



The Church in the Tridentine and Early Modern Eras

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Introduction: The Roots of Reform in the Sixteenth Century

The early modern period stands out as one of the most creative in the history of the Christian church. While the Reformation proved viciously divisive, it also engendered theological and devotional initiatives that, over time and despite resistance, ultimately transformed the conventions of ecclesiology, ministry, apostolate, worship and piety. Simultaneously, the Catholic church, in particular, underwent profound shifts in devotion and theological thought that were only partially the product of the shock induced by the Reformation and at best only indirectly influenced by pressure from Protestant Reformers. Yet despite the pre-1517 antecedents of *reformatio*, and the reforming objectives of the Catholic Council of Trent (1545-7, 1551-2, 1562-3), the concept of church reform was effectively appropriated by Protestants from the sixteenth century onwards. Protestant churchmen claimed with assurance that they and the Reformation that they instigated sought the church's 'reform in faith and practice, in head and members'. They stood by this assertion even when their reforms moved outside the official Catholic canonical framework within which they might be instigated.¹ Some went further still; 'Radical' Reformers deliberately sought to 're-form' the church by a drastic break from the existing institution and theology in order to re-construct primitive Christianity.

By implication, therefore, and the point was often explicitly made by Protestant churchmen, the Catholic church remained profane and unreformed, the church of the Anti-Christ. In grasping the labels of 'true' and 'reformed' so tenaciously, Protestant churches placed the Catholic church on the defensive. An important element underpinning the decrees of the Council of Trent, consequently, was emphatically to signal the Catholic church's purity and authority as the church of Christ and the Apostles, and to mark out its commitment to eradicating any misconceptions in doctrine and abuses in worship or morality that crept into its religious beliefs and practice; in this era, the 'catholicity' of doctrine, that is, its uniformity and accuracy, became a central theological concern for the increasingly assertive Catholic church and for its critics.

From the eighteenth century, theologians and historians argued the merits and validity of their denominations within the dualistic framework of Protestant Reformation/Catholic Counter-Reformation.² This balance shifted in the twentieth century when Jedin³ argued for the organic Reformation of the Catholic church prior to and independent of the Protestant Reformation. Importantly, he based his explanation of Catholic renewal and resurgence in the early modern era on the pillars of the papacy, the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) formally initiated by Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) in 1533 and the Council of Trent. Jedin's triangular analysis of the achievements of the early modern church was a highly influential example of institutional history, in which a Reformation, Counter-Reformation and modernising church was analysed from an institutional, clerical and 'top-down' perspective.

Partly in reaction to this narrowly conceived approach, other scholars chose to concentrate principally on non-institutional or non-official forms of catholicism and protestantism. This paradigmatic shift encouraged them to look beyond trinities of pope, council and religious order and Luther (1483-1546), Calvin (1509-1564) and Cranmer (1489-1556) to the ordinary faithful's lived experience of the church as community, guardian, authority or disciplinarian. Just as importantly, it questioned traditional assumptions that church meant institution and clergy, that the Protestant and Catholic 'lay' faithful were passive recipients of doctrine and discipline and that confessional identity referred principally to attendance at service.⁴ In doing so, it alerts us to the importance of broadening our investigative focus beyond the ecclesiology evident within papal and conciliar decisions and within the writings of a limited number of prominent theologians to include the ecclesiology expressed through the eclectic thought and lives of the less renowned. Moreover, it encourages us to be aware of the burden of tradition within the disciplines of historical theology and church history: it points out that assessments of church, ecclesiology, ministry and vocation in the early modern era may depend substantially on how they are defined, and on whether it is assumed that the term church describes solid institutional and authoritative structures, a fluid, ever-changing and ever-diverse coalition of the baptised, or an amalgam of these definitions. Equally, however, inspecting a church mainly through the study of the 'sentiments and acts' of popular religion can tend to write the institutional out of history or neglect the lively reciprocity of the relations between social and ecclesiastical groups.

¹ *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman Tanner, 2 vols., London, Sheed and Ward, 1990, ii, Sess. III, 407.

² John W. O'Malley, *Trent and All That. Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2000.

³ Hubert Jedin, *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient*, 4 vols., Freiburg, Herder, 1949-75. The first two volumes are available in English: *A History of the Council of Trent*, trans. Ernest Graf, London, Nelson, 1957-61.

⁴ Amongst the most influential contributions are: John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985; Jean Delumeau, *Catholicism Between Luther and Voltaire. A New View of the Counter-Reformation*, trans. Jeremy Moiser, London, Burns and Oates, 1977; Heinz Schilling, *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society: Essays in German and Dutch History*, Leiden, Brill, 1992.

Sensitivity to the limitations of research and interpretative approaches is particularly important in charting the path of 'reform' taken by the early modern church. No denomination of the Christian church can legitimately claim to be the sole representative of 'Reform' or of 'Reformation' during this period. The Protestant and Catholic churches may each lay claim to them in their ecclesiological self-understanding. The growing evidence of organic advancements in piety and spirituality before 1517 demonstrates that the Protestant churches were not, as often assumed, the sole heirs to Christian Humanism or to those frequently categorised as early Protestants in all but name, such as the irenic Cardinal Jacopo Sadoletto (1477-1547)⁵ or Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet (d.1514), who presided over a circle of reform in Meaux. It included Josse Clichtove (1472-1543), the Parisian humanist, discreet theologian of conciliarism, advocate of disciplinary reforms and celebrated publisher of commentaries on the writings of the church fathers.⁶ He was a protégé of Briçonnet's vicar, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (c.1455-1536), a charismatic advocate of scriptural scholarship and clerical probity, and editor of the works of, amongst others, Ignatius of Antioch.⁷

The Meaux circle came under some suspicion from the French royal authorities during the 1520s as the impact of Luther's challenge to the Catholic church emerged. Several of its members shared some sympathy with Luther's doctrine of justification by faith and advocacy of vernacular scripture.⁸ The diversity of theological views displayed within this catholic and Catholic group reveals the shared heritage of the denominational churches. However, it also complicates the task of identifying specific roots and influences on each church's structural development and theological growth because it is clear that these pious environments sheltered those who remained Catholic and those who subsequently embraced the Protestant cause. For example, one of the most significant influences on Catholic piety and apostolate was the Oratory of Divine Love, a lay dominated confraternity initially established in 1497. It nourished the spiritual formation of several men who were later to assume leading roles in the Catholic hierarchy such as Paul Carafa (1476-1559), and germinated several religious communities and orders, including the Barnabites (1526), the Ursulines (1535) and the Capuchins (1528).⁹ Yet, while Carafa went on to become Pope Paul IV and a notorious foe of heterodoxy, the Capuchins suffered the extreme embarrassment of the defection of their vicar general, Bernardino Ochino (1487-1564), to the Protestant cause in 1542.

The Oratory also germinated several Catholic communities and religious orders characterised by commitment to active service within the world and reluctance to adopt monastic rules of living. All found expression in charitable work amongst the poor, the young or the ill, and the members' ties were further tightened through practices such as common prayer and sacramental participation. A further distinction for some was their origin in and debt to lay confraternities and their longer term interest in treating the lay vocation, for the married or single, as spiritually valid and distinct. The Barnabites, established by Antonio Zaccaria (1502-39), were devoted to *imitatio Christi* through visitations to the sick, poor and imprisoned, catechesis, and the collection of alms for charitable work. The group included a lay oratory, the Married Couples of Saint Paul, as well as clerical Barnabites and female lay Angelics, who lived in community but without vows (this group split into enclosed and lay communities in 1552). Zaccaria insisted that the group's three companies were linked by a common spiritual apostolate, with their male and female members working together in mutual support for their self-transformation and for the transformative good of others. He encouraged the Married Couples to seek perfection in their married state and allowed them to incorporate the spiritual and charitable tasks of *imitatio* into the norms of marriage and family life.

Defining 'Church': Ignatius of Loyola and Vincent de Paul (1581-1660)

Recognition of the organic development of a new spirit of piety within the church before the Protestant Reformation invites us to ponder the extent to which those involved considered themselves to be 'reformers.' Zaccaria was never concerned with eradicating constitutional, institutional or doctrinal abuses in the church. Likewise, Ignatius of Loyola displayed virtually no preoccupation with the question of 'reform' in an institutional sense and, until late in his career, he placed scarcely any emphasis on the need to battle against the

⁵ *Jacopo Sadoleti Cardinalis et Episcopi Carpentoractensis viri disertissimi. Opera quae extant omnia*, 4 vols., Verona, n. p., 1737-8 (including his commentary on Romans, which earned disapproval in Rome for its conciliatory attitude towards Calvinism).

⁶ Alison Forrestal, *Fathers, Pastors and Kings. Visions of Episcopacy in Seventeenth-Century France*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2004, 23-5; Jean-Pierre Massaut, *Josse Clichtove, l'humanisme et la réforme du clergé*, 2 vols., Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1968; Michel Veissière, 'Guillaume Briçonnet, évêque de Meaux, et la réforme de son clergé', *Revue d'Histoire Écclesiastique*, 84 (1989), 655-72.

⁷ Philip Edgcombe Hughes, *Lefèvre: Pioneer of Ecclesiastical Renewal in France* Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1984.

⁸ Veissière, 'Briçonnet', 669-70.

⁹ *Religious Orders of the Catholic Reformation. In Honor of John C. Olin on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Richard L. DeMolen, New York, Fordham University Press, 1994.

surge of protestantism.¹⁰ This may have been because, like many of his generation, he took the word 'reform' to refer primarily to the reform of the papacy and curia and neither he nor his companions thought this concerned them directly. So, they concentrated their evolving spirituality and activities on missionary work, retreats (where they concentrated on 'discernment of the spirit', using Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*)¹¹ and latterly on teaching.

Loyola's preoccupation with the help and salvation of souls certainly affected his conception of ministry and church. He intended to inject new life into Christian piety, by working within the existing structural framework of the church. The question of counter-reform did become more prominent in Jesuit activity as time passed; Loyola at least tacitly approved the dispatch of Jesuits to Protestant regions from 1550 onwards, and two Jesuits contributed to the decrees issued at Trent.¹² Additionally, however, the Jesuits' fourth vow, to go where sent by the pope, has often been interpreted as a manifestation of their extreme, and ultramontane, loyalty to the pope's authority. It should rather be interpreted as a function of their founder's ethos: drawing on the models of Jesus, the Apostles and Paul, Loyola conceived the Jesuits to be itinerant ministers willing to move quickly to regions within and outside Europe where they were needed.¹³

Loyola's vision of 'christianitas' was central to his concept of the church as a kingdom of souls, needing guidance in spiritual and moral formation. With patristic and medieval roots, it involved shaping the individual in Christian virtues, so that they became both personally and socially equipped to live in the world and to promote the interests of catholicism through patronage, example and divine invocation. The Jesuits proved adept in encouraging the development of confraternities and associations that combined common prayer, sacramental practice, catechesis, formation of conscience and collective works of mercy in order to purge and illuminate souls as they moved towards union with God. This was in direct compliance with Loyola's *Constitutions* for the Jesuits, which stressed the importance of ministering to groups rather than individuals when possible.¹⁴

A century after Loyola, the highly regarded Vincent de Paul echoed Loyola's reluctance to pin his vision of the church and its future on the defeat of protestantism. Despite his experience of religious war in France (1562-94), de Paul was inspired less by the need to react against protestantism than by his desire to respond to the perennial problem of how to save Catholics from the damnation that resulted from ignorance, wilful or otherwise. Although he accepted the conventional assumption that an effective priesthood should play a primary role in providing sacramental and didactic support he encouraged the laity to assume distinctive and creative responsibility for the preservation of the church's health. This concentration on the needs of the souls that formed the church allowed space for, even demanded, diverse forms of ministry that brought specific apostolic gifts for spiritual welfare.

For Loyola and de Paul, consequently, the term *ecclesia* (church) had two meanings, which were not mutually exclusive: a conglomerate of souls forming the living, breathing body of Christ, and an external structure of hierarchy and authority. De Paul, however, pushed the conceptual breadth of vocation further than Loyola, in his championing of the vocations of women from low social groups. With his collaborator, Louise de Marillac (1581-1660), he provided a serious vocational opportunity for women in the Daughters of Charity (1633), regardless of their material means, as well as a structure that enabled them to thrive spiritually and to assist the physical and spiritual needs of the laity within their own social groups. Marillac and de Paul's view of *ecclesia* sang loudly of mutual assistance for souls, a principle expressed in Marillac's work in offering retreats and organising charitable and educational initiatives and de Paul's efforts to train priests, support lay people and establish charitable institutions. Marillac strictly avoided entering the field of priestly training, though some nuns revered for wisdom inspired by grace rather than theological study did act as spiritual guides to priests during her lifetime. Within a society that accepted that women were the weaker sex and should be subject to male spiritual guidance, the attribution of engraced wisdom might allow a woman to influence the spirituality of

¹⁰ John W. O' Malley, 'Was Ignatius Loyola a Church Reformer? How to Look at Early Modern Catholicism', in *The Counter-Reformation*, ed. David Luebke, Malden, Mass. and Oxford, Blackwell, 1999, 65-82.

¹¹ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. George Ganss, St Louis, Mo., Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992.

¹² John W. O' Malley, 'Attitudes of the Early Jesuits towards Misbelievers', *The Ways*, 68 (Summer 1990), 62-73.

¹³ Forrester, *Fathers*, 74-108; John W. O' Malley, 'The Society of Jesus', in John Patrick Donnelly and Michael W. Maher (eds.), *Confraternities and Catholic Reform in Italy, France and Spain*, Kirksville, Mo., Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999, 143-4.

¹⁴ *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, ed. George Ganss, St Louis, Mo., Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970; Michael W. Maher, 'How the Jesuits Used Their Congregations to Promote Frequent Communion', in Donnelly and Maher (eds.), *Confraternities*, 75-95; *id.*, 'Confession and Consolation: The Society of Jesus and its Promotion of the General Confession', in Katherine Jackson Lualdi and Anne T. Thayer (eds.), *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, Aldershot and Burlington, Vt, Ashgate, 2000, 184-200; John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1993, 4-8.

priests, but it did not give her leave to subvert the divine order by stepping into the male domain of ordained ministry.

The Church as Institution: Tridentine Hierarchy and Government

Like Loyola, de Paul fully endorsed the place of magisterial hierarchy and paid serious attention to the institutional and theological boundaries of the Catholic church that ruled the public vocational work of a figure such as Marillac. Although he frequently expressed his apprehension that the church was in a state of irreparable decline in Europe partly because of protestantism's victories (and that its hope lay in the virgin lands of the new world), he really feared that the church was about to implode from within, through the refusal of a Catholic 'Jansenist' minority to accept the wisdom of the fathers, councils and popes. He built his orchestrated campaign against the Jansenists in the 1640s on his plea to papal authority to quash their claim that they were the authentic defenders of Augustine's doctrine of grace, as well as to condemn their apparent reluctance to approve frequent sacramental participation and their appeals to the conciliarist doctrine and freedom of conscience to shield their doctrinal beliefs. Concurrently, however, de Paul continued to associate with suspected Jansenists, rather than send them to coventry. He did so partially to take opportunities to persuade them to renege on their supposed heresies but his links went further than was necessary for this to happen. He even sent young clerics to reside with and work for the Jansenist bishop Nicolas Pavillon (1597-1677) in the 1650s. In this affair, therefore, we see both faces of de Paul's sense of ecclesiology simultaneously: the institutional and the personal; the church as guardian of doctrinal truth and the church as the inclusive and charitable nurturer of souls.¹⁵

In these kind of circumstances, however, the limitations of Trent's decrees became startlingly evident. Theoretically, the Catholic church's reliance on scripture and tradition responded to theological questions, whether posed by Protestants or Jansenists, and the Tridentine decrees offered the most recent exposition of key doctrines and of the disciplinary rules that expressed them. Catholic theologians now defined 'catholicity' to ward off not only the external subversion of Protestant heresies but also to prevent, once more, the fragmentation of the Catholic church from within. But the delegates at Trent had not intended to offer a composite description of church doctrines. Rather, they responded to specific doctrinal and disciplinary criticisms made by Protestants, and their decrees were most penetrating in compiling doctrinal and disciplinary rules to ensure regularity of belief, worship and government.

One key example of this is evident in the consequences of placing bishops at the centre of the Tridentine reform programme. This was done partially in reaction to dismissal of the office in some Protestant churches, but Trent also codified teaching and recommendations that had circulated in the church for centuries when it ordered bishops to instigate disciplinary renewal in their dioceses through annual diocesan synods, the introduction of seminaries and regular preaching. These practical instructions of 'administrative episcopatism' were not accompanied by a complete theology of episcopacy however, a fact that is particularly obvious in the decree on episcopal residence issued in 1646 and that on sacramental order in 1662-3.¹⁶ In these, the Council, despite the warnings of several delegates, dodged the question of whether bishops held their jurisdiction immediately or directly from God or indirectly, by mediation, from the pope. In fact, the papacy and its supporters (*zelanti*) used the debate to argue strongly for the inclusion of a decree confirming papal jurisdiction over the entire church, which was utterly contrary to the medieval doctrine of conciliarism and absolutely unacceptable to most members of the French and Spanish delegations.

The Council did decree that the priestly orders 'truly and properly' formed one of the seven sacraments, imprinting a unique and ineffaceable character on its recipients which enabled them to consecrate the bread and wine and forgive sins. It further confirmed that bishops belonged to the same sacramental order but were distinguished from priests by their charismatic ability to govern as apostolic successors and their ability to confer the sacraments of confirmation and ordination. Yet ecclesiological dilemmas regarding the source and practice of episcopal jurisdiction remained: did episcopal jurisdiction come directly from God or indirectly via the pope? Precisely what degree of independent jurisdiction could a bishop expect to possess within his diocese? It was not merely papal and episcopal pride or the quotidian authority of an individual bishop that stood at stake. The reason that the questions were taken so seriously during and in the centuries after Trent was because, in an institution freshly committing to hierarchical direction, the responses given to them would mould the relationship between members of the church hierarchy and determine the loci of ecclesiastical power and the operation of ecclesiastical government, perhaps permanently.

After Trent, Archbishop Charles Borromeo's (1538-84) rigorous administration in Milan saw the introduction of regular synods, schools of Christian doctrine for catechesis and ecclesiastical conferences for

¹⁵ *Saint Vincent de Paul. Correspondence. Conferences, Documents*, ed. Jacqueline Kilar, trans. Helen Marie Law *et al*, 10 vols., New York, New City Press, 1983- , iii, 163-5, de Paul to Jean Dehorgny, March 1647.

¹⁶ *Decrees*, ed. Tanner, ii, Sess. VI, pp. 681-2; Sess. XXIII, 742-53.

priests. His firm sense of episcopal leadership, however, brought him into conflict with both the papal and secular authorities; the papacy thoroughly edited the statutes of his 1578 provincial council, even though they accorded with Trent's decrees, and ordered that the Council's decrees were to be suspended in Milan until further notice. Only when the furious archbishop personally remonstrated with Pope Gregory XIII were his decrees approved.¹⁷ Equally, however, Borromeo was not averse to using the weight of his status as archbishop to fend off the attempts by Philip II's government to replace the Lombard province of the Holy Office with the Spanish Inquisition; as a result of his robust resistance to Spanish intrusions into ecclesiastical affairs he enjoyed a degree of episcopal independence that was rather unusual in other regions of the empire, and this was later protected by his nephew Federico Borromeo during the 1620s.¹⁸

This and similar clashes¹⁹ partially reflected Rome's attempts to enhance the pope's authority and coincided with the expansion of the curial congregations responsible for ecclesiastical administration, especially the foundation of the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith in 1622. The trend rested on an absolutist ecclesiology that placed premiums on the doctrines of papal primacy, infallibility and universal jurisdiction. Although Trent, therefore, placed bishops at the heart of diocesan affairs and seemed to offer them autonomy in dioceses, the papacy interpreted these principles minimally while bishops frequently tended to interpret them in ways that permitted them substantial, sometimes maximum, liberty of action. For example, Rome refused to approve the decrees of the provincial council of Bordeaux, held by Archbishop Sourdis (1574-1628) in 1624, on the basis that he had neglected to specify that prelates acted as delegates of the apostolic see when performing visitations of convents and monasteries, correcting their abuses or controlling their 'hierarchical' activities of sacramental administration and preaching. This was a daring and deliberate distortion of Trent's legislation, but Sourdis acted, with the enthusiastic approval of the French Assembly of Clergy, in the belief that bishops did not govern dioceses as papal delegates, but by virtue of the jurisdictional power inherent in their office. It was hardly surprising that Rome hawkishly pounced on his decrees, and although used within Bordeaux, they never earned papal approbation.²⁰

This episode should also be judged with reference to its place within the serious tensions between bishops and religious orders (regular clergy) through the early modern era. Although there are countless instances of their co-operation in such activities as missionary work, education or the foundation of monasteries and convents, bishops persistently complained about the unwarranted independence of the regulars, who appeared unwilling to give up the independence that they had won during the medieval period.²¹

At the heart of the issue lay competing conceptions of the church, ecclesiastical government, discipline and hierarchy at local and universal levels. The regulars, the papacy and the bishops all based their conceptions on the traditional notion that the church was a hierarchy of orders, but the regulars and the papacy favoured a broadly conceived system of subdivided hierarchy, whose distinct sections were connected by their common obedience to the pope. This was not a form of presbyterianism, for it accepted the unrestricted authority of the pope as universal bishop of the church while not eliminating bishops' jurisdictional authority altogether. It also relied heavily on the claim that the pope possessed universal jurisdiction and that he granted bishops their diocesan jurisdiction. Therefore, he could quite legitimately exempt members of the religious orders from that jurisdiction when he deemed it necessary.

The 'New World' of the Churches: Ecclesiological Models and Boundaries

Mission and Settlement

Freedom from episcopal interference was a particularly important right to claim in Catholic missionary environments: the Jesuits and Benedictines refused to accept that the bishop appointed to oversee the English mission in 1624 had any jurisdiction over their activities, prompting a long war of printed propaganda and appeals to Rome.²² Their opponents, supported by the assertive French episcopate, recognised the pope's primacy as the 'bishop of bishops' and Christ's earthly vicar. They could not agree that the leadership this entailed stretched to papal infallibility or to the ability of a pope to intervene in a diocese without the approval of its bishop, whose jurisdiction was received immediately or directly from God. So attentive to this principle were the French that they endeavoured to ensure that it was enshrined as an inalterable episcopal right in the French church and in the ecclesiological structures erected in the new French colonies.²³

¹⁷ Forrester, *Fathers*, 112.

¹⁸ Anthony D. Wright, 'Relations Between Church and State: Catholic Developments in Spanish-Ruled Italy of the Counter-Reformation', *History of European Ideas*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1988), 385-403.

¹⁹ See Craig Harline and Eddy Put, *A Bishop's Tale. Mathias Hovius among his Flock in Seventeenth-Century Flanders* New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2000, 125-7, for an analysis of Bishop Hovius' battle with Rome in 1607.

²⁰ Forrester, *Fathers*, 112-3.

²¹ For example, Alison Forrester, *Catholic Synods in Ireland, 1600-1690*, Dublin, Four Courts, 1998, 96-9, 163-6.

²² *Id.*, *Fathers*, 87-94.

²³ 1665: *Ibid.*, 119.

The issue of ecclesial organisation and discipline was a primary worry for both the Catholic and Protestant churches in the new colonies established through trade and settlement in the Americas, China, Japan, India and Africa. Catholic missions were often unable to replicate the institutional patterns that operated in Europe because of geographical isolation, insufficient personnel (which was compounded by a contemporary debate over the ordination of natives),²⁴ tensions between secular and regular clergy and lack of co-operation from secular authorities. Their missionaries had to adapt their usual didactic methods and devotional forms to the languages and cultures of indigenous people and to the needs of slaves newly descended from ships.²⁵ The Jesuits, in particular, came under heavy fire in China from those who considered any engagement or compromise with pagan beliefs to be entirely illegitimate.²⁶

The first Protestant mission to the new world took place in 1555, when the Calvinist church in Geneva sent a small cohort of settlers to Brazil.²⁷ While this mission did not survive, others were longer lived, though with varying degrees of interest in converting natives. Missions to natives were complicated, as the influential minister Cotton Mather (1663-1728) identified in relation to his own Reformed community in New England, by the fact that the Protestant churches tended to import the denominational debates that characterised protestantism in Europe. To combat this, Mather formulated fourteen classically Protestant doctrinal truths that should form a unified basis of Protestant missionary work in lands that had been divinely granted for the purpose of realising the perfect Christianity that was impossible in Europe.²⁸ His view of old Europe bears passing resemblance to that expressed by de Paul,²⁹ and it was generally matched by other Reformed communities. Roger Williams (1603-1683), founder of the Rhode Island colony, considered his Separatist church (that is, independent from the episcopal and monarchically governed Church of England) to be a community of the regenerate, while some Reformed churches claimed that their foundation was the 'new Israel'. They experienced acute anxiety about the certainty of election and established regulations such as proof of repentance for full church membership.³⁰ These churches wished to segregate themselves from corrupt catholicism, but also from any Protestant influences that might taint their witness to the true faith.

Models of Authority: Jansenism and Calvinism

For the Catholic church, the dissension that arose over the rivalry between papal and episcopal jurisdictional power reached new heights during the Jansenist quarrel. Although conflict centred on the interpretation of the Augustinian doctrine of grace proposed by Cornelius Jansen in his 1640 work *Augustinus*, it rapidly expanded to become the scene of a direct competition between papal authority and episcopal jurisdiction and power of judgment. In resisting the papal condemnations (1653, 1656 and 1663) of supposed Jansenist doctrines, the Jansenists were able to play on the sensitivity of French bishops to their hierarchical status and power and their sense of corporate collegiality, as well as on a tradition of gallican independence, in which the bishops opposed any infringements on their jurisdiction by either pope or king. In particular, four bishops chose to represent the cause. They and the Jansenists, led principally by Antoine Arnauld (b. 1612) until his death in 1694, argued eloquently that it was necessary to hold a church council to resolve the question of faith at issue; until the church was seen to concord formally that Jansen's doctrine was heretical, nobody could be forced to act against their conscience. Furthermore, the pope could not proceed against a bishop unless he infringed canonical norms or failed to defend a defined article of faith. Until then, bishops should be permitted to use their episcopal power to judge matters of faith, for which they would answer to God, and to decide whether it was appropriate to take action in their dioceses against Jansenism.³¹

²⁴ C. R. Boxer, 'The Problem of the Native Clergy in the Portuguese and Spanish Empires from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries', in *Christianity and Missions, 1450-1800*, ed. J. S. Cummins, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1997, 175-95.

²⁵ Maher, 'Confession', 184-200; John Leddy Phelan, 'Pre-Baptismal Instruction and the Administration of Baptism in the Philippines during the Sixteenth Century', in *Christianity*, ed. Cummins, 139-59.

²⁶ For the Jesuit Matteo Ricci's efforts to enter Chinese society through a marriage between Confucian philosophy and Christian faith, see Andrew R. Ross, *A Vision Betrayed. The Jesuits in Japan and China 1542-1742*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1994, 119-54.

²⁷ G. Baez-Camargo, 'The Earliest Protestant Missionary Venture in Latin America', in *Christianity*, ed. Cummins, 303-13.

²⁸ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 7 vols., Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1979. See also Ernst Benz, 'Pietist and Puritan Sources of Early Protestant World Missions (Cotton Mather and A. H. Francke)', in *Christianity*, ed. Cummins, 315-42, at 320.

²⁹ See above, p. xxx.

³⁰ F. J. Bremer, *Congregational Communion: Clerical Friendship in the Anglo-American Puritan Community, 1610-1692* Boston, Northeastern University Press, 1994; R. T. Handy, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976; A. Zakai, 'The Gospel of Reformation: The Origins of the Great Puritan Migration', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 37 (1986), 584-602. On Williams, see O. E. Winslow, *Master Roger Williams* New York, Macmillan, 1957, and Edmund S. Morgan, *Roger Williams: The Church and the State*, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967.

³¹ Forrestal, *Fathers*, 127-33.

Throughout this war, the Jansenists' opponents accused them of being crypto-Calvinists: disciples of predestination and irresistible grace and enemies of the pope. Stung by this suggestion, the Jansenists fought back but were hampered by the claim made by Pierre Nicole, a leading member of their group, that Peter and Paul had led autonomous communities in Rome, providing a model for popes and bishops to follow ever since. To be fair, the likeness to Calvinist ecclesiology was only superficial; the Jansenists had a well-developed view of episcopacy and certainly did not wish to promote a presbyterian style church without either pope or prelates. Indeed, the Jansenist bishops displayed a keener sense of Cyprianic episcopacy than many other bishops; throughout the affair, the question of jurisdiction did not overtake those of pastoral responsibility and apostolic vocation to become an end in itself. They defended their intransigence by interweaving jurisdictional rights with pastoral needs: they were, as the 'eyes and mouth' of the church and the 'depositories' of faith and discipline, dutybound to ensure the wellbeing, not simply of their own dioceses, but of the entire church.³²

Calvinist ecclesiology was based on what Calvin considered to be the structure closest to the New Testament pattern and supportive of the ministry of the Word, but this presbyterian form did not prevent him from realising that a doctrine of ministry and ministerial vocation was vital to a church that claimed to be a divine institution testifying to Christ's grace.³³ While most Calvinist churches conformed to the presbyterian model (with its fourfold ministry of elder, doctor, deacon and pastor) and synodal network,³⁴ Lutheran churches assumed a variety of ministerial structures, with some retaining the episcopal ministry as historical and scriptural (apostolic). This diversity stemmed from Luther's reluctance to prescribe a uniform structure of ecclesiastical government. However, the variety of organisational models precipitated acute problems for the Erastian Anglican church, for a vocal Reformed element of its membership (commonly known as Puritans), including theologians such as William Perkins (1558-1602), disliked the concept of episcopacy, though some proved willing to accept it in their national church if it was deemed an earthly and politically expedient office, whose members derived their jurisdiction from the monarch. These regarded an episcopate that claimed to hold its jurisdiction by divine right or law as 'popish', so set themselves firmly against the 'innovations' of Laudian protestantism and high Anglicanism that emerged before the Civil War in 1641.³⁵ Therefore, although Anglican and Catholic apologists argued publicly over the legitimacy of Anglican episcopacy, they shared a similar dilemma after the Reformation: both searched for a mature image of episcopal office but were troubled by the degree of jurisdiction to be offered to its incumbents and by whether that jurisdiction was owed directly to God, pope or monarch.

The Anglican debate spilled into the colonies on the eastern seaboard of north America, where Puritan settlers took the opportunity that distance offered to establish experimental forms of ecclesiastical government. Puritan communities (such as the Massachusetts Bay Colony established in 1630 in the wake of more feeble settlements from 1620) founded congregational churches, with federations of parishes run by self-selected councils of parishioners. The belief that their parochially, and therefore congregationally, governed churches had been rightfully distinguished from the corrupt episcopal Church of England was crucial to their identity as new Israel. However, communities which allowed such significant avenues of power to lay people tended to suffer power struggles between ministers and socially prominent laymen; Puritan divines had never agreed on the balance of power that should exist between church elders and the church community in governmental and disciplinary decisions,³⁶ and the emerging congregations inclined towards egalitarian participation that favoured the laity over ministers. This was a natural result of the Reformation doctrine commonly known as the priesthood of all believers, which confirmed the spiritual equality of all Christians (though not the historical equality, which allowed the Reformers to reject the possibility of female ministers). It was, therefore, also the product of the abandonment of the traditionally distinguishing sacramental element of ministry by Protestant theology. Furthermore, pushed to its extreme conclusion by leading Puritan divines such as Walter Travers (1548-1635), it conceded that a minister was set apart only and crucially by the fact that he had been chosen to serve by the local church fellowship which ordained him.³⁷

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³² *Ibid.*, 136-7.

³³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1989, 322-6.

³⁴ Philip Benedict, *The Faith and Fortunes of France's Huguenots, 1600-85*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001.

³⁵ W. D. J. Cargill Thompson, 'Sir Francis Knollys' Campaign against the *Jure Divino* Theory of Episcopacy', in C. Robert Cole and Michael E. Moody (eds.), *Essays for Leland H. Carlson. The Dissenting Tradition* Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1975, 39-77; Patrick Collinson, 'Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition', in *ibid.*, 3-38, at 11.

³⁶ Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints. Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology 1570-1625*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, 157-202.

³⁷ Walter Travers, *A full and plaine declaration of ecclesiastical discipline*, n. p., n. p., 1574, 75. On Protestant ministry see below, p. xxx.

In the Catholic church, the Jansenist affair eventually lost momentum after the final papal condemnation in 1713 (*Unigenitus*; even then a special assembly of French prelates deliberately acted 'as judges of faith'),³⁸ but it badly bruised the papacy and heightened its suspicion of conciliarism and episcopal claims to power. To make this war of practical theology still more complicated, the range of papal power had two aspects: the spiritual and the temporal. While the clergy argued over precedence, status and authority, secular sovereigns watched for signs that the papacy intended to actualise the political theology that claimed that the pope's spiritual and temporal powers were held by divine right or law; as such, the pope could intervene freely in the civil realm, even to the point, if necessary, of deposing an infidel or tyrant king (the hierocratic theory). This assertion was, as Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) noted, 'odious to the princes of the world.'³⁹ It was doubly so in an era when the power of sovereigns continued to grow, though not as rapidly as the cult of absolute rule and divine right monarchy (the belief that the king received his royal power directly from God and was answerable only to God).⁴⁰

Amongst other prominent Catholic theologians, Bellarmine faced this challenge, so topical too in the wake of royal assassinations by Catholic subjects,⁴¹ with a powerful justification of the church's, meaning principally the pope's, interest in the exercise of political power. He argued influentially that the spiritual power (founded on divine law) must be considered supreme over the temporal (founded on natural law) because its end was higher and more excellent (equally, Catholic theologians argued that the temporal realm and power were transient and therefore subservient to the persevering 'empire of Christ').⁴² The pope was bound to intervene in the temporal realm when secular political action or inaction threatened the faith or the salvation of souls. In these exceptional circumstances, the pope could judge, direct or correct. Bellarmine carefully, however, distinguished between the pope's spiritual and temporal power (his *Controversies* were almost placed on the Index in 1590 as a result), suggesting that the former was immediate or direct while the latter was derived or indirect. For that reason, the pope could never depose a civil sovereign but could, for a spiritual reason, indicate to the faithful that this action was necessary and direct the faithful to ensure that particular civil acts, such as laws protective of the church and the faith, were implemented. In making this case, Bellarmine was tied by the common medieval assumption that the civil and ecclesiastical realms formed the halves of Christian society.⁴³

The pope's claims to either direct or indirect power over the civil realm flatly contradicted the vigorous theory of divine right monarchy, espoused not just by the Catholic Louis XIV but also by the Protestant Stuart monarchs. In the state church headed by the latter, Richard Hooker (1554-1600) defended an enduring theory of polity that offered the monarch, supported by parliamentary and convocational consent, spiritual dominion or supreme power in ecclesiastical affairs (but not purely spiritual power). He based this view on a combination of Scripture, tradition and reason, which he also used to criticise the Puritan tendency to construct ahistorical ecclesiastical institutions solely by Scriptural rules and models. Because the Church of England's erastian and episcopal configuration was not contrary to Scripture (therefore, it was compatible with Scripture), was consistent with tradition, and fitted contemporary circumstances and requirements, he argued, it was a legitimate and appropriate form of ecclesiastical structure and government.⁴⁴

Although Hooker wrote principally in opposition to Puritans, his argument could be adopted to protect the Anglican church from subversive attacks by Dissenters and Catholics, the former emerging as Separatists within the Anglican church from the 1640s, and the latter a suspected minority within the realm throughout the early modern era. Catholic sovereigns displayed some erastian ambitions too, however. Notably, the French crown intermittently resorted to the threat to form an erastian national Catholic church and was able to overawe papal pretensions to power by bringing bishops over to its thinking, benefiting from the fame and intellectual ability of Jacques-Benigne Bossuet (1627-1704) in particular. He was amongst the bishops who composed and signed the notorious 1682 Gallican Articles, in which the bishops explicitly denied that the king answered to any authority but God's. Furthermore, they took the opportunity to endorse the Council of Constance's

³⁸ Forrester, *Fathers*, 161.

³⁹ Robert Bellarmine, 'Epistola Apologetica Roberti S.R.E. Cardinalis Bellarmini ad Franciscum Card. Sancti Clementis adversus temeritatem et errorem Alexandri Carerii Patavini', in LeBachelet, *Auctarium Bellarminianum*, Paris, n. p., 1913, p. 434.

⁴⁰ Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1992; Robin Briggs, *Early Modern France, 1560-1715*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2nd edition 1998, 73-159.

⁴¹ Mark Greengrass, *France in the Age of Henri IV. The Struggle for Stability*, London and New York, Longman, 2nd edition 1995, 60, 251.

⁴² Charles Plowden, *A short account of the Establishment of the New See of Baltimore in Maryland, and of consecrating the Right Rev. Dr. John Carroll first Bishop thereof* London, J. P. Coghlan, 1790, 5-6.

⁴³ Robert Bellarmine, *Disputationes de Controversiis...Fidei adversus hujus temporis haereticos*, 3 vols., Ingolstadt, n. p., 1586-9; John Courtney Murray, 'St. Robert Bellarmine on the Indirect Power', *Theological Studies*, 9 (1948), 491-535.

⁴⁴ Richard Hooker, 'Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie', VIII, 2-8: *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. W. Speed Hill, 7 vols., various publishers, 1977-88.

conciliarist doctrine, to affirm that the decisions of a church council held precedence over those of a pope, to proclaim that papal power was subject to established laws and customs and to qualify papal power by confirming that the pope's decisions in matters of faith were not irreformable 'without the consent of the entire church.'⁴⁵

In order to respond to the frequent accusation that Catholics could not maintain their loyalty to a Protestant sovereign because they would always be bound to obey the pope's instructions, Irish Catholic theologians unsuccessfully attempted to translate a version of these doctrines to the difficult situation in Ireland in 1666, where an overwhelmingly Catholic population was ruled by a Protestant sovereign and denied freedom of worship until the repeal of the Penal Laws from the 1770s.⁴⁶ This missionary church also encountered tensions within its own ranks; bishops often reported resentment from, and occasionally outright conflict with, regulars and secular clergy who refused to submit to their discipline.⁴⁷ In France, parish priests (*curés*) endorsed a presbyterian style ecclesiology, in which they functioned as monarchs of their jurisdictions, with no interference from their bishop and a deliberative role in diocesan synods. In addition to adopting the traditional Gersonian belief that they were the direct successors of the seventy-two disciples, they argued that they held the jurisdiction inherent to their office by divine law. Their doctrine placed *curés* and bishops on a parallel jurisdictional footing and neutralised a bishop's influence through most of his see. During the 1650s, *curés* in Paris and other provinces met in assemblies to judge doctrinal issues and to issue thinly veiled assertions of autonomy to their bishops.⁴⁸ The resilience of their doctrine, and its ability to reanimate, became evident during the later eighteenth century, when the *curés'* festering grievances against what they perceived to be episcopal tyranny drove them to act once again as a corporal, clearly defined, clerical caste and to distinguish themselves from the bishops in the Estates General (1789) that ushered in the French Revolution.⁴⁹

Ministries and Vocations

Priest and Pastor

The identities that French bishops and *curés* proclaimed were both strongly influenced by a dominant contemporary 'school' of theology. At its centre stood Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629), founder of the French Congregation⁵⁰ of the Oratory (1611), although the diffusion of its central tenets probably owed more to Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-57) and Vincent de Paul, founders of the Sulpician Congregation (1645) and the Congregation of the Mission (1625) respectively. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, sixty per cent of French bishops had been trained, generally for three years, in the Sulpicians' Parisian seminary, while the Lazarists managed sixty diocesan seminaries in France. Moreover, the theology and training methods of the French school were adopted in seminaries through the Catholic church until the modern era and its writings became required reading for seminarians.⁵¹

In addition to its directives to bishops, the Council of Trent had laid down practical instructions for the training of priests in diocesan seminaries and had required that priests reside in their parishes, administer the sacraments and teach their flock through catechesis and preaching. The French school's teaching fleshed out the theology that lay behind or implicitly within these commands and provided the structures and personnel to implement Trent's vision of reinvigoration. In doing so it fostered the confidence of authority, wisdom and prestige amongst bishops and priests.

This unique formulation of priesthood and episcopacy upheld and enhanced the notion that the church was a Pseudo-Dionysian hierarchy of orders. Therefore, bishops were ranked first, or highest, amongst the 'dispensers of the holy things', followed by priests and then deacons. Further down in the hierarchy were, in descending order, the monastic orders, initiates (laity) and catechumens. Within the hierarchy, the priest performed the crucial role of mediating divine grace, so that he drew those below him in rank (that is, principally the laity) towards union with God through administration of the sacraments. As a 'living sacrament',

⁴⁵ Forrestal, *Fathers*, 131-2, 158.

⁴⁶ J. Brennan, 'A Gallican Interlude in Ireland', *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, xxiv (1957), 219-37, 283-309.

⁴⁷ Forrestal, *Synods*, 132-89.

⁴⁸ *Id.*, *Fathers*, 74-108; Richard Golden, *The Godly Rebellion. Parisian Curés and the Religious Fronde 1652-1662* Chapel Hill, North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press, 1981, 69-75.

⁴⁹ Nigel Aston, *The End of an Elite: The French Bishops and the Coming of the Revolution, 1786-1790*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992.

⁵⁰ The term 'congregation' designates a permanent association of secular priests who live in common (and usually with a Rule) but do not form a religious order.

⁵¹ Eamon Duffy, 'The English Secular Clergy and the Counter-Reformation', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 34 (1983), 214-20.

therefore, he continued the salvific work of Christ, the eternal priest, who delegated his authority to him through ordination.⁵²

To try to guard against any democratisation of ecclesiastical discipline, Bérulle and his associates persistently confirmed that priests should render obedience to their *grands prêtres*, or bishops. They placed the activities of their congregations in dioceses firmly under episcopal obedience which was both politically advantageous and a reflection of their theological image of episcopacy. Olier summarised this understanding when he identified bishops as fathers, leaders (or heads) and kings in 1651. Innovatively, he recognised a distinct episcopal spirit, held in plenitude, on which priests and laity were dependent for sanctification. In doing so, he echoed Trent's distinction between the episcopal powers of order and jurisdiction. Olier described the operation as a flowing of grace from the bishop to priests; the head of the body animating and therefore perfecting its limbs (priests), by the unique grace that flowed through the veins. This emphasis on a vivifying and nourishing spirit was positive and pastoral, while clearly indicating that the episcopal office was a dynamic, and essential element of the church's spiritual wellbeing, its structure and the functioning of the lower clergy.⁵³ While Olier did not claim that the episcopate was a separate sacrament from the priesthood, he also did not suggest that episcopacy was merely an extension of priesthood. Moreover, unlike, for example, the view offered by certain Anglicans, notably Archbishop Whitgift (c.1530-1604),⁵⁴ Olier did not suggest that it was simply a bishop's jurisdictional power that distinguished him from a priest.

Embedded within this theology of priesthood and episcopacy is an endorsement of Trent's emphasis on the cultic role of the priest and his primacy in protecting and developing the church. The Council was thoroughly influenced by the often voiced assumption that reform of the church would be achieved through reform of those who would go on to lead the laity in true faith and upright Christian virtue. This presumption is related to the increasing emphasis on parochial religious practice during the Tridentine era; in structural terms, parish priests and the bishops above them organised, directed and kept close observation on the religious devotions of the laity. Of course, there were exceptions to this, as the household religion of Catholics in Ireland reveals.⁵⁵ However, the plentiful investigations of confraternities have provided evidence of the trend; local, idiosyncratic, confraternities tended to be replaced by those dedicated to universal doctrines such as the Rosary and the Blessed Sacrament and, increasingly, their medieval autonomy was undermined by Trent's order that parish priests and bishops assume control of their accounts and activities.⁵⁶ Just as the issues of authority, uniformity and orthodoxy dominated debates over ecclesiological structures therefore, the movement towards uniformity and universality in confraternal and associative devotions reflected the quest for a defined catholicity that characterised the Catholic church after Trent.

Of course, one of the principal reasons for this preoccupation with the sacerdotal role in cultivating holiness was the fact that the Protestant churches undermined it so categorically. As mentioned above, Calvin and Luther both confirmed the need for ordained ministry within their denominations, but the variety that this basic precept permitted meant that Protestantism incorporated episcopally and congregationally governed churches. Significantly, however, the abandonment of a theology of priestly sacramentality and sacrificiality drove the Protestant understanding of ministry towards governmental and didactic, rather than a cultic, presentations of the minister's functions. While ordained ministers were, as Calvin had affirmed, specially designated ambassadors of God, this primarily relied on their responsibility to serve their congregation through the pastorate of evangelical preaching, as the Zurich reformer Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) noted so trenchantly when he chose to stress ministerial service over dignity or lordship.⁵⁷

Their intense prioritising of the preached word encouraged Protestant ministers to grasp their mission to act as the 'mouthpieces' of God in honourably proclaiming his Word.⁵⁸ It promoted a neo-clericalist ideology that also supported the calls frequently made by churchmen such as the moderate Puritan Lawrence Chaderton (1526-1640) for the laity to obey their ministers' directions in doctrinal, liturgical and moral affairs.⁵⁹ Protestant churches deliberately distanced themselves from the Catholic rite of ordination, with its sacramental basis and its positioning of the priest on a higher plane (or hierarchical order) within the church but, despite this, they

⁵² Jean-Jacques Olier, *Traité des saints ordres*, eds. Gilles Chaillot, Paul Cochois and Irénée Noye, Paris, Procure de la Compagnie de Saint Sulpice, 1984, 183-98.

⁵³ Forrestal, *Fathers*, 61-5.

⁵⁴ Cargill Thompson, 'Campaign', 39-77; Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1988, 13-70.

⁵⁵ John Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Ireland, 1596-1641', *Historical Studies*, viii (1971), 155-69.

⁵⁶ *Decrees*, ed. Tanner, ii, Sess. XXII, 740.

⁵⁷ *Huldreich Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke*, 14 vols., Berlin, C. A. Schwetschke, 1905, ii, 438-40; W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986, 260-81.

⁵⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, trans. Beveridge, 315-26.

⁵⁹ Brachlow, *Communion*, 161

retained, with just a few exceptions (such as Zwingli's Zurich and Bohemia), the apostolic rite of laying on of hands, and proved conspicuously eager to foster the distinctive position of the minister within the church. Though the 'church's' consent, that is the consent of church members, was theoretically required in all major decisions, this did not prevent ministers from making edifying decisions on its behalf. Clearly, this was an attempt to reconcile clericalism with the vigorous lay leadership that Calvinism, in particular, exhibited. It was a structural and theological problem that the Catholic church tended to shy from confronting institutionally. Yet the search for normative standards in doctrine, worship and government during the early modern period should not be allowed to obscure the fact that it witnessed remarkable development in specific areas of ministry and apostolate.

The Female Vocation

Traditional histories obscured women's active part in shaping institutions, spirituality and values within Christianity while modern histories tend to condemn the Catholic church, in particular, for its hostile enclosure of women in convents,⁶⁰ and for its restriction of their activities to childbearing and prayer. In Protestant and Catholic communities, women and men did manage to set influential precedents in forming female apostolic models of ministry; while it is foolish to ignore the fact that gender played an important role in ecclesiastical relations, we must avoid too abruptly demarcating an intransigent male church from its female membership. Men and women were often capable of choosing the teachings most appropriate to their lives and adapting or ignoring conventions and rules as necessary.⁶¹ They were not invariably successful: the Ursuline order did not properly represent its Italian founder's (Angela Merici 1474-1540) vision of a female confraternity living and working in the world as lay apostles. While some of its Italian communities remained unenclosed, its general development from 1535 was the product of pressure to adapt to conventional conventual structures and expectations of female religious life.⁶² But it was achieved by the Daughters of Charity. Though they lived in common, they were adamant in their decision to remain a secular community and confraternity with only simple and annual vows (rather than the solemn vows that represented religious life) because it enabled them to remain unenclosed and free to work routinely with the poor, the sick, the young and the criminal. While circumventing the decree of Trent on enclosure, they ensured that their spiritual motivation and ethos of charity were sustained.

The Daughters, therefore, instigated a new Catholic model of female vocational life, midway between a traditional confraternal association, whose members lived openly in lay society, and an enclosed, cloistered, religious order (non-enclosed 'tertiary' or third orders, who followed the rule of a specific religious order, had previously existed, but these were enclosed by Trent). They also innovated in undertaking a range of responsibilities that cannot all be dismissed as 'feminine' or as alternative expressions of the physical maternity that they had not chosen. To do so is to ignore the positive aspects of the metaphor of motherhood, marian or otherwise: Marillac, their founding superior general, who was the mother of a son, meditated joyfully on the private bond of communication that existed between Mary and the Christ child in her womb and used it as an example of the spiritual strength available to women when Christ became their interiorised guide. Additionally, motherhood was a metaphor used to describe the person and work of Christ since the medieval period.⁶³ So, the Daughters certainly understood that they were spiritual mothers in their care of the vulnerable; this also partially underpinned their delivery of education, catechesis and retreats. It enabled them to mark out their imitation of Christ in generation, nurture and sacrifice, while using their vocational imperative as a robust justification for working in rough, often male dominated, environments. Their apostolate was active and public, and it was not intent on physically protecting them from the world or their fragile natures, as enclosure was customarily thought to do. By 1789, the Daughters comprised fifteen per cent of the 'females in religion' in France and had been established in north Italy, eastern and central Europe. Their experience should not be seen as that of an organisation which slipped through the cracks in the implementation of Tridentine rules.

Amongst Catholics, women's participation in apostolic ministry often took place under the umbrella of confraternal organisations, which traditionally borrowed their sense of fraternal and spiritual community from Christ and the Apostles. Confraternities provided important forums for the evolution of collective devotional norms and interior forms of piety, therefore proving crucial to the reinforcement of catholicism after the Reformation. A key example is provided by the Ladies of Charity (1617), whose spirituality was oriented towards charitable sensibility, and found social justification in the midst of the growing numbers of poor

⁶⁰ The Council of Trent universalised the practice of enclosure for female religious in 1563: *Decrees*, ed. Tanner, Sess. XXV, ch. 5, 778.

⁶¹ For contrasting views, see Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul. Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Washington D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 2001, and Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, London, Picador, 1985.

⁶² Charmarie J. Blaisdell, 'Angela Merici and the Ursulines', in *Religious Orders*, ed. Demolen, 99-136.

⁶³ Caroline Walker Bynun, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1982.

throughout Europe. In regions of French influence and rule, the wellborn Ladies organised charitable aid to the poor, established schools and raised funds for abandoned children. The work was inspired not simply by compassion or by a conventional submission to the duty of almsgiving, but by an apostolic desire to save souls in danger of being lost through lack of training and opportunity. It was simultaneously motivated by the suggestion that Christ stood amongst the poor; service to Christ through them could therefore prove redemptive for those who voluntarily ministered. With the exception of the procurator, the association's officers were female, and the level of entrepreneurial acumen amongst the members for fundraising, budgeting and project management is notable. It was frequently partially the fruit of their experience in managing households and estates while their husbands attended to, for instance, court or professional tasks. They were helped by the fact that French property laws and inheritance customs (like those in German sovereignties) allowed women the freedom to assume these roles when necessary; this may have restricted equivalent activities in Spain and Italy.⁶⁴

Some Ladies assumed responsibility for work that they consciously understood to be an apostolically inspired manifestation of the ministry of teaching. A first-hand record of this is found in a letter written to de Paul by Geneviève Goussault, who presided over the Ladies of Charity of the *Hôtel Dieu* hospital in Paris, describing her travels in western France in 1633. First, it is noteworthy that de Paul did not object to the type of activities that Goussault described. Second, she peppered her letter with scriptural references; she possessed an extremely strong pastoral orientation that she deliberately compared to Christ's care of the vulnerable and underpinned with a recognition that she served Christ the prisoner and the persecuted victim in assisting the people that she met. As the Jesuits did, she may even have seen her travel as a key element to her apostolicity: the missionary sent out by God. She was quite ready, as a result, to lead locals in prayer, to catechise children and adults, to preach to large crowds which included clergy, and to offer herself as an example of the importance of regular sacramental observance and charitable acts. Furthermore, she did not shy from criticising a local priest or from informing Vincent de Paul that he needed to organise a mission in the region.

The Daughters of Charity restricted the teaching aspect of their ministry to catechesis, provision of retreats and education, though even this could be interpreted as an undermining of the Pauline ban. Yet Goussault ignored Paul's instruction completely; maybe she was able to do so because she had the confidence of noble birth, but that had not protected Protestant noblewomen during the Reformation.⁶⁵ It is just as likely that Goussault was so strongly motivated by her call to save souls that she was willing to perform virtually whatever act would achieve this, and to ignore customary restrictions imposed on her sex by custom or religion.

Perhaps Goussault's high social bearing also contributed to the impression that she made on provincial notables and peasants. Yet, importantly, they told her that they were especially pleased that 'I do not play the role of the reformer, I laugh heartily and I go to my parish church.' She was thought not to patronise her listeners and conversants or irritate them by saccharine piety or condemnations. If we add to this the fact that Goussault had a family of five children, we see that she did not simply transfer the monastery to the world in her apostolate; she thoroughly amalgamated the appropriate elements of both vocations into her family and social life, so that she could pass messages, sometimes seemingly incidentally and without deliberate forethought, on Christian doctrine, virtue and practice through the normal channels of conversation, friendship, visitation and example. Chatting casually to children in the street during a short stop in a town, she recited the Our Father with them as they said their farewells; one impressed individual told her it was evident she loved the poor and was most content when among them, for she 'looked twice as beautiful' while talking to them. According to Goussault, God granted her the courage to speak to large crowds. Clearly, she perceived the inner glow noted by her admirer to be divine grace, to which she owed her fervent wish to follow the powerful example of 'my Saviour.'⁶⁶

There is much in Goussault's activity that coincides with the teaching that François de Sales' (1567-1622) presented in his massively popular *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1610), regularly read by the Ladies and Daughters. On the one hand, de Sales endorsed the orthodoxy that spiritual directors should be male, but in practice he did not query the spiritual direction that Jeanne de Chantal (1572-1641), his associate in establishing the Visitation order, and other Visitation nuns offered. He also gave a sense of validity to the lay vocation that often went unrecognised by other Catholic clerical authors, even if many clergy actively supported lay initiatives to establish religious orders and deal with the problems of poverty. In addition to confirming the spiritual equality of men and women, de Sales' placed less emphasis on exterior purity, usually made

⁶⁴ Barbara Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity. Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, 17-8; Merry E. Wiesner, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany*, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1986.

⁶⁵ Merry E. Wiesner, 'Nuns, Wives and Mothers: Women and the Reformation in Germany', in *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe*, ed. Sherrin Marshall, Bloomington, Ind., Indiana University Press, 1989, 8-28.

⁶⁶ *Vincent de Paul*, ed. Kilar, i, pp. 191-6, Goussault to de Paul, 16 April 1633.

synonymous with virginity, than in interior purity of virtue, thus returning spiritual merit to the widowed and married states.⁶⁷

Still, we should not overestimate the progress made in the development of female apostolic ministry within catholicism during the early modern era. The dominance of the male clerical model of ministry could circumscribe alternatives and complements, as Mary Ward (1585-1645) discovered when she sought to establish an active, unenclosed female equivalent of the Society of Jesus.⁶⁸ This model, accompanied by the Tridentine decrees on parochial religious practice and hierarchical supervision of religious practices, was not always flexible enough to allow men and women to develop their lay ministries fully. It often forced women to use an apparently unthreatening rhetoric of obedience and submission to achieve their goals, respond to their spiritual needs and accommodate public expectations of female qualities and behaviour. Male saints were not usually presented as models of humility and obedience, but that was precisely how the Carmelite Teresa of Avila (1515-82) was presented when canonised (1622), despite her clashes with authority, her spiritual leadership and long periods outside the cloister.⁶⁹

Amongst Protestants, the possibilities of female ministry within a 'priesthood of all believers' were felt especially keenly in the Separatist groups that emerged during the social upheaval of the civil war in England. Women were amongst the founding members of the Baptists, Levellers and the Society of Friends (Quakers) and were committed to active roles in the expression and government of their churches.⁷⁰ Unlike most churchmen, the Quaker founder, George Fox (1624-91), happily confirmed women's right to preach in meeting houses because he intended to replace the male administered Anglican church and ancient restrictions (which he considered historical rather than scriptural) that inhibited these particular priestly believers from doing so. Female proselytising was a marked feature of the early Quaker movement (its first major female preacher was Elisabeth Hooton 1600-72), as was the related collegiality cultivated among its female membership throughout their persecution by the government at home and in the new American colonies. Standing alongside Fox, Margaret Fell (1614-1702) was amongst the Quaker vanguard. In her public ministry, founded on a doctrine of women's spiritual equality with men that she articulated in *Women's Speaking Justified*,⁷¹ she strove to ensure that the movement could expand and consolidate as a Christian denomination. She contributed substantially to the fund established to finance travelling Quaker preachers (Fund for the Service of Truth) and sought tirelessly to overturn the government's intolerance of Quakers by petitioning and negotiating at the highest levels of the administration, even enduring four years of imprisonment (1664-8) when Charles II's government accelerated its campaign to outlaw Dissenters from 1661.⁷²

As new religious groups and churches became established throughout the early modern period, their experimental status and intense reflection on appropriate expressions of doctrine and organisation produced dissent. The Massachusetts Bay Colony faced several such confrontations. The Quakers were mutilated, executed or banished from it in 1657. Some years earlier, Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643) challenged religious and social stability by calling into question key doctrinal emphases such as proof of repentance and holiness (which she considered the product of a false covenant of works) on the basis of supposed direct revelations from the Holy Spirit. Her church's elders accused her of propagating a form of Antinomianism, meaning that she devalued Christian works in favour of a strict covenant of grace that did not require acts that represented holiness and penance. When she instigated and preached at devotional meetings that seemed to assert her authority independently of the church's, she was banished and joined Roger William's community in Rhode Island (Williams had left Massachusetts after confrontation over doctrines in 1636).⁷³ It was not merely female proselytising that raised opposition within churches; all those who undercut a church's conventions of doctrine and worship and unifying truths of faith might expect to meet hostility.

Conclusion

⁶⁷ François de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, ed. and trans. John Ryan, New York, Image, 1972; Spivey Ellington, *Sacred Body*, 170.

⁶⁸ Henriette Peters, *Mary Ward: A World in Contemplation*, trans. Helen Butterworth, Leominster, Gracewing, 1984.

⁶⁹ Alison Weber, *Theresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990.

⁷⁰ Claire Cross, "'He Goats Before the Flocks": A Note on the Part Played By Women in the Founding of Some Civil War Churches', in G. J. Cuming and D. Bakers (eds), *Popular Belief and Practice: Studies in Church History*, viii (1972), 195-202; D. Ludlow, 'Shaking Patriarchy's Foundations: Sectarian Women in England, 1641-1700', in *Triumph over Silence, Women in Protestant History*, ed. Richard Greaves, Westport, Conn. and London, Greenwood, 1985, 93-123.

⁷¹ Margaret Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, London, n. p., 1667.

⁷² A. Lloyd, *Quaker Social History, 1669-1738*, London, Longman, 1950, 107-19; P. Mack, 'Teaching about Gender and Spirituality in Early English Quakerism', *Women's Studies*, 19 (1991), 223-38.

⁷³ Emery Battis, *Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1962; M. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002.

Accurately defining positions of teaching and governmental authority proved as desirable for most Protestant churches as for the Catholic during the Tridentine and early modern eras. In contrast to the former, the Catholic tendency to see the priestly and monastic vocations as the models that all others should aspire to emulate was deeprooted; when the lay directed Company of the Holy Sacrament in France, for instance, decided to establish pious associations for the religious formation of artisan youths, it was unable to imagine any structure that did not amount to a lay monastic community, where youths lived and worked strictly in common according to the monastic virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience and a structure of prayer, sacramental reception and work.⁷⁴ More generally, the laity usually were not comfortably accommodated within the church's official structures of authority; Trent's decisions were taken by theologians, bishops and heads of religious orders, with some influence from the powerful Emperor Charles V, while diocesan synods were also reserved to clergy; because of the principle of subsidiarity, it was normally in the lived experience or actualisation of theology that the laity managed to shape their church and to develop their ministry within it.

This cautious note should not, however, blind us from identifying key developments within the church. Ecclesiology emerged as a distinct discipline. Institutionally, theologians and controversialists concentrated on the visible or exterior aspects of church, which meant the prerogatives of government and authority, sacramentality and the relationship between church and sovereign. For the Protestant and Catholic churches, these proved profoundly urgent questions, for they sought to justify their claims to apostolicity and salvation through robust declarations of historical continuity of structure, dominion and revelation. Additionally, it was crucial to the churches to cultivate their unity in doctrine and discipline, so that the loci of authority and the power of doctrinal judgment assumed prominent positions in theological polemics and analytical discourses. Institutionally too, the development of secular sovereignties and of political theories that bolstered secular power obliged churchmen to celebrate the independence and superiority of the sacred realm while concurrently taking the risk of allying their churches with ambitious political rulers. Each of these issues touched the lives of the faithful within the church, but the ecclesiology displayed in devotion and piety did not always reflect precisely the same concerns and influences as polemical treatises or church councils.

Trent's reliance on clerical leadership and its perpetuation of the superiority of ordained priesthood was partially a defensive response to Protestant subverting of Catholic priesthood and hierarchy. It encouraged the French's school's fruitful reconfiguration of priesthood and episcopacy while giving rise to rivalry within the clerical hierarchy. However, the real innovations in ministry came from those Christians who looked beyond the narrow focus on male clerical supremacy by endeavouring to promote complementary or common ministries for clergy and laity and for men and women. The ecclesiology of souls demonstrated by the associative identity and confraternal strength of Catholic belief, devotion and mission played a fundamental role, though it was not always in harmony with the external ecclesiological structure, power and government of the church. Confraternities could bolster both genres of ecclesiology: to homogenise and superintend beliefs and worship under the jurisdictional ascendancy of parish priest, bishop and pope, or to imagine shared spiritual motivations and apostolic roles for the faithful of the body of Christ. In this regard, the pattern of development within Roman Catholicism after Trent was similar to that within most Protestant denominations: an initial period of vigorous creativity followed by a period of consolidation and even retraction. This meant that as Protestant denominations solidified their positions, they adopted rules and conventions that obliged women either to retreat from the leadership roles that they had managed to carve out during a formative period that had necessarily gambled on freedom and resistance to theological and organisational conventionality, or to seek spiritual fulfilment on new and independent terms.

⁷⁴ Alain Tallon, *La Compagnie du Saint Sacrement, 1629-1667*, Paris, Cerf, 1990, 148-9.