with the centre of the gospel, describing it as that which 'is constituted by the eschatological saving act of God in Jesus' cross and resurrection.'[67] From that vantage point, it appeared that Lutheran ideas of the gospel were very close to Catholic ideas about the centre of the hierarchy of truths.[68] *Facing Unity* mentioned the concept explicitly[69] and looked hopefully at the diversity Roman Catholics permitted in the Eastern Orthodox understanding of remarriage.[70] At that time, Lutherans stated that they could not accept Catholic understandings of Mary and the papacy as consonant with scripture and the gospel without reinterpretation.[71]

In dialogue with Evangelicals, Catholics hinted at the concept of a hierarchy of truths without referring to it explicitly:

> statements made by [the magisterium] have different levels of authority (e.g., papal encyclicals and other pronouncements, decisions of provincial synods or councils, etc.). These require to be treated with respect, but do not call for assent in the same way as the first category.[72]

The potential benefits of permitting ecumenical understandings of faith to function harmoniously with particular definitions of the *Roman Catholic church* make the hierarchy of truths one of the most important principles in Protestant-Catholic dialogue. There is a danger, however, of placing too much hope in a concept which Catholics maintain is open to misinterpretation. In conjunction with the *World Council of churches*, Catholics attempted to clarify that the intention of Vatican II was to express faith in an organic way: 'Truths are articulated around a centre or foundation; they are not placed side by side.'[73] This statement did not address the fundamental question of whether this organic expression implied that

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[64] M-RC, *Denver Report* (1971), 102,
[65] *Ibid*., 101.
[66] M-RC, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Teaching Authority Among Catholics and Methodists*, Brighton (2001), 23.
[67] L-RC, *Malta* (1972), 24.
[68] Ibid., 25.
[69] L-RC, *Facing Unity* (1984), 56.
[70] Ibid., 65.
[71] Ibid., 66.
[72] E-RC, *ERCDOM* (1977-1984), 1.3b.
[73] Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (JWG), *The Notion of 'Hierarchy of Truths': An Ecumenical Interpretation* (1990), 9.

truths could be accepted separately or whether the requirement to accept a complete set of truths remained.

Hans-Joachim Schulz noted the tendency within Catholicism to disclaim the interpretation of hierarchy as implying that some truths may be given up.[74] Particularly relevant to this position was *Dominus Iesus*' use of the *Catechism* to emphasise the need for '*assent to the whole truth*'.[75] Orthodox were sceptical of the phrase precisely for this reason. They understood revelation as 'an indivisible unity' with 'no distinction between primary and secondary truths, between essential and non-essential doctrines.'[76] Orthodox suggested that the only possible use of the phrase would be to distinguish between formulations which had been officially sanctioned, and those which had not.[77] On the other hand, Otto Hermann Pesch attributed to *hierarchy of truths* the meaning that 'the condition for church unity cannot be that both sides, enumerating schematically the doctrines which divide them, have to arrive at consensus on *all* these doctrines.'[78]

In an attempt to circumvent this disagreement, Patrick O'Connell asked whether it was possible to consider an ontological hierarchy as distinct from an epistemological hierarchy.[79] He followed the thought of Heribert Mühlen who argued that because mariological dogmas are only indirectly linked to the foundation of faith they should not be required for unity and the anathemas associated with them should be withdrawn.[80] If O'Connell's distinction is granted, then Protestant criticisms can be dealt with in the epistemological arena without threatening the ontological claims of Catholicism. Therefore, Catholics might maintain that all their doctrines possess equal ontological status while permitting difference in doctrines with limited epistemological justification. Such an understanding would grant meaning to the Joint Working Group's assertion that the concept of hierarchy helps to distinguish between differences which would prevent unity and differences which need not.[81] Otherwise, it is possible to come to new understandings of the *order of importance*, as in Roman Catholic perspectives on justification and Reformed perspectives on episcopacy,[82] but not to accept real difference concerning the elements comprising the hierarchy.

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[74] Schulz, H.-J. 'The Priority of the Preaching of the Word of God, the Liturgy and Diaconia over Doctrine' in J.O. Beozzo and G. Ruggieri (eds.), *Concilium: The Ecumenical Constitution of Churches No.3* (2001), p.41.
[75] *Dominus Iesus* (DI), 7. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 150.
[76] JWG, *The Notion of 'Hierarchy of Truths': An Ecumenical Interpretation* (1990), 16.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Pesch, O.H. '"*Hierarchy of Truths*" – *and Ecumenical Praxis*' in J.O. Beozzo and G. Ruggieri (eds.), *Concilium: The Ecumenical Constitution of Churches No.3* (2001), p.61.
[79] O'Connell, P. *Hierarchy of truths*, p.86.
[80] Ibid., p.93.
[81] JWG, *The Notion of 'Hierarchy of Truths': An Ecumenical Interpretation* (1990), 28.
[82] Ibid., 19.

The final element of textual authority which requires analysis is the role of theologians as textual experts. It seems possible that through such an identification, a constructive distinction between theologians and those who exercise ministerial authority may be maintained. If ministerial authority is to be guided by the central texts of faith, it is necessary to articulate the place of those who devote themselves entirely to their study.

The critical role of texts in the Orthodox tradition is evidenced by Thomas Fitzgerald's argument that Protestant objections about the disjunction between the New Testament and post-apostolic use of the term priest need to be addressed more fully.[83] Nonetheless, the role of an Orthodox theologian is understood as a duty 'to express the faith held from the beginning, to record it and formulate it'.[84] Thus, theologians exercise authority through their acts of preservation and formulation. While creativity is not prohibited, it must always maintain its connection to the texts, the faith held from the beginning.

In Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, the distinct role of theologians is less evident. Biblical scholars and theologians were entrusted with the task of recalling the Church to Tradition afresh[85] but their identification with the episcopate is assumed. 'Theologians in particular serve the communion of the whole Church by exploring whether and how new insights should be integrated into the ongoing stream of Tradition.'[86] Gabriel Daly's argument seems relevant here that 'theologians should firmly reject any suggestion that they are exercising any kind of "magisterium," "parallel," or even "subordinate."'[87]

In Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, theologians were described as those responsible to 'investigate the faith by interpreting it on the basis of the witness of Holy Scripture and of the church tradition and by making it accessible to contemporary minds.'[88] Lutherans noted that historically their theologians came to occupy the role of authoritatively formulating doctrine,[89] but the admission itself indicates a willingness to reconsider the problems created by such fusion, dealt with further in relation to the ministerial aspect of authority. At a later stage of dialogue, Catholics affirmed that dissent could be justified if based on canonical texts, citing Augustine and Thomas Aquinas as examples.[90]

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[83] Fitzgerald, T. 'Perspectives on Ecclesial Authority: The Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue Statements' in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review Vol.35 August* (1990), pp.197-198.
[84] Bobrinskoy, B. 'How does the Church remain in the truth? An Orthodox Response' in J. Moltmann and H. Küng (eds.), *Concilium: Who Has Say in the Church? October* (1981), p.21.
[85] A-RC, *The Gift of Authority* (1998), 25.
[86] Ibid., 28.
[87] Daly, G. 'Which Magisterium is authentic?' in J. Moltmann and H. Küng (eds.), *Concilium: Who Has Say in the Church? October* (1981), p.54.
[88] L-RC, *The Ministry in the Church* (1981), 51.
[89] Ibid., 53-54.
[90] L-RC, *Church and Justification* (1993), 217.

Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue presented an extensive description of the theologian's role:

> to seek proper answers to the implicit or explicit questions asked about the Christian faith, to relate faith and culture in intellectually coherent ways, to explore the depths of doctrine, to organize the insights of the saints in satisfying syntheses, to educate the members of the Church in the contemplation of the divine mysteries, and to assist church leaders, both locally and when gathered in conciliar assembly, to formulate and preach the Gospel in fidelity to the Word of God written and transmitted.[91]

In short, theologians must study and articulate the authoritative texts in conjunction with the insights of the faithful and the exercise of church leadership.

It is clear that in those communions which have a strong sense of ministerial authority, it is possible to distinguish between the role of theologians and the role of *episcope*. Theologians may then function as an effective voice for the texts apart from the responsibilities of oversight. This has the dual benefit of allowing theologians to explore doctrine in confidence that their work will be pastorally considered by those exercising *episcope* while freeing up the episcopate for active ministry knowing they have a permanent resource recalling them to the essential texts. Churches which have subordinated their theologians to the episcopate have begun to consider the possibilities of mutually critical conversation between them. Conspicuously absent, with the exception of Lutherans, is similar consideration by those communions which have given up their *episcope* to theologians. This perspective finds support in Herbert Vorgrimler. He stopped short of declaring that theologians *should* be considered partners in interpretation with the magisterium, but clearly indicated the possibility of accepting such a model and recognised the need for a separate description of existential authority.[92] It is these existential and ministerial aspects which the following sections address.

10.2   EXISTENTIAL ELEMENTS

While it is evident that there has been considerably less discussion of the existential aspect of authority than either textual or ministerial aspects, there have been increasing calls, especially from developing nations, that 'the actual situation in which peoples live should furnish the criteria for the interpretation of Scripture.'[93] Similarly, Herbert Vorgrimler follows Karl Rahner's discussion of the real authority exercised by believers when they articulate their faith by specifying that such

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[91] M-RC, *Brighton*, 25.
[92] Vorgrimler, H. 'From *Sensus Fidei* to *Consensus Fidelium*' in J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx (eds.), *Concilium No.4* (1985), p.6.
[93] Okure, T. 'Behold I Make All Things New: The Final Statement of the Fourth Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation' in W. Bueken and S. Freyre (eds.), *Concilium No. 1* (1995), p.114.

articulation takes the form of narrative or oral history, thus grounding the authority of believers in praxis rather than propositions.[94] That is to say, believers' authority is expressed existentially rather than textually.

All churches agree that there are existential elements which are connected to authority, but not all agree on the extent to which such elements are determinative. In Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue, living tradition and *sensus fidei* have been persistent terms referring to existential elements which serve to guide the Church along with the Bible and preceding councils.[95] Some care must be taken, however to distinguish between the wider scope of the former embracing the whole activity of the Church and the latter's narrow sense of a communal intuition about faith. The most comprehensive expression of existential authority came in Methodist-Roman Catholic articulation of four criteria by which the experiences of the faithful might be judged. The first was textual,[96] but the remaining three were existential: the holiness which results,[97] the *sentire* of the church,[98] and the reception of the purported insights.[99]

Though it would be too much to suggest that holiness was put forward as a condition for ministry, Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue emphasised that 'ministry should be lived in holiness'.[100] It is this sort of authority exhibited by the monks of Mt. Athos who do not have any official authority, but because of their practice of faith are able to exert a 'moral influence.'[101] Authority in this sense is not merely assent to truth, but actions which proclaim and verify truth. Awareness of this perspective is necessary for understanding the place of sacraments within the threefold criteria listed in *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church*.[102]

Anglicans have emphasised with Catholics the need for faith to be realised 'in daily life' so that 'the gospel is not transmitted solely as text.'[103] Since this emphasis has emerged only recently, it may have been prompted by other bilateral discussions. This active conception of holiness was further developed in *The Gift of Authority* where holy people were described as responsible to call the Church to Tradition afresh.[104]

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[94] Vorgrimler, *From* Sensus Fidei… pp.-8-9.
[95] O-RC, *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church* (1987), 27.
[96] M-RC, *The Word of Life: A Statement on the Church – Sixth Series 1991-1996, Baar* (1995), 55.
[97] Ibid., 60.
[98] *Sentire* describes a 'spiritual instinct' and is used in particular to designate feeling rather than thinking. Ibid., 56.
[99] Ibid., 59.
[100] O-RC, *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church* (1988), 8.
[101] Neuhaus, R.J. 'The New Catechism and Christian Unity' in B.J. Nicholls (ed.), *Evangelical Review of Theology Vol.21, No.2* (1997), p.158.
[102] O-RC, *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church* (1987), 21.
[103] A-RC, *Church As Communion* (1990), 27.
[104] A-RC, *The Gift of Authority* (1998), 25.

Methodists and Roman Catholics found common ground in their emphasis on the pursuit of holiness through a disciplined life,[105] noting in particular the parallels between early Methodists and Jesuits.[106] Vatican II's depiction of development as the process by which the Church interprets the gospel afresh has already been noted. Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue described development as 'an ecclesial process,' but based on 'the experience and holiness of the faithful'[107] rather than on episcopal declarations. In this way, the report suggests the possibility that existential authority may serve as a counterpoint to the ministerial authority of the episcopate.

Despite their acknowledgement that all texts require interpretation, Evangelicals understand *official* interpretations of scripture as ultimately unnecessary because the text's inherent clarity makes the appropriation of its meaning the responsibility of each believer.[108] Nevertheless, a tacit assumption exists that those who have demonstrated their appropriation of the text by a holy lifestyle are effective interpreters. In this way, the interpretation of some persons is regarded as valuable while the interpretation of others is dismissed outright. The fact that holiness was not seen as an obvious common ground may be attributed to the Catholic connection of holiness to participation in the sacraments and the Evangelical suspicion of sacraments as a distraction from scripture.[109] Among Baptists, some regard organic union as an unrealistic goal, but encourage ecumenism through joint bible-studies and worship.[110] Thus, while they cannot envision agreement on theological propositions, they nevertheless desire to engage in the pursuit of holiness as a common task.

It is surprising that discussion of holiness did not feature prominently in those communions which emerged most directly out of humanist critiques of the Church on an existential level, namely Lutherans and Reformed. The closest the latter came was in eliciting an admission from Catholics that the 'Judgement on the church just before the Reformation has… been severe – and justly so.'[111] Similar criticism of 'the fearful, vacillating and self-serving policies of Clement VII'[112] makes it possible to conceive of a common reading of sixteenth century history as differing responses to a vacuum of existential authority. Presumably, Lutheran discussion did not reject the idea that holiness is a kind of authority, but rather took the need for holiness as axiomatic. Nevertheless, conversations need to take place between these

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[105] M-RC, *Denver* (1971), 7.
[106] Ibid., 8.
[107] M-RC, *Baar* (1995), 39.
[108] E-RC, *ERCDOM* 1977-1984), 1.1.
[109] Blocher, p.124.
[110] Cupit, L.A. 'The Vision of Unity Emerging Among Baptists as a Result of Bilateral Dialogues' in *The Seventh Forum on Bilateral Dialogues* (WCC, 1997), p.33. Faith and Order Paper No. 179.
[111] R-RC, *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* (1990), 34.
[112] Ibid., 40.

communions and Roman Catholicism concerning the place of saints, and holiness as an existential element of authority seems the most constructive context in which to do so. Such discussion would be a useful extension of the Reformed-Roman Catholic reconciliation of memories[113] and compliment Geoffrey Wainwright's proposal for an ecumenical calendar of witnesses.[114]

Finally, in his discussion of the tension between the magisterium and the people of God, Jon Sobrino eloquently pleaded, 'what is needed is historical patience and a conviction that in the final analysis what is needed is holiness, and that holiness is what, sooner or later, will turn the experience of faith into the expression of doctrine.'[115] His comment serves as an important reminder that existential authority cannot be reduced to a kind of lay authority – it must be pursued and exercised by the whole people of God.

As Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue developed, it offered a refined perspective of existential authority by describing an instinct about faith (*sensus fidei*) dependent upon holiness because it is 'formed by worshipping and living in communion as a faithful member of the Church.'[116] It is worth noting, however, that *sensus fidei* could only strictly be understood as possessing authority in the collective form of *sensus fidelium* since its validity depended on being 'exercised in concert by the body of the faithful'.[117] It is not the individual believer, but the whole body of believers to which the episcopate must pay attention.[118] Historically, *sensus fidei* has been regarded as useful in dealing with simple questions, but Luigi Sartori argued that widespread education and the speed at which information may now be disseminated makes it viable in complex questions also.[119]

The statement of the *Honolulu Report* that both conscience and institutional authority are 'regulated by the Word of God, by the faith of the Church and by the shared experience of the Christian faithful'[120] suggests that the Methodist-Roman Catholic understanding of existential authority cannot ultimately be restricted to the individual. It is always subordinate to the collective experience of the people of God.

In Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, the existential side of authority is only mentioned in passing, but nevertheless remains necessary in order for 'a many sided

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[113] Ibid., 63.
[114] Wainwright, G. 'Ecumenical Challenges for Methodism in the Twenty-first Century' in R.G. Jones (ed.), *Epworth Review Vol. 27 No.1* (2000), p.74.
[115] Sobrino, J. 'The "Doctrinal Authority" of the People of God in Latin America' in J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx (eds.), *Concilium No.4* (1985), p.61.
[116] A-RC, *The Gift of Authority* (1998), 29.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid., 30.
[119] Sartori, L. 'What is the Criterion for the *Sensus Fidelium*' in J. Moltmann and H. Küng (eds.), *Concilium: Who Has Say in the Church? October* (1981), p.59.
[120] M-RC, *Honolulu* (1981), 29.

exchange' to take place between 'believers, priests, and theologians.'[121]   Believers must have a ground from which to engage in such an exchange. The only possible ground believers possess is their experience of faith, but it is not clear whether they act as individuals or collectively.

The closest comparison to *sensus fidei* within Evangelical or Baptist perspective can be found in its emphasis on individual responsibility 'for what we believe and why we believe it.'[122]   Though there is a marked contrast between the communal emphasis of *sensus fidei* and the individual emphasis of Evangelicalism, both rely on the principle that God has endowed each believer with a spiritual intuition.

Quite apart from the tension between individual and collective forms of *sensus*, Christian Duquoc argued that '*sensus fidei…* is inadequate to define the institutional or political scope of a reciprocal and responsible relationship between base and hierarchy, since it is still *interpreted* as passive.'[123]   This inadequacy is most apparent in Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue. Though the responsibility for maintaining the apostolic faith is described as being shared by the whole people of God, all the active expressions of that maintenance, namely 'preaching, explaining, applying…. heeding and sifting'[124] belong to the *episcope*. Even 'understanding, articulating and applying' required the assistance of those with *episcope*.[125] The only tasks left to the people of God are recognition and assimilation.[126] *The Gift of Authority* moved in a positive direction by attributing the task of 'discernment, actualisation and communication of the Word of God' to the whole people of God,[127] but still failed to address Duquoc's critique fully. Michael Root specifically criticised *The Gift of Authority* for its failure to articulate the role of the laity in a juridical sense.[128] This seems to suggest that significant work is still required to establish an active authority of believers based on *sensus fidei*.

While it is possible to conceive of reception in terms of a formal act, this research addresses it only within the existential context of 'the genuine adherence of believers'.[129] Surprisingly, it featured in only three communions' discussion with Catholics. Anglicans and Catholics noted very early a shared understanding of

[121] L-RC, *The Ministry in the Church* (1981), 51.
[122] White, p.52.
[123] Duquoc, C. 'An Active Role for the People of God in Defining the Church's Faith' in J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx (eds.), *Concilium No.4* (1985), p.73, emphasis added.
[124] A-RC, *Church As Communion* (1990), 32.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] A-RC, *The Gift of Authority* (1998), 28.
[128] Root, M. *The Gift of Authority*, p.8.
[129] Birmelé, A. 'Reception as Ecumenical Requirement' in A. Falconer (ed.), *Faith and Order in Moshi* (WCC, 1998), p.62.

reception as recognition of the apostolic faith by the people of God,[130] an expression of the laity's role in a 'continuing process of discernment and response'.[131] Methodists and Catholics have only declared recently that reception is an 'essential moment in the process of Tradition'.[132] Though Lutherans discussed it, they did not explicitly affirm the Catholic position that formulation of doctrine 'is not carried out alone by one component of the church but is due in the last analysis to the support and guidance of God's Spirit who exercises control through the fellowship of the whole people of God.'[133]

No part of the latter can be faulted, but the first two expressions have serious problems centred in the quixotic statement that 'In Catholic teaching, the agreement of the faithful is not a condition of truth, but the Church's assent cannot fail to be given.'[134] This is nothing more than a repetition of the Anglican-Roman Catholic agreement that despite being 'the final indication that [a doctrinal] decision has fulfilled the necessary conditions',[135] reception 'does not create truth or legitimize the decision'.[136] In this light, it is difficult to conceive what meaning could be attributed to the assertion that 'the Commission denies that a council is so evidently self-sufficient that its definitions owe nothing to reception.'[137] The denial of the contrapositive case is only possible when the original proposition is always true. If conciliar decisions are always true, they are self-sufficiently evident. Furthermore, the predicate would also be true *a priori*, but this is not consonant with recent history, even within Catholicism. While the doctrine of Mary's ascension was received almost unanimously, *Humanae Vitae* continues to elicit considerable dissent.[138] Decisions on clerical celibacy and the ordination of women are perceived as hierarchical actions which have ignored the *sensus fidelium*.[139] Such divergent views of the faithful and the magisterium prompted Jan Walgrave to ask if it was still appropriate to talk about consulting the faithful.[140]

How then should reception be understood? Leonardo Boff argued that the whole church is both *ecclesia discens*[141] and *ecclesia docens*.[142] Furthermore, the

[130] A-RC, *Elucidation* (1981), 3.
[131] A-RC, *Authority In The Church I…* (1976), 6.
[132] M-RC, *Brighton* (2001), 24.
[133] L-RC, *Church and Justification* (1993), 221.
[134] M-RC, *Brighton* (2001), 24.
[135] A-RC, *Elucidation* (1981), 3.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Fries, H. 'Is there a Magisterium of the Faithful?' in J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx (eds.), *Concilium No.4* (1985), pp.88-89.
[139] Duquoc, *An Active Role…*, p.75.
[140] Walgrave, J. 'Newman's "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine"' in J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx (eds.), *Concilium: The Teaching Authority of Believers No.4* (1985), p.29.
[141] The hearing church. Boff, L. 'Is the distinction between *Ecclesia docens* and *Ecclesia discens* justified?' in J. Moltmann and H. Küng (eds.), *Concilium: Who Has Say in the Church? October* (1981), p.47.
[142] The witnessing church. Ibid., p.48.

realisation that *discens* must be prior to *docens* suggested that the hierarchy must listen as well as teach.[143] If applied to the concept of reception, it would mean that the laity could play an active role in establishing the teaching of the Church. Though the problem of determining who speaks for 'the laity'[144] would remain, a model of authority which will take their insights into account is a vital first step. While *Lumen Gentium* could provide useful guidance in this area, it has never been fully applied.[145] It is apparent therefore, that positive change would require Catholic movement from the language of qualification to the language of moderation seen in Lutheran dialogue. Such acceptance of the determinative role of reception would open the way to Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's more radical proposal to overcome ecclesial patriarchy in identifying authority not 'as "power over," as domination and submission, but as the enabling, energising, creative authority of orthopraxis'.[146]

10.3 <u>MINISTERIAL ELEMENTS</u>

All churches agree that there is a ministerial aspect to authority, but not on the elements which comprise it, particularly as they relate to the bishop of Rome. There are four major areas of discussion, arranged from most amenable to most divisive: teaching authority, episcopacy, primacy, and infallibility.

Joseph Ratzinger's definition of teaching authority as the ability to declare a doctrine binding even when it is contested by 'theologians, exegetes, and experts on the Bible'[147] is both the most up to date and most stringent Catholic definition of teaching authority. Orthodox and Catholics did not deal with this active sense of teaching authority, but focused on teaching authority in history. They stated that the 'faith of the church constitutes the norm and the criterion of the personal act of faith.'[148] While this may seem to interpose an intermediary corpus between the criterion of truth[149] and the laity who put it into practice, a dynamic understanding of 'faith of the church' does not preclude interpretation on the part of the believer. It is clear that the established teaching of the church serves as an unchangeable guide, but it is accessed directly through participation in the liturgy.[150]

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[143] Ibid.
[144] Vorgrimler, *From* Sensus Fidei…, p.7. See also Sartori, L. *What is the Criterion for the* Sensus Fidelium, p.59.
[145] Schillebeekx, E. 'The Teaching Authority of All – A Reflection about the Structure of the New Testament' in J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx (eds.), *Concilium No.4* (1985), p.22.
[146] Fiorenza, E.S. 'Claiming our Authority and Power' in J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx (eds.), *Concilium No.4* (1985), p.52.
[147] Ratzinger, J. 'The Augsburg Concord on Justification: How Far Does It Take Us?' in P. Avis et al. (eds.), *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church Vol.2 No.1* (2002), p.20.
[148] O-RC, *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church* (1987), 5.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid., 14.

In Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue, the teaching authority of the Church was contrasted with private judgement.[151]   While it might be supposed that this discussion could be reduced to contradictory assertions of institutional authority on the side of Catholics and private judgment on the side of Methodists, the *Denver Report* is careful to dispel such an idea. It cites John Henry Newman's presentation of historical Catholicism as 'a continuous picture of authority and private judgement alternately advancing and retreating as the ebb and flow of the tide'.[152] It has been noted that Methodists understand John Wesley's role as a kind of authoritative teaching.[153] Observing that Methodist recognition of doctrinal standards indicated an affirmation of institutional authority, both groups were able to agree that private judgement and authority must be held together.[154] Authority was understood as both limiting and safeguarding freedom, but no discussion elucidated on the ways in which it does so.[155] Differences regarding the nature of this shift led to consideration at Honolulu that they might represent a fundamental rift.[156] Further discussion suggested this distinction was behind the historic contrast of existential and ministerial aspects of authority.[157]   While emphasis on private judgement presupposes the possibility of encountering God existentially through the text, emphasis on institutional authority requires that experience be subjected to official interpretation of the text. These are not mutually exclusive, but as Harry Kuitert noted in relation to the Reformed tradition, 'No longer can either the Scriptures or the pope be considered to be the highest authority as was so in the old days.'[158]   It seems that isolating either concept as supreme leaves the exercise of authority open to abuse.

In dialogue with Lutherans, Catholics emphasised that though bishops have authority to teach, they remain subject to the Word of God which they must defend 'against omissions and falsifications.'[159]   This episcopal role of protecting the message was distinguished from the theologian's task of interpreting scripture.[160] Though the interaction of textual and existential aspects with ministerial aspects of authority has already been noted, for Catholics *final* authority belongs to the bishops

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[151] M-RC, *Denver* (1971), 110.
[152] Newman, J. H. *Dream of Gerontius* 237:1.7 (cited in H. Meyer and L. Vischer (eds.) *Growth and Agreement I*).
[153] Carter, D. '*Episkope* and Episcopacy in British and American Methodism: Past, Present and Future' in G. Rowell et al. (eds.), *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church: Episkope, Episcopacy and Primacy Vol.2 No.2* (2002), p.51
[154] M-RC, *Denver* (1971), 111.
[155] Ibid., 117.
[156] M-RC, *Honolulu* (1981), 47.
[157] Ibid., 33.
[158] Kuitert, H. 'How does the Church remain in the truth? A Reformed Theologian's Response' in J. Moltmann and H. Küng (eds.), *Concilium: Who Has Say in the Church? October* (1981), p.30.
[159] L-RC, *The Ministry in the Church* (1981), 50.
[160] Ibid., 51.

when they are 'in universal agreement with each other and in communion with the Bishop of Rome'.[161]

As noted, Lutherans differed in that they accorded teaching authority to their theologians.[162] Erasmus had criticised Luther for this very reason: he was not exercising his role of theologian in a pastorally responsible way.[163] There is little cause for surprise to discover that in a tradition where the roles of textual interpreters and overseers were conflated there has been a tendency to understand the statements of church leaders as simply an exposition of the scriptural witness. Though the Roman Catholic system is on the whole understood as centralised, its separation of theologians from the teaching office has the potential for tremendously fruitful exchange, if only the voices of theologians are heeded.

Further discussion revealed that the main difference between Catholic and Lutheran understanding of teaching authority is that the former regard it as 'in a special manner the task of the bishops'[164] and that the latter regard it as 'a process of consensus-building in which church leaders or bishops, teachers of theology, pastors and non-ordained members of the congregations participate with basically equal rights.'[165] It is important to note that Catholics did not use the word *exclusive*, thus leaving the way open for consideration of consensus-based models understood as a *shared* process which the bishops are *responsible to guide*. The recognition that 'both churches can and do teach in an authoritative way'[166] led to discussion in *Church and Justification* of the similarities between Catholic decrees and Lutheran confessions.[167] It became apparent then that differences involved the exercise of teaching authority rather than whether such a function is appropriate to the church.[168] While both agreed the Church's teaching was binding, Lutherans maintained that it must be open to question by all Christians.[169]

Just as Lutherans acknowledged that their confessions and Catholic canon law played a similar determinative role, so Evangelicals acknowledged that 'some congregations, denominations and institutions have a kind of magisterium'[170] which uses a particular interpretation to define itself and apply discipline. Richard Mouw described key Evangelical writers as exercising an unofficial teaching office.[171]

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[161] Ibid., 52.
[162] Ibid., 53-54. Cf. 10.1.4 The Role of Theologians.
[163] Rupp, E.G. and P.S. Watson *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, pp.40-42. Cf. 2.3.2 Humanist Theologians.
[164] L-RC, *Facing Unity* (1984), 60.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.
[167] L-RC, *Church and Justification* (1993), 207.
[168] Ibid., 208.
[169] Ibid., 213-215,
[170] E-RC, *ERCDOM* (1977-1984), 1.3b.
[171] Mouw, R.J. 'The Problem of Authority in Evangelical Christianity' in C.E. Braaten and R.W. Jenson (eds.), *Church Unity and the Papal Office* (W.B. Eerdman's, 2001), p.*139.*

Evangelical-Roman Catholic agreement that God intended for the Church to have teachers, that the Holy Spirit protects from false interpretation, and that independent charismatic teachers were a mutual problem[172] created space to express their differences in terms of anxieties. While Evangelicals emphasised individuals' interpretations 'lest God's word be lost in church traditions,'[173] Roman Catholics emphasised the community's interpretation as a bulwark against dissolution 'in a multiplicity of idiosyncratic interpretations.'[174] Some attention must be given to this Catholic claim and Evangelicals' rejection of it. Kenneth Kirk's critique linking the fissiparous nature of Protestantism to weakness in or lack of episcopacy[175] was picked up by George Vandervelde who argued that Evangelical critiques of a formal teaching office as a barrier between scripture and the people of God merit re-examination in light of divisions.[176] While Catholics pointed to the visible unity they have maintained, Evangelicals cited the 'diversity of viewpoints' within Catholicism as evidence against this claim.[177] There are two problems with this approach. In the first place, it has the obvious failing of criticising diversity rather than disunity, the essence of the Catholic claim. The fact of Catholic unity in the midst of diverse viewpoints seems to suggest the merits rather than the failings of a formal magisterium. In the second place, it is technically correct in arguing that the magisterium is ineffective for preventing disunity because the ministry of unity is properly attributed to the episcopate as a whole rather than merely the teaching office. The misdirection of this critique reveals a lack of understanding which does not appear to have been corrected.

Though Ratzinger's definition of teaching authority represents in some ways his characteristic emphasis on pre-Vatican II Catholicism, it remains an important challenge to agreement reached in bilateral discussion. The Orthodox may need to consider an active teaching authority. Methodists need to consider the possibility that personal freedom is antithetical to institutional authority. Lutherans and Reformed need to accept that both their model of a single source with a plurality of interpreters and the Catholic model of a plurality of sources with a single interpretive entity have particular failings which can never be remedied in a permanent sense, but only through continual dialogue. Finally, Evangelicals need to take into account the positive role of a strong teaching office in preventing division. Nevertheless, Edmund Hill's argument must also be noted that the Catholic magisterium

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[172] E-RC, *ERCDOM* (1977-1984), 1.3a.
[173] Ibid., 1.3b.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Kirk, K.E. 'The Apostolic Ministry' in K.E. Kirk (ed.), *The Apostolic Ministry* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1946), p.13.
[176] Vandervelde, *Introduction*, p.8.
[177] E-RC, *ERCDOM* (1977-1984), 1.3b.

necessarily relies on the expertise of theologians and other scholars.[178] This seems to give support to the suggestion addressed earlier that theologians serve the Church most effectively when allowed to function as a counterpoint to a pastoral or ministerial authority.

While establishing the necessity of the threefold ministry was important in multilateral dialogue such as BEM, it has not emerged as a focal point in bilateral dialogue between Catholics and communions which already possess a threefold episcopate. Instead, they have focused on the relation of the local to the universal. For communions without a threefold pattern, discussion centred around the function of *episcope* as a bulwark against division, considering adoption of some Catholic forms largely based on Kirk's pragmatic argument noted above.[179]

For Catholics and Orthodox, the discussion of ministerial elements centred around distinctions between local and universal ecclesiologies. They described the communion of the local church as being 'expressed and realized in and through the episcopal college.'[180] For both communions the bishop is the centre of spiritual life in his presidency at the eucharist,[181] but for the Orthodox this centring represents an extension of their proposal to develop unity on a regional basis.[182] The dialogue emphasised the equality of bishops as successors of the apostles 'whatever may be the church over which he presides or the prerogatives $(\pi\rho\epsilon\sigma\beta\epsilon\tau\alpha)$ of this church among the other churches.'[183] Metropolitan John Zizioulas' argument that the laity are ordained in their confirmation or chrismation, making it appropriate to speak of *four* orders in Orthodoxy[184] has had a surprisingly limited response. This perspective could be extremely useful in bilateral dialogue for articulating how the laity are connected to ministerial authority.

Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue placed a similar emphasis on the relation of the local church to the universal Church. The desire 'to foster universal communion' was lauded as a condition for being faithful to Christ.[185] Primacy and conciliarity were introduced as complementary concepts[186] which required universal as well as local expression. [187] Though the term 'pope' was studiously avoided in favour of 'see of Rome,' the report looked to the papal office as the default choice

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[178] Hill, E. *Ministry and Authority in the Catholic Church*, p.80.
[179] Kirk, p.13.
[180] O-RC, *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church* (1988), 26.
[181] Ibid., 40.
[182] O-RC, *The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity* (1982), III.3.
[183] O-RC, *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church* (1988), 49.
[184] Zizioulas, J. 'Ordination – A Sacrament? An Orthodox Response' in *Concilium: Mutual Recognition of Ecclesial Ministries? No. 4* (1972), p.36.
[185] A-RC, *Authority In The Church I…* (1976), 13.
[186] Ibid., 22.
[187] Ibid., 23.

for such a role.[188]   This auspicious beginning soon encountered difficulties as separation between convergence in faith and convergence in life became apparent in the poor response to ARCIC I and the disparity between each communion's response to ARCIC II.[189]   Increasing emphasis on centralisation eventually led Anglicans to assert their conviction that 'authority needs to be dispersed rather than centralized'[190] against the Catholic claim that centralised authority was essential for the preservation of unity.   Some have held back from endorsing a shared exercise of *episcope* to ensure that cooperation and accountability will really be present.[191]   One of the important areas of growth was the emphasis in *The Gift of Authority* on the inseparability of the episcopate from the existential element, *sensus fidelium*.[192]

Catholics seemed more accepting of an emphasis on the local church in dialogue with Orthodox than with Anglicans.   It is possible that this resulted from the differences noted in the previous chapter[193] regarding the basis for the threefold pattern.   The common understanding of tradition which Orthodox and Catholics share may make them more comfortable discussing the importance of the local church without fear that it would be emphasised to the detriment of the universal Church.   It is also possible that many Anglicans actually experience a 'Peter-shaped gap at the heart of Anglicanism'[194] and for this reason papal primacy is more attractive to them than to Orthodox who see such a role fulfilled by their patriarchs. Catholics have emphasised that though the local church has 'structural primacy,' it is not an 'alternative to the universal Church.'[195]   The relationship between the particular and the universal is one of 'mutual indwelling.'[196]   Thus, local church is only properly understood as the place in which the universal Church is made present. The question then moves from the static abstract one of 'Is my church part of the Church?' to the active concrete one of 'Is the Church being made present in my church?'.

In Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue, there was a general trend of valuation of the threefold ministry specifically because it was the normative model through

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[188] Ibid.

[189] Tanner, M. *Roman Catholic Relations from Malta to Toronto*, p.119.

[190] A-RC, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church* (1993), 49.

[191] Platten, S. 'ARCIC II's The Gift of Authority' in P.A. Hardiment (ed.), *One in Christ Vol.36, No.2* (2000), p.127.

[192] A-RC, *The Gift of Authority* (1998), 30.

[193] Cf. 9.4.5 Episcopal Communions.

[194] Thomas, P.H.E. 'The Evolution of the Primates: Anglicanism, Primacy and Conciliarity' in G. Rowell et al. (eds.), *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church:* Episkope, *Episcopacy and Primacy Vol.2, No.2* (2002), p.93.

[195] Beozzo, J. O. and G. Ruggieri. 'Introduction: Towards an Ecumenical Structuring of the Churches' in J.O. Beozzo and G. Ruggieri (eds.), *Concilium: The Ecumenical Constitution of Churches No.3* (2001), p.13.

[196] Pereiro, J. 'Newman and Meaning: The Ecclesiological Issues' in P. Avis et al. (eds.), *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church Vol.2 No.1* (2002), p.96.

which textual norms were established.[197] This was possible in large part because most Methodists already possessed a ministry of bishops within their own tradition.[198] *The Apostolic Tradition* defined the central task of *episcope* as 'maintaining unity in the truth'[199] thereby connecting the idea of teaching to what had previously been discussed primarily in terms of its unitive function. A comprehensive picture of *episcope* was developed including responsibility for the community's growth in holiness and its faithfulness to the apostolic tradition.[200] In this way, the ministerial aspect of authority functions as a caretaker of the textual and existential aspects. Though Catholics understood *episcope* as a function of the episcopal college centred in the pope, Methodists could only affirm that they perceived such a function in Wesley and his successors. Nevertheless, some Methodists have declared themselves willing to accept episcopacy if permitted the same degree of liberty which Anglicans are permitted.[201]

The initial Lutheran-Roman Catholic exchange included encouraging reconsideration of the other's ministry,[202] but soon after, *Ways to Community* expressed frustration that no progress had been made regarding the mutual recognition of ministries.[203] One reason for this was that the historical Lutheran understanding of the distinction between bishop and pastor as a matter of human law clearly contradicted the Catholic understanding that it was a matter of divine law. In *The Ministry of the Church*, they were able to agree that the distinction was 'something essential for the church'[204] in so far as the development of local and regional emphases was aided by the Holy Spirit. This initial agreement grew to a shared understanding that bishops have a dual function of representing 'the universal church in their own church and… their own church among all other churches.'[205]

The title *Facing Unity* belies the hesitancy with which Lutheran-Catholic dialogue has been conducted. In 1981, both had recorded desire for mutual recognition of ministries but rejected it as an interim stage towards unity because it was so closely linked with full church communion.[206] In 1984, four stages were proposed as a possible approach to a shared episcopate: an initial period of joint exercise, a formal act of recognition, exercise of *episcope* as a single college, and finally a single ordained ministry.[207] The problems and benefits of each stage were

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[197] M-RC, *Towards a Statement on the Church* (1986), 29.
[198] Ibid.
[199] M-RC, *The Apostolic Tradition* (1991), 93.
[200] Ibid., 74.
[201] Wainwright, *Ecumenical Challenges…,* p.73.
[202] L-RC, *Malta* (1972), 63-64.
[203] L-RC, *Ways to Community* (1980), 87.
[204] L-RC, *The Ministry in the Church* (1981), 48.
[205] L-RC, *Facing Unity* (1984), 111.
[206] L-RC, *The Ministry in the Church* (1981), 82.
[207] L-RC, *Facing Unity* (1984), 118.

discussed in detail, but this portion of the document seems to have prompted very few practical results. It is possible that such stagnation resulted from outstanding concerns about the nature of justification, prompting the further question: why has no episcopal movement followed the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* in 1999? Much of the blame for this must fall on the suggestion in *Dominus Iesus* that Lutheran churches were not 'churches in the proper sense',[208] as addressed more fully below.[209]

Though Methodists and Lutherans seem to have made significant gains in terms of a common understanding of episcopacy, Reformed have only entered the initial stages of discussion. The acknowledgement that the Reformed emphasis on church as *creatura verbi* and the Catholic emphasis on church as *sacramentum gratiae* expressed 'the same instrumental reality'[210] laid an important foundation for considering the structures of ministerial authority. Reformed have agreed with Catholics on the need for *episcope* at local, regional, and even a universal level, but not who should exercise it or in what manner.[211] The most encouraging sign of this exchange came in Reformed reflection that they had adapted medieval forms of ministry in the sixteenth century, and therefore could conceivably adapt their forms of ministry 'in the ecumenical future of the church.'[212]

David McLoughlin argued that the highest form of the Church universal was the network of bodies centred in each local bishop rather than a hierarchy of leadership centred in the pope.[213] It is not clear, however, why bishops responsible for a number of congregations should form the centre rather than the minister or pastor responsible only for a particular congregation. Further dialogue concerning the definition of local church is needed between communions who do and do not use the threefold pattern.

Among the outstanding issues remaining between Reformed and Catholics is the inadequate description of ordination, particularly the ordination of women.[214] Similar concerns to articulate the place of women in ministry were apparent in the Orthodox objection that no reference had been made to the possibility of ordaining women to the diaconate as suggested in 1988[215] and Methodist dialogue where Catholics reasserted their understanding that they have no authority to alter a sacrament received from tradition.[216] The decision of some Anglican communions to

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[208] DI, 17.
[209] See 10.4 Evaluation.
[210] R-RC, *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* (1990), 112-113.
[211] Ibid., 142.
[212] Ibid., 142e.
[213] McLoughlin, D. *Authority as Service in Communion*, p.127.
[214] R-RC, *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* (1990), 141.
[215] *A Joint Reaction by the Orthodox/Roman Catholic Consultation in the U.S.A.* (1989), 20.
[216] M-RC, *The Apostolic Tradition* (1991), 97.

ordain women caused Catholics to drastically reconsider proposals for an integrated episcopate. In this regard, bilateral dialogue has been even less effective in facilitating conversation about the possibility of women exercising ministerial authority.

The episcopate is at its most basic level the instrument of connectivity in the Church whereby local churches are linked to the universal Church. Understood in this sense, the unity of the Church is an episcopal problem in so far as no currently functioning episcopal body adequately connects all churches. For precisely this reason, Geoffrey Wainwright's repeated proposal for a consultative, ecumenical committee called by the pope[217] represents a significant and necessary stage of the ecumenical pilgrimage. The problem of an episcopate which is able to incorporate non-episcopal communions remains.

One strategy may be drawn from Kenneth Kirk's definition of essential ministry as the recognised power to ordain.[218] This seems to indicate the possibility of including other communions within a structure of *episcope* on the basis of their power to ordain within their communion. Though this definition might have been pressed further, it has clearly not been incorporated into the language of either Vatican II or bilateral discussion.

A more contemporary solution may be found in the connection between *koinonia* and *episcope*. In ARCIC II, *koinonia* became the new framework in which to conduct ecumenism.[219] It had already been emphasised as being realised in both the local congregation and the collection of local congregations acting together.[220] In this way, the ecumenical use of *koinonia* is intrinsically linked to episcopacy from its origins. Similarly, in Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue, *koinonia* is the context in which apostolic succession is passed on in the local church.[221] Baptists expressed their priority of the local congregation in terms of *koinonia* and a concern 'to avoid development of structures which would threaten the freedom of individuals and the autonomy of local congregations.'[222] Though the Roman Catholic understanding of universal *koinonia* as being comprised of the linked *koinonia* of local gatherings[223] has generally been viewed with suspicion by communions with centripetal ecclesiologies, it is possible that a deeper appreciation of episcopacy could be

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[217] Wainwright, *Ecumenical Challenges…,* p.74.
[218] Kirk, p.14.
[219] Platten, p.126.
[220] A-RC, *Authority In The Church I …* (1976), 8.
[221] O-RC, *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church* (1988), 45.
[222] B-RC, *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World* (1988), 48.
[223] Ibid.

reached for Evangelicals and Baptists through consideration of the role bishops have played in Catholic missions.[224]

It is possible to conceive of an *episcope* for communions who do not adopt the threefold pattern, limited to the facilitation of *koinonia*, that could be recognised within Evangelical, Baptist, and the Reformed traditions without threatening congregational autonomy but could also be recognised by other communions as an effective link between local or regional *koinonia* and the wider ecumenical *koinonia*. Giving non-episcopal communions the opportunity to participate in a collegial body with the understanding that their role was limited to facilitation (rather than oversight) could take into account a variety of particular concerns, such as the Baptist unease with organic models of unity.[225] Richard Mouw's observation that para-church organisations form a major part of Evangelical ecclesiology[226] suggests that such a quasi-episcopate would be best developed as a voluntary organisation which could garner support only by demonstrating its effectiveness. There would be no need to assert that the regional office of *episcope* in that form was equivalent to a bishop's because that distinction would not be important for non-episcopal communions, provided there was recognition of their ability to function in an episcopal way as the link between local and universal *koinonia*. Furthermore, Vatican II's assertion that through baptism all Christians are in *real though imperfect* communion with Rome[227] means that it would be possible to include them in an episcopal college such as Wainwright has suggested contingent on communion with Rome.

The question of papal primacy, as apparent in chapter one, has had a long and difficult history. Contemporary discussion has focused on the terms 'primacy of honour' and 'primacy of jurisdiction.' Catholics have historically asserted that the pope is due both, while Orthodox have responded that primacy of jurisdiction was an exaggeration of the primacy of honour the other ancient sees gave to Rome. Discussion of primacy with Protestants was particularly difficult because it required not merely answering whether such a ministry was necessary, but first of all whether it was even useful. Many communions have been surprisingly, even generously, accepting of the possibility of a universal exercise of *episcope*, but only if limitations could be agreed upon. This progress was crowned by John Paul II's plea for 'patient

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[224] Escobar, S. 'Missionary Dynamism in Search of Missiological Discernment' in D. Parker (ed.), *Evangelical Review of Theology Vol.23, No.1, January* (1999), p.88.
[225] See *Seventh Forum on Bilateral Dialogues*, p.50.
[226] Mouw, p.136.
[227] *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR), 3.

and fraternal dialogue' concerning the role of the bishop of Rome,[228] though Konrad Raiser dismissed it as question begging in its assumption of magisterial primacy.[229]

Orthodox affirmed the constructive value of primacy within the context of episcopal synods.[230] They could accept it in theory but objected to Roman primacy as it has been historically exercised.[231] While it is tempting to characterise Orthodox as determined to establish authority on a local level and Catholics as determined to do the same on a universal level, they specifically rejected this dichotomy as artificial.[232] Nevertheless, the failure to mention primacy in *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church* as a part of the proposed framework of equality[233] argues against the possibility that Orthodox would consider accepting primacy of jurisdiction. Focus was directed to description of the pentarchy in which Rome is placed within the context of four other historical centres of Christianity.[234] In this way, Orthodox seem to indicate a willingness to accept a primacy of honour which preserves the identity of the local church. The biggest hindrance to such acceptance is the failure of Rome to provide credible assurance that its exercise of primacy will not repeat what they regard as the abuse and betrayal of their ancestors.[235] That further discussion seems to have been postponed indefinitely was supported by Cardinal Cassidy's description of the sparse Orthodox response to *Ut Unum Sint* as 'rather disappointing.'[236]

Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue began with the possibility of limiting the scope of primacy. The idea that certain 'functions assumed by the see of Rome were not necessarily linked to the primacy'[237] created the possibility of separating historical actions of the pope from primacy. There is little wonder then that the description of primacy as an expression of *episcope* which fosters *koinonia* by encouraging churches to listen to one another[238] bore little resemblance to the historical papacy. Even in the case of Germanos Strenopoulos or Nathan Söderblom, it is not clear that their effectiveness in getting churches to listen to one another depended on some sort of primatial rather than merely episcopal authority. It is important to recall that no case was being made for accepting the historical forms or

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[228] *Ut Unum Sint*, 96.
[229] Weigel, G. 'The Church's Teaching Authority and the Call for Democracy in North Atlantic Catholicism' in C.E. Braaten and R.W. Jenson (eds.), *Church Unity and the Papal Office* (W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), p.142.
[230] O-RC, *An agreed statement on conciliarity and primacy in the church* (1989), 7.
[231] Ibid.
[232] *Agreed Statement of the Eastern Orthodox/Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States: Apostolicity in the Life of the Church* (1986), 12.
[233] O-RC, *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church* (1988), 49.
[234] Ibid., 52.
[235] Neuhaus, p.157.
[236] Cassidy, E.I. '*Ut Unum Sint* in Ecumenical Perspective' in C.E. Braaten and R.W. Jenson (eds.), *Church Unity and the Papal Office* (W.B. Eerdman's, 2001), p.18.
[237] A-RC, *Authority In The Church I…* (1976), 12.
[238] Ibid., 21.

current practice of the pope, but only a theory of *episcope* which is both primatial and conciliar.[239]   Thus, Anglicans and Catholics were able to devise a common theoretical model which did not encroach upon the divisive areas of infallibility and an unqualified 'universal immediate jurisdiction'.[240]   What is surprising, however, is that the *Elucidation* labelled this model not merely useful, but *necessary* for the visible unity of the Church.[241]   In this, Anglicans departed drastically from the convictions of Thomas Cranmer. Even if this statement did not mean the bishop of Rome, it would be difficult to assert that Cranmer understood his irenical efforts with continental theologians as an attempt to bring them under the *episcope* of Henry VIII or Edward VI. Even in later dialogue, *The Gift of Authority* does not appear to deal with the essential tension between centrifugal forces within Anglicanism and centripetal forces within Catholicism.[242]   The charge that Anglicans were being asked 'to share an unreformed papacy'[243] has not been adequately answered.

Methodist acceptance of a theoretical model of primacy was likewise contingent on postponing discussion of infallibility and universal immediate jurisdiction. They declared with Roman-Catholics that 'papal authority… is a manifestation of the continuing presence of the Spirit of Love in the Church or it is nothing.'[244]   Once agreement had been reached that the Church has authority to teach,[245] Catholics attempted to mitigate Methodist unease about the terms 'infallible' and 'universal immediate jurisdiction' by grounding them within 'the total responsibility of teaching and disciplinary office in the Church.'[246]   This failed, of course, to deal with the main objection that a single person or office could not be adequate to such responsibility. Methodists developed a more nuanced distinction than Anglicans between the *functions* of the bishop of Rome pertaining to his diocesan see and patriarchy of the Latin church and *primacy* as a 'universal ministry of unity.'[247]   This distinction between the universal unitive function and particular diocesan functions created the possibility of placing ecumenically untenable functions within the locus of Roman Catholicism. The importance of the statement was underscored by its repetition regarding the possibility of a shared Methodist-Catholic episcopal college,[248] but no definite steps have been taken to actualise this possibility.

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[239] A-RC, *Elucidation* (1981), 8.
[240] A-RC, *Authority In The Church I…* (1976), 24.
[241] A-RC, *Elucidation* (1981), 8.
[242] Nilson, J. 'The Gift of Authority: An American, Roman Catholic Appreciation' in P.A. Hardiment (ed.), *One in Christ Vol.36, No.2* (2000), p.136.
[243] Platten, p.132.
[244] M-RC, *Honolulu* (1981), 35.
[245] Ibid., 34.
[246] Ibid., 36.
[247] M-RC, *Towards a Statement on the Church* (1986), 59.
[248] Ibid., 62.

Early Lutheran-Roman Catholic discussion focused on the place of Peter in the New Testament and the Catholic challenge for Lutherans to reconsider his place in light of Vatican II's 'new interpretive framework' of collegiality.[249]   While Lutherans admitted the need for a ministry of unity because 'no local church should live in isolation'[250] they were unwilling to concede that primacy was its necessary form.[251]   In later dialogue, Lutherans took a position akin to Anglicans and Methodists, articulating previous concerns about primacy, particularly infallibility, and suggesting the ministry of a Petrine office might become amenable if it were theologically reinterpreted and practically restructured.[252]   While the pursuit of such goals was subsumed by desires to reach agreement on justification, the necessary reinterpretation is the next logical step in Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. Indeed, Lutherans have begun to follow Wolfhart Pannenberg's lead in conceding that, since the need for a universal pastor has been admitted, they should not work to create such a ministry but rather devote their efforts to reforming the already existing ministry of the bishop of Rome.[253]

As J.M.R. Tillard described it, the fear of bishops that entry into communion with Rome will lead to restriction of freedom or arbitrary interference in local affairs is justified.[254]   He states, 'the centre does in a number of cases obscure the authority of the other members of the college'.[255]   Furthermore, the phrase *semper libere exercere*[256] seems to release the Pope from the obligation to act in harmony with the bishops.[257]

Two series of dialogues offered no possibility for a common understanding of primacy because they did not distinguish between primacy and other functions. Reformed critiques were directed against infallibility and are therefore dealt with below. The most vehement rejection of the papacy by Evangelicals has taken two forms: a historical and a theological critique. The historical critique focuses on scandalous episodes perpetrated by or linked to the papacy.[258]   The theological critique regards the papal office as 'irreconcilable with the spirit of the Gospel…

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[249] L-RC, *Malta* (1972), 66.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid., 67.
[252] L-RC, *The Ministry in the Church* (1981), 73.
[253] Yeago, D.S. 'The Papal Office and the Burdens of History: A Lutheran View' in C.E. Braaten and R.W. Jenson (eds.), *Church Unity and the Papal Office* (W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), p.105.
[254] Tillard, J.M.R. *In Search of Vatican II*, p.180-181.
[255] Ibid., p. 178.
[256] 'can always be exercised freely' – *Lumen Gentium* (LG), 22.
[257] Tillard, *In Search of Vatican II*, p.181.
[258] De Courcey, P. *Standing Room Only*, p.277.

[because] it wishes directly to set up a kingdom of the world which Christ declined'.[259]

It is apparent then, that some communions are developing a common understanding of primacy with Catholics while others remain closed to such a possibility. How then might primacy be a service to ecumenical Christianity? Giuseppe Alberigo proposed 'an executive collegial organ, presided over by the pope, which would be responsible for all current decisions relating to communion among the churches.'[260] While it is clear he intends such a body as separate from the curia, what is not clear is whether he was proposing an exclusively Catholic body or one which allows for active participation by other communions. His program of 'pastoral ecumenism'[261] only seems tenable if it recognises non-Catholic leaders as members of the college who can exercise pastoral care of Catholics as well as their own communion.

While Vatican II did not restate the doctrine of papal infallibility directly, it can apparently be derived through a syllogism combining the ability of the church to teach infallibly[262] with the ability of the pope to express the faith of the church.[263] Though the clarification that actual Catholic teaching is confined to a particular set of circumstances and grounded in the whole people of God[264] elicited relief from many communions, the intransigency of Catholics in this area remains the most problematic issue of authority in relation to Catholicism. Jürgen Moltmann and Hans Küng described papal infallibility as a 'great stumbling block' and charged Rome with the responsibility of moving it.[265]

Three overarching positions quickly became apparent. The first, and Catholic position, was that the Church is infallible and that the infallibility of the Church may be expressed by the bishop of Rome. Edmund Hill's more nuanced view distinguished between infallibility as an exercise of the *teaching office* which he understood Augustine to have rejected[266] and as an act of *judgement* that could be exercised by the people of God or the pope.[267] The second held that the Church as a whole is infallible but that it is a mistake to attribute that infallibility to any one

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[259] Reymond, R.L. *The Reformation's Conflict With Rome – Why it Must Continue!*, p. 64. Robert L. Reymond is a Reformed theologian whose writing may be considered representative of the adversarial approach some Evangelicals espouse.
[260] Alberigo, G. 'The Petrine Ministry as a Service of the "Pilgrim Churches"' in J.O. Beozzo and G. Ruggieri (eds.), *Concilium: The Ecumenical Constitution of Churches No.3* (2001), p.141.
[261] Ibid., p.143.
[262] LG, 42.
[263] LG, 44.
[264] Fries, p.85.
[265] Moltmann, J. and H. Küng. 'Forward: Who has the say in the Church?' in J. Moltmann and H. Küng (eds.), *Concilium: Who has say in the Church?* (1981), p.ix.
[266] Hill, p.82.
[267] Ibid., p.83.

person or office. The third held that God has granted infallibility to neither person nor institution.

Anglicans displayed willingness to consider the Catholic understanding,[268] but noted that the Marian dogmas promulgated independent of councils evidenced the dangers of accepting an infallibility centred in bishop of Rome.[269] *The Gift of Authority* presented faithfulness to scripture and consistency with Tradition as textual limits to infallibility,[270] but did not propose any institutional checks on papal authority because Catholics understood conciliarity as establishing informal boundaries or 'moral limits' to what the pope may do.[271] It seems evident, however, that informal boundaries such as collegiality and *sensus fidelium* have been ignored by popes at different stages in history, so this cannot be properly understood as a limit.

Methodists initially opposed Catholic descriptions of the charism of teaching and discernment as a possession of the episcopal college that can be exercised infallibly by the pope,[272] because such teaching exceeded 'the capacity of sinful human beings.'[273] Discussion which followed seemed to be an attempt to circumvent this disagreement by focusing on the concept of reception as integral to infallible teaching. The problematic nature of the Catholic formulation has already been noted. Another attempt at circumvention can be seen in the idea that even infallible teachings are not necessarily 'presented in the best possible way'[274] allowing some room for redefinition based on the motivation behind the teaching. This offered the theoretical possibility of focusing on *Humanae Vitae* as an attempt to preserve the sanctity of marriage rather than to inhibit careful planning of family size. A further area of growing understanding may be found in Geoffrey Wainwright's connection of infallibility to Wesley's doctrine of assurance of faith.[275] Acknowledgement of the common desire for reliable information about salvation could provide a useful starting point for considering how to respond to these desires in a collective and pastorally responsible way.

It is possible that Anglicans and Methodists could invoke the hierarchy of truths to focus attention on the infallibility of the *whole church* as more central than the infallibility of *the pope*.[276] The subordination of papal infallibility to ecclesial infallibility would make it possible for these communions to agree on fundamental

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[268] A-RC, *Authority In The Church II – Windsor Statement* (1981), 29.
[269] Ibid, 30.
[270] A-RC, *The Gift of Authority* (1998), 42.
[271] Root, p.13.
[272] M-RC, *Towards a Statement on the Church* (1986), 69.
[273] Ibid., 72.
[274] Ibid., 71.
[275] Wainwright, G. *Methodists in Dialogue* pp.57-71.
[276] O'Connell, P., p.93.

preservation from error, but the problems associated with selective acceptance of the hierarchy remain. This would naturally entail a reduced role for the papacy, but that very reduction would make it possible for other communions to perceive the exercise of the office in terms of pastoral care. Surely agreement could be reached that such care would be more central to the hierarchy than infallibility.

Other communions opposed the doctrine of infallibility in both the papal and the ecclesial sense. The Orthodox position may be seen in the assertion that for the Church '*there are no external criteria or infallible guarantee of the truth of its members.*'[277] One reason for Lutheran opposition may be the much stronger stance on infallibility which was presented to them. Catholics stated that the pope 'is preserved from error in teaching when he solemnly declares the faith of the church (infallibility).'[278] This may have simply been the result of the trend in early dialogue to simply clarify opposing positions. The principle *sola scriptura* was clearly intended to combat such assertions. While Lutherans could admit that 'simply pointing to Scripture and to the creedal statements of the past is not enough',[279] they staunchly maintained that both official teachers and councils could err.[280]

A characteristic Evangelical response invokes the limitations of all human knowledge as an *a priori* refutation of infallibility.[281] Southern Baptists described infallibility as a term appropriate only to scripture.[282] It has also been suggested that Evangelical opposition to infallibility stems from an understanding of time as a series of unrepeatable events in contrast to the Catholic understanding as continuity.[283] Catholics have a sense of connection to the ancient councils and therefore to their authority, while Evangelicals perceive the early centuries of the Church's life as a special time for defining the faith which has now passed.

It was in dialogue with Reformed that Catholics first used the strategy already discussed regarding Methodists, but with much less encouraging results. They attempted to first establish the infallibility of the Church and discuss the role of the pope from that perspective.[284] They also assured Reformed that the acceptance of certain doctrinal statements as binding 'does not imply that all the expressions chosen are necessarily the best available nor again that the ecclesial authorities enjoy this charisma in a permanent manner'.[285] In their opposition to this, Reformed

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[277] Bobrinskoy, p.22.
[278] L-RC, *The Ministry in the Church* (1981), 70.
[279] Kühn, U. 'How does the Church remain in the truth? A Lutheran Response' in J. Moltmann and H. Küng (eds.), *Concilium: Who Has Say in the Church? October* (1981), p.24.
[280] Ibid., p.23.
[281] White, p.51.
[282] *Report on Sacred Scripture* (1999), 1.
[283] Blocher, p.126.
[284] R-RC, *The Presence of Christ in Church and World* (1977), 41; R-RC, *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* (1990), 51.
[285] R-RC, *The Presence of Christ in Church and World* (1977), 41.

argued that attributing infallibility even to the Church as a whole impinges on the sovereignty of Christ, that history suggests the Church has made frequent errors, and that formulating doctrine in that manner runs the risk of reducing faith to a set of propositions.[286]

Interestingly, Reformed did not even attribute infallibility to scripture, but only 'God's fidelity to his covenant'.[287] Thus, Reformed did not object to ministerial infallibility in favour of textual infallibility, but rather to infallibility in general. Harry Kuitert locates the source of this perspective in a growing awareness of the hermeneutic problem to which magisterium is an inadequate solution.[288] Since this disagreement invokes the uniqueness of God rather than the superiority of text over magisterium, it seems possible that a resolution might be reached through further clarification. If Kuitert's own position that 'we have no means for sustaining the Church in the truth other than by discussion'[289] is to be followed, that means infallibility cannot be singled out as a property of one aspect of authority but must be grounded in the *intersection* of all three aspects of authority.

10.4 EVALUATION

One question which has overshadowed all bilateral dialogue with Roman Catholics in recent years is quite simply: has *Dominus Iesus* undermined all the progress Protestants thought they had been making? The declaration drafted under Joseph Ratzinger in 1999 has garnered negative response on two levels. On a general level, it seems to ignore developments since Vatican II – a fact which reportedly perplexes even parts of the curia.[290] On a particular level, the phrasing 'the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, are not Churches in the proper sense',[291] aside from the insult delivered to fraternal partners in dialogue, seems to make any negotiation concerning alternative methods of *episcope* impossible. In short, it 'rejects a pluralistic ecclesiology according to which the one church of Jesus Christ is realized in the same way in several Christian communities.'[292]

Five years before, André Birmelé declared that Roman Catholicism adhered to 'a church whose self-understanding no longer fits the evidence, a church which

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[286] Ibid., 42.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Kuitert, pp.29-30.
[289] Ibid., p.30.
[290] Beozzo, J.O. and G. Ruggieri, p.13.
[291] DI, 17.
[292] van Wijnbergen, C. 'Reactions to *Dominus Iesus* in the German Speaking World' in J.O. Beozzo and G. Ruggieri (eds.), *Concilium: The Ecumenical Constitution of Churches No.3* (2001), p.147.

like all Christian churches is in search of its identity'.[293] It is possible therefore, to see *Dominus Iesus* as an expression of insecurity in the midst of contemporary threats posed by a changing world. Jack Dominian suggested that the natural transition in a child's development, from a *unilateral* respect towards authority figures to a *mutual* respect which recognises both its own judgement and that of others, could be a useful metaphor for understanding current tensions in the *Roman Catholic church*.[294] The magisterial papalist perspective may need to yield to the ministerial conciliarist perspective or risk inhibiting the process of maturation.

James Pereiro argued that because communities which *Dominus Iesus* did not consider sister churches might have members who are truly brothers and sisters in Christ,[295] the biblical metaphor of 'a body' must be considered insufficient to capture Roman Catholic ecclesiology.[296] Though Pereiro did not press the issue, if he was correct, this seems grounds for reconsidering, if not rejecting, an ecclesiology embroiled in such complexity.

The most constructive proposals suggested neither acceptance nor dismissal. Kilian McDonnell emphasised that *Dominus Iesus'* main intent was to stem the relativism which threatened the unique place of Christ.[297] He likened it to the bark of a watchdog – a warning, but not the final word because though it has been labelled 'irrevocable,' it was not promulgated with the full authority of the church.[298] Similarly, Otto Hermann Pesch suggested that ecumenical Christians would view such statements 'as an indication of questions which are not yet settled, but need not regard them as the last word on the matter.'[299]

With that in mind, the following proposal summarises the outstanding needs within bilateral dialogue on authority in a model of integrated interpenetrating criteria. Theologians should be regarded as the voice of the texts while bishops should be regarded as the voice of the Church as an institution. The whole people of God, but especially the laity because they have no other expression of authority, should be regarded as the voice of practical faith. Nicholas Lash highlighted the danger of elevating either textual or ministerial authority too high: 'A naïve biblicalism would be a poor alternative to a naïve authoritarianism as the criterion by which the christian [sic] search for truth is to be assessed.'[300]   Anglicans and

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[293] Birmelé, A. 'Catholic Identity as seen by a Partner in Ecumenical Dialogue' in J. Provost and K. Walf (eds.), *Concilium: Catholic Identity No.5* (1994), p.125.
[294] Dominian, J. 'The Role of Authority in Faith' in N. Timms and K. Wilson (eds.), *Governance and Authority in the Roman Catholic Church* (SPCK, 2000), p.4.
[295] DI, 17.
[296] Pereiro, p.102.
[297] McDonnell, K. 'The Unique Mediator in a Unique Church: A Return to Pre-Vatican II Theology?' in K. Raiser (ed.), *Ecumenical Review Vol.52, No.4 October* (2000), p.542.
[298] Ibid., p.545.
[299] Pesch, p.70.
[300] Lash, p.30.

Catholics proclaimed as early as 1981 that 'the Church needs both a multiple, dispersed authority, with which all God's people are actively involved, and also a universal primate as servant and focus of visible unity in truth and love.'[301]

Several problems remain, but the various issues raised in this chapter are best dealt with in the context of the entire thesis and therefore are addressed within consideration of the implications for inter-church relations.

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[301] A-RC, *Authority In The Church II…* (1981), 32.

CHAPTER 11: IMPLICATIONS FOR INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS

11.1 <u>WHAT PROBLEMS DID THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY REVEAL?</u>

The sixteenth century witnessed a culmination of numerous tensions related to the growth of papal power, the effects of humanism, the role of language, sustained public dissent, and emerging nationalism. The ensuing conflicts revealed three interlocking problems: the problem of sources, the problem of holiness, and the problem of interpretation.

The escalation of Martin Luther's critique of abuses into radical rejection of ecclesial authority was initially posited as a conflict between scripture and tradition for several reasons. Luther's experience of God through scripture led him to dismiss elements of tradition, and even portions of the canon, which did not resonate with that experience. Calvin's comprehensive view of scripture strove to maintain the unity of the Old and New Testaments. The radical Anabaptist application of *sola scriptura* demonstrated the vestiges of tradition in other Protestant formulations. Cranmer drew from the ancient fathers as well as scripture in a laudable attempt to synthesise Catholic and Protestant perspectives, but was forced to consider also documents which had been promulgated by the state. The Council of Trent's description of scripture and tradition as two separate sources perpetuated the pattern of dichotomisation. Reduction to this dichotomy compounded the problem of sources by obfuscating the differences between Protestant patterns and ignoring the reality of tradition as a continual process.

The problem of holiness addressed by humanist critiques was compounded by polemics of demonisation as well as genuine disagreement about the most significant aspects of a holy life. Opponents were characterised as not merely mistaken, but servants of the devil. Protestant reformers echoed humanist criticism of moral depravity among church officials, but added a new dimension as they were drawn into competition with each other. A factor in the execution of Servetus was almost certainly proving that Calvin and Geneva opposed heresy. Many Anabaptists worked to distance themselves from more radical groups. Luther made frequent use of 'devil' and 'antichrist' to characterise his opponents. The anathemas of the Council of Trent treated Protestants as advocates of schism, a long established sin. Cranmer's attempts to reform the bishops as constructive examples of holiness were hindered by the scandalous behaviour of Henry VIII and the political infighting in which the bishops were involved. Thus in addition to accusations of error on all sides, Catholics charged Protestants with undermining the Church, Anabaptists

charged others with immorality, and state-supported reformers fought on two fronts, charging Catholics with immorality and Anabaptists with undermining the state.

The problem of interpretation was by far the most significant because it encompassed identification of interpreters, methods of interpretation, and responses to alternate interpretations. The identification of interpreters revealed tension between centralised and decentralised forms of governance. Luther proposed that all believers were 'priests' who had a right and responsibility to interpret scripture for themselves. Nevertheless, his conflicts with Karlstadt and the Anabaptists revealed his view that linguistic scholars were in the best position to interpret authoritatively. Calvin included laity in church governance to some extent, but found a purely ecclesial *Venerable Company of Pastors* indispensable to resisting political interference. The authority of all believers was muted by the belief in the simplicity of scripture, and the practical authority of ministers in matters of interpretation. Anabaptists advocated a decentralised ecclesiology, in part because any centralisation made them more susceptible to repression and in part because they rigorously applied the principles of the priesthood of all believers and the sovereignty of conscience. Nevertheless, charismatic leaders exercised authority in a similar way to Luther or Calvin within their respective groups. Furthermore, it was former priests and religious who provided much of the unitive leadership responsible for sustaining the movement's enduring forms. Cranmer's development of a Protestant form of episcopacy was complicated by an Erastian framework which placed the king at the head of the episcopal college. Thus, a decentralised approach to scripture was combined with the centralisation of a political monarchy. The Council of Trent presented an unequivocally centralised ecclesiology with the pope as ultimate interpreter. The idea of a council with authority superior to the pope was rejected as insufficient for enacting the desperately needed reforms or resisting the influence of political leaders.

The various models of hermeneutics used in the sixteenth century may be described in terms of where they located the centre of meaning. For Luther, it was 'the gospel' as defined by his reformation breakthrough, a factor determined ultimately by linguistic scholars. For Calvin, the centre was the principle that scripture interprets itself in conjunction with practical application in the urban life of Geneva, a framework which enabled him to accord the Old and New Testaments equal status. Anabaptists, depending on the group, tended towards a literalism which would tolerate nothing outside of scripture or an apocalypticism which depended on complex symbolic interpretation. For Cranmer, the attempt to centre interpretation in the will of the ruler met with considerable difficulties concerning succession. The Council of Trent made explicit use of a range of historical documents, but ultimately

centred interpretation in the teaching of the pope. All these models faced the common problem of subjectivism because they concentrated *de facto* authority in a single person. They were open to criticism wherever it was possible for an individual to interpret contrary to the wider community and therefore provided easy targets for polemical writers.

Finally, there was the problem of dissent. Never before had dissent been expressed so persistently in so many forms. The pattern of division among Protestants revealed that any movement begun through dissent would be susceptible to its own claims about a right or duty to reject authority. None of the reform movements produced an adequate solution to this problem. Roman Catholics continued their policy of strict control, through ecclesial and political structures, which had already proved incapable of receiving prophetic criticism. A similar policy emerged in England except that ecclesial structures became an extension of political structures rather than the other way around. Luther and Calvin began with a principle of dissent, but did not apply that principle consistently, particularly in the later stages of their careers. The Anabaptists took the right to dissent as axiomatic, but the stringent application of this policy simply illustrated its obvious weakness: an absolute right to dissent leads to division. Therefore, neither centralised ecclesiology nor decentralised ecclesiology possessed an adequate model for dealing with dissent and no hermeneutic method proved itself sufficiently comprehensive to command the assent of all.

11.2 HOW HAVE THE PROBLEMS CHANGED?

The identification of scripture and tradition as elements of Tradition, occurring almost simultaneously in the *World Council of churches* and Vatican II, profoundly altered the discussion of sources. Many communions have begun to recognise that it is impossible to disassociate scripture from tradition and therefore explore the relationship between them with an understanding that scripture possesses a unique authority in the understanding of all concerned, described by many as 'normative.' Not all communions have accepted this change in the discussion and therefore they continue to proclaim a retrogressive perspective of antithetical sources. Recognition that this perspective is both inaccurate and unhelpful does not entail, however, a particular view of the respective 'weight' given to scripture or tradition. Though agreement has been reached that scripture is the supreme textual authority, communions still disagree about the place of subsidiary texts, especially those written after the Council of Chalcedon (451).

Nevertheless, some communions have emphasised that tradition cannot be limited to texts. They wish to assert the authority of additional elements of Tradition

exhibited in the practice of faith, what this study has termed 'existential.' In regard to such questions, the principle area of progress has been the growing appreciation that disagreement does not imply spiritual deficit in the opposing party. In many cases, renunciation of polemical language and acceptance of mutual blame for schism[1] has led to the removal of historical condemnations. While an ecumenical *sensus fidei* has not yet been established, significant movement has been made in that direction through the efforts of the *World Council of churches* to include as many communions as possible in the process of reception. Unfortunately, there is not even a common understanding of what reception of ecumenical documents would mean, much less its implications. Though many communions have affirmed the importance of the existential aspect of authority, the critical role it has the potential to fulfil has often been muted by preoccupation with textual or ministerial aspects.

In the twentieth century, discussion of interpreters has taken as a starting point the premise that interpretation is a communal process which everyone must take part in. The dreams of simple objective meaning have been given up for a realistic attempt to describe structures which best facilitate the pursuit of truth. Discussion of interpreters has entered a new phase as various communions have begun to seriously consider the possibility of union. While this has facilitated a new possibility of an ecumenical body of interpreters, it has also generated a unique problem of how centralised and decentralised ecclesiologies can function together. The participation of seemingly disparate communions in a common discussion about ministerial patterns remains a major achievement, but an honest appraisal recognises how little movement has occurred. A clear divide remains concerning episcopacy. The fear that submission to the pope – or for some communions, acceptance of the threefold pattern – would mean abdication of the freedom to interpret according to conscience has not been alleviated. Likewise, no satisfactory answer has been given to the opposite fear that 'freedom of conscience' would mean accepting a plurality of undesirable interpretations.

Furthermore, the possibility of considering theologians as an interpretative body separate from the magisterium has made it possible to distinguish between scholarly rigour and pastoral responsibility. The two are not antithetical, but have different interests at heart. The common usage of the historical-critical method has generated common hermeneutical questions and most recently acknowledgement of its limitations.[2] The different hermeneutic centres have not changed, but the acceptance of other emphases as valid perspectives has led to an acceptance of plurality based on agreement that Christ forms the centre. Instead of claiming to

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[1] For instance, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3.
[2] *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, 21-23.

capture a single permanent meaning, ecumenical dialogue has focused on the need to 'read the text anew' and discover the gospel's particular message to each time and culture.

The rise of the secular state has made interference of political leaders in church affairs and corresponding violent responses to dissent a non-issue ecumenically. As ties between church and state became less significant, politicians rarely displayed interest in ecclesial affairs. Where heresy ceased to be a civil crime, repression of dissent to the extent possible in the sixteenth century became impossible. While it should be appreciated that some communions still have a sense of being discriminated against by other Christians where they are geographically in the minority, pluralism has redefined dissent as assent to another community. The problem of dissent has shifted from how to limit the influence of dissent to how to cope with the reality of disagreement. Dissent remains a problem as Protestant churches continue to split and Catholic theologians come into conflict with the magisterium, but now that some measure of 'pluriformity' has been established within Christianity, the only real dissenters are those who reject the wider dialogue. While these individuals and communions appear to be trapped in the condemnations of the past, ecumenists must consider objection to the ecumenical process in light of the sad history of repression which every communion has taken part in. Many of those who abstain from dialogue or obstinately refuse to move are nevertheless part of the body of Christ.

11.3 <u>WHAT SOLUTIONS MIGHT BE POSSIBLE?</u>

This work has attempted to draw together the various conceptions of authority into a single framework, modelled after the Trinity, composed of three interpenetrating aspects: textual, existential, and ministerial. An ecumenical understanding of authority should conform to this model in a way that can accommodate differences regarding how various elements of each aspect are ordered. Textual authority includes scripture, conciliar decisions, creeds, and confessions of faith, but what it means for scripture to be 'normative' has not been fully determined. Existential authority includes personal experience, *sensus fidelium*, and those who have been recognised as living an exemplary life, but difficulties remain in dealing with conflicts between personal experience and the *sensus fidelium*. Ministerial authority includes bishops, teachers, and other offices which articulate faith on behalf of the institution, but the possibility of a universal ministry of oversight and the degree to which it is bound by a college of those who exercise *episcope* remain matters for debate.

Dagmar Heller asked in 1994 whether it was possible to conceive of 'a hermeneutic "circle" which would consist of Scripture, Tradition, traditions, the Church, and the social/cultural context'.[3] More recently, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* has been criticised for failing to address 'the question of the last responsible and authoritative interpreter'.[4] The three-aspect framework presented here addresses both of these concerns in so far as it is a hermeneutic circle in which there is *no last interpreter*. That is not to say that there is no longer a standard by which faith may be judged, but rather that Christian authority is *an ongoing process* which includes each of these. This perspective is an uncomfortable one. Any attempt to move from a naïve circularity represented by the word *sola*, to an informed circularity which acknowledges the process of authority, faces a continual temptation to treat a single aspect – whether scripture, experience, or a teaching office – as if it were a means of demarcating a firm epistemological ground for faith.

Ecumenical dialogue has demonstrated how particular communions have come to emphasise one aspect over and against the others. It would appear that Protestants have elevated textual authority to a place of pre-eminence; that Catholics and Orthodox have elevated ministerial authority to a place of pre-eminence; and that Pentecostals and Charismatics have done the same for existential authority. Some hope may be seen in George Vandervelde's argument that the similarly divergent Protestant, Catholic, and Pentecostal perspectives described by Lesslie Newbigin are not mutually exclusive.[5] If communions can come to recognise the ways in which their exercise of authority includes all three aspects of authority, it may be possible for them to take the further step of accepting that each aspect is insufficient on its own.

When a communion has emphasised one aspect of authority over the others, the tendency has been to focus on a single element within that aspect and declare that the ultimate source of authority. Thus, scripture is sometimes referred to as if it were the only record of Christian experience. A personal awareness of God's presence or personal morality sometimes disregards the present community or saints of the past. The pope appears, sometimes and from some points of view, to act as if he were not part of an episcopal college. In this way, *sola* in relation to aspects is closely linked to *sola* in relation to elements. Therefore, *sola* represents exclusion on three levels: it isolates a single aspect of authority from other aspects, it isolates a single element

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[3] Faith and Order Standing Commission, *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Standing Commission (1994)*, p.33.

[4] Faith and Order Standing Commission, *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Standing Commission (2000)*, p.23.

[5] Newbigin's categories referred to how each communion understood incorporation into Christ: Protestants by hearing the word, Pentecostals by receiving and abiding in the Holy Spirit, and Catholics through sacramental participation. Vandervelde, G. 'Ecclesiology in the Breach' in D. Parker (ed.), *Evangelical Review of Theology Vol.23, No.1* (1999), pp.46-47.

within that aspect as pre-eminent, and it isolates a single type of communion from communions which have emphasised other aspects or even elements.

The danger of such isolation is that it makes authority more susceptible to the temptations described by John Henry Newman as rationalism for theologians, superstition for the practicing faithful, and power for the magisterium.[6] Authority grounded in texts always runs the risk of degrading into rationalism. Authority grounded in experience always faces the danger of superstition. Authority grounded in ministry remains ever open to abuses of power. Therefore, none of these are adequate in themselves. No *sola* is possible which preserves the church in a permanent way from error.

This seems to indicate that any comprehensive solution to the problems posed by authority must move in the opposite direction. To conceive of authority in dialectical terms, using one aspect as a counterpoint to another, would be a start to this process, but ultimately all three aspects need to be brought into balance. Each part of the tripod is essential to the nature of authority, but precisely because of this essentiality, they must always be held in tension. In conclusion, therefore, the writer would suggest the following principles that an ecumenical understanding of authority would include, and the changes in perspective which the application of such principles would require:

In the area of textual authority, there must be universal appreciation for a plurality of texts. Communions which already appreciate the role extra-scriptural texts have to play in the life of the Church would facilitate this by affirming the normative place of scripture as many have already done. Communions which have repeated the refrain of *sola scriptura* have the difficult task of finding a place for other texts despite their tradition. The beginning steps involve the recognition that the doctrine *sola scriptura* itself is an extra-scriptural text to which they may have given undue prominence.

In the area of existential authority, there must be a dynamic connection between personal experience and the communal experience of all places and times. Communions which find themselves challenged by prophetic individuals would facilitate this by responding effectively to such calls to return to the essential experience of faith. Communions and individuals which frequently find themselves speaking as a minority would act constructively by submitting to the *sensus fidelium*.

In the area of ministerial authority, there must be a common collegial body which is able to demarcate faith in a definitive way. This remains the most pressing problem for establishing an ecumenical understanding of authority because the issue of ministerial pattern is complicated by the issue of primacy. In regard to ministerial

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[6] Tracey, D. *Roman Catholic Identity amid the Ecumenical Dialogues*, p.110.

pattern, communions which do not have a threefold pattern would facilitate agreement by adopting it, at least in terms of function. Communions for which such a pattern is important would do the same by considering ways to include non-episcopal leaders in an authoritative collegial body on the basis of their role in fostering *koinonia* rather than defining *episcope* exclusively in terms of conformity to a hierarchical model of governance. Consideration that episcopal assemblies developed in response to the needs of the early Christian communities[7] suggests the possibility of rethinking episcopacy in a pragmatic way based on the apparent ecumenical needs. A successful model of episcopacy would be consonant with the Catholic idea of making progress in the Holy Spirit, the Orthodox idea of the immutability of ancient forms, and the Protestant idea of *semper ecclesia reformanda*. In regard to primacy, decentralised communions would facilitate agreement by accepting the potential unitive value of a universal primacy of honour. A wide-scale acceptance of primacy remains dependant upon the successful integration of various communions in a single college, but Roman Catholics have the difficult task of limiting their historical claims to jurisdiction and infallibility. Because the bishop of Rome is both the logical candidate for such a role and the leader of the only communion making such claims, it is apparent that the first true act of universal primacy must be one of self-limitation.

Thus, it is apparent that ecumenical progress in authority requires movement on all sides. The nature of the disagreements are such that it is possible for opposite sides to perceive that they are being asked to take the larger, more painful step. With this in mind, it seems appropriate to conclude with two important metaphors. The first, of pilgrimage, has featured prominently in ecumenical dialogue since John Mackay used it in 1948.[8] The idea of a spiritual journey reminds us that difficulties have value, movement is essential, and that even those who appear far off will eventually be near if there is a common destination. The second metaphor is that of the Samaritan who aided the stranger left for dead on the road to Jericho.[9] It is worth remembering that in the story, it was the religious leaders who failed to respond to the need – possibly because they perceived the real risk involved in doing so. The movement this research suggests in various aspects of authority requires of each communion a humble willingness to release their hold on *confessional identity* and prayerfully, with other Christian communions, consider their common *identity in Christ*. Fears of doing so are understandable – those who open their identity up for

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[7] Berardino, A. 'Patterns of *Koinonia* in the First Christian Centuries' in J.O. Beozzo and G. Ruggieri (eds.), *Concilium: The Ecumenical Constitution of Churches No.3* (2001), p.50.
[8] Mackay, J. 'A Theological Foreword to Ecumenical Gatherings' in J. Mackay (ed.), *Theology Today, July* (1948), pp.149-150.
[9] Luke 10:30-35.

reconsideration may be subsumed by other confessional identities if their openness is not reciprocated. The parable of the Samaritan should remind the churches that sometimes the gospel requires risk, and that sadly, they have too often chosen to cross to the other side of the road and walk on in solitude.

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